



Title : Youthwork@cyberspace.com : unsanctioned social network site connections between youth work practitioners and young people

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UNSANCTIONED SOCIAL NETWORK SITE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN YOUTH WORK  
PRACTITIONERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*Liesl Conradie*

A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of *Professional Doctorate*.

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L. Conradie

*ABSTRACT*

Social network sites are online spaces that can be used for interaction between young people and youth work practitioners. The focus of this thesis is social network site interaction that falls outside the guidance of the local authority, through unsanctioned interaction on practitioners' personal but also work profiles.

Twenty one practitioners and fourteen young people were interviewed, using a semi-structured interview guide. Three inter-linked themes emerged through the research process; space and place; trust development and boundary management. Young people wanted to interact with some practitioners through the practitioners' personal profiles but the majority of practitioners would rather interact with young people through work profiles. Young people viewed and trusted these practitioners as friends and were willing to share their personal, but also socially intimate information with them. Most practitioners viewed their relationship with young people as a professional relationship and aimed to maintain personal and professional boundaries. However, practitioners did not extend this same awareness to the boundaries of young people. This was further confirmed by the practice of client searching through a variety of profiles to access socially intimate information of young people.

Where practitioners and volunteers lived and worked in the same geographical spaces, these multiple relationships increased uncertainty with regards to unsanctioned SNS interaction. Other practitioners were either fearful or opportunistic of these relationships and used them to gain further socially intimate information about young people or turned a blind eye to these relationships due to uncertainty of how to respond.

This thesis extends knowledge and theory concerning youth work practice at a time of change, and also new spaces for interaction online. Civic courage and incentives that outweigh deterrents lead to unsanctioned connections for practitioners. For young people this interaction was based on the type of friendship they perceived they had with practitioners. Studying perceptions regarding this interaction revealed cycles of perpetual negative practice, personal and socially intimate boundaries and different views on the type of relationship that young people and practitioners developed with each other.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Professional Doctorate at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name of candidate:

Signature:

Date:

## Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	4
Table of Contents .....	5
List of Tables and Figures .....	11
Acknowledgements.....	13
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	14
1.1. Introduction to the research .....	14
1.2. Research aims.....	18
1.3. Research question .....	19
1.4. Justification for the research.....	20
1.5. Boundaries of the research .....	21
1.6. Methodology .....	22
1.7. Background to youth work and its changing nature .....	22
1.8. Social network sites as spaces.....	29
1.9. Outline of chapters.....	32
1.10. In summary.....	34
Chapter 2: Methodology .....	35
2.1. Introduction.....	35

2.2. Chosen methodology .....	36
2.3. Alternative approach considered .....	38
2.4. Categories and themes explored .....	40
2.5. Ethical clearance.....	43
2.6. Participants and sampling .....	49
2.7. Data collection method .....	62
2.8. Interview process and data analysis.....	64
2.9. Overview of the themes .....	70
2.10. Testing the rigour of the research.....	71
2.11. Limitations of the research method employed.....	74
2.12. In summary.....	79
Chapter 3: The relevance of space and place to young people and youth work .	82
3.1. Introduction.....	82
3.2. Youth work spaces.....	83
3.3. Meanings attached to spaces.....	88
3.4. Space becoming place .....	90
3.5. Space of flows.....	98
3.6. Social network sites as 'non-places' .....	98
3.7. Networked publics.....	100
3.8. Civic courage.....	105
3.9. In summary.....	106

Chapter 4: The significance of trust as part of relationship development in practitioner and young person relationships.....	107
4.1. Introduction.....	107
4.2. Defining trust.....	108
4.3. Uncertainty of intentions .....	114
4.4. The development of trust.....	115
4.5. Approaches to trust development in a helping relationship .....	115
4.6. The role of institutional trust .....	126
4.7. Trust, privacy and technology .....	129
4.8. In summary.....	132
Chapter 5: Boundaries in youth work practice as impacted on by unsanctioned social network site interaction.....	134
5.1. Introduction.....	134
5.2. Defining boundaries .....	135
5.3. Permeability.....	139
5.4. Self-disclosure.....	140
5.5. Boundary violations and boundary crossings.....	143
5.6. Multiple relationships .....	144
5.7. Integration or separation as boundary management solutions .....	147
5.8. In summary.....	152
Chapter 6: Findings: The Significance of Space as a space for connection within SNS interaction.....	154



6.2. Interactions within spaces outside of youth work settings and times ....	155
6.3. Engaging with and in social network site spaces .....	161
6.4. SNS as connecting spaces between young people and practitioners.....	166
6.5 The SNS spaces that young volunteers wanted to use to connect with young people.....	170
6.6. Findings identifying the spaces that practitioners wanted to connect with young people.....	174
6.7. In summary.....	183
Chapter 7: Developing relationships: The significance of 'trust' in unsanctioned connections between youth work practitioners and young people on social network sites.....	185
7.1. Introduction.....	185
7.2. The nature of the developing relationship for young people participants .....	186
7.3. The nature of the relationships that practitioners thought they developed with young people.....	197
7.4. The impact of the dissemination of policy and guidance on practitioners .....	211
7.5. In summary.....	215
Chapter 8: Findings: considering boundaries within relationships during unsanctioned connections .....	217
8.1. Introduction.....	217
8.2. Boundaries in relationships perceived as professional relationships by practitioners .....	218

8.3. Relationships where young people viewed practitioners as just 'doing their job' .....	222
8.4. Boundaries when relationships were viewed as 'more than a work relationship' by practitioners .....	224
8.5. Practitioners perceived as 'like a friend' by young people .....	226
8.6. Dealing with the variation in boundaries due to how relationships were perceived by participants .....	232
8.7. In summary .....	240
Chapter 9: Discussion of findings and key themes.....	242
9.1. Introduction.....	242
9.2. Spaces for connecting with others .....	243
9.3. Connections depended on the perceived nature of the relationships developed.....	248
9.4. Relationships perceived as 'like a friendship' by young people as and 'more than a work relationship' by practitioners .....	249
9.5. Relationships perceived as work or professional relationships by practitioners and how young people perceive these relationships.....	270
9.6.Lack of control in both types of relationship perspectives .....	282
9.7. In summary.....	283
Chapter 10: Conclusion and Recommendations.....	286
10.1. Introduction.....	286
10.2. Summary of findings.....	287
10.3 Contribution to knowledge .....	290

10.4. In hindsight what would I do differently .....	293
10.5. Policy and practice implications .....	297
10.6. Dissemination of Findings .....	300
10.7. Recommendations.....	302
Appendices.....	305
Appendix A .....	306
Appendix B.....	308
Appendix C.....	310
Appendix D .....	311
Appendix E.....	312
Appendix F .....	316
Appendix G .....	323
Appendix H .....	326
Appendix I.....	351
Appendix J .....	353
Appendix K.....	355
Appendix L.....	357
Reference List.....	359

## List of Tables and Figures

Table 2.1: Young People Participants .....	55
Table 2.2: Breakdown of Practitioner Participants .....	61
Table 2.3: Overview of the Three Key Themes .....	71
Table 6.1: The types of youth work young people accessed .....	155
Table 6.2: Young people who only access universal youth work, interaction with practitioners outside of youth work times and spaces.....	156
Table 6.3: Young people accessing generic and one to one work interaction with practitioners outside of youth work times and geographical space.....	157
Table 6.4: Young volunteer interaction with practitioners outside of youth work times and spaces.....	157
Table 6.5: Young volunteer interaction with previously known young people they practiced with .....	158
Table 6.6: Young volunteer interaction with previously unknown young people they practice with .....	159
Table 6.7: Practitioner interaction with young people outside youth work settings and geographical space .....	161

Table 7.1: Young people's views on their relationships with practitioners.....	191
Table 7.2: Young volunteers' perceptions of relationships with practitioners.....	192

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### ***1.1. Introduction to the research***

Young people became a significant demographic on social network sites, for example, MySpace, in 2004. Since then, young people have migrated to a variety of different social network sites (SNS), for example, from MySpace to Bebo to Facebook. One social network site, in particular, plays a central role in this thesis. During the time this research was completed, the social network site that was most popular amongst young people in England, and also mentioned in every interview, was Facebook.

Due to the nature of youth work, social network sites, as spaces for delivering youth work as a form of informal education, were bound to be explored (Melvin, 2013; Davies and Ali, 2009; Davies and Cranston, 2008a, b). The National Youth Agency's (NYA) (Davies and Cranston, 2008a and b) study was the first in England to explore how youth work could respond to social network site opportunities and challenges, and how social network sites could be used as youth work tools. A key focus of the NYA's (2008) interim and final reports was on building youth work's capacity to respond to social network sites. As a professionally qualified youth work professional, I am in favour of the profession exploring new spaces and developing responses and practice to effectively engage with young people. For this reason, a key point that stood out for me in Davies and Cranston's (2008) research was that the majority of engagement with social network sites by youth work practitioners, where young people were active, was taking place 'under the radar'. This did not constitute the main focus of the NYA research and as such

this is peripheral in their reports and mentioned in passing. They refer to 'under the radar' engagement only once in the interim report and once in their final report. They do not directly define 'under the radar' interaction, however, in the interim report (Davies and Cranston 2008a, p.27) they mention that the use of social networking was achieved 'under the radar' and by 'circumventing filters on youth centre computers'. In the final report (2008b, p.22) they suggested that:

Whilst some areas are developing official bespoke social networking features for their own local youth websites, most engagement with the main SNS where young people are already active (MySpace, Facebook, Bebo etc.) was taking place 'under the radar' and a number of survey responses specifically highlighted that their uses of SNS were not officially sanctioned.

Charles et al (2008) ascertained that Canadian young carers who do not display adverse behaviours could fall 'under the radar' and equated the term to them being unnoticed. I suggest that in similar terms social network site engagement by youth workers that involves interacting with their clients could be 'unnoticed' if it takes place without line manager consent and outside the perimeters of available guidance and policy.

'Under the radar' assumes subversion or deviance. Subversion from expected behaviour and social norms and according to Becker (1963) can be considered deviant. Deviant suggests challenge to social norms - what we are expected to be and how we are expected to behave. Deviant does not always imply against the law or breaking rules, but rather an overstepping of the accepted and also the expected. What was seen as expected at the time of Davies and Cranston's (2008) research and also this study was still in its infancy, due to the relative newness of the technology and the engagement of it by practitioners to connect with young people. At the time of this study, guidance and policy existed but it was not disseminated. The overwhelming majority of participants were unaware of the existence and content of the guidance. The social norms were based on



previous understanding of boundaries between practitioners and young people, perceptions of risk within a risk averse society and fledgling policies and guidance. Giddens (2005) suggests that living in modern society is to live with risk. When considering young people and the internet, various opportunities but also risks are created and explored (Livingstone, Byron, 2008). The risks that young people encounter online extend to who to trust and who not. The social construction of childhood in the UK draws a clear divide between young people and adults. Government regulates most interactions between young people and adults that extend beyond the family domain.

Government and local authorities are risk averse and attempt to minimise perceived risk to children and young people. Hope (2005) identified three types of risks relating to the internet as perceived by schools and policy makers. These are risks to young people themselves, risk to the practitioners involved with them and also risks to the institutions themselves. Therefore rules of engagement in the form of policy and guidance were created to control and minimise these risks.

'Under the radar' therefore implies the existence of rules of engagement that indicate what is to be considered 'above the radar'. Behaviour considered above the radar indicates rules as well as power to implement and to oversee the keeping of these rules. However, who determines the boundaries between what is considered above the radar and what is considered under the radar?

As this study is an attempt to find out why and how participants connect with each other 'under the radar' I suggest that this term is value-laden and perceived as negative. For this reason my gatekeeper suggested that I do not include the term 'under the radar' in my information leaflets; but rather explore with participants how and why they connect with young people without using language that could be considered judgemental and negative.

The term 'under the radar' as well as 'unsanctioned' proved to be problematic during the research process as it became clear that what it implied did not follow through in all cases. For example, some managers were aware of practice outside the policy and guidance, however, they felt unable or unwilling to deal with it due to a lack of knowledge of the policy as well as a lack of experience with the technology. In some cases the guidance and policy was misunderstood and this led to connections being sanctioned by managers which did not meet the policy and guidance. In these cases subversion was not at play but rather a lack of awareness, engagement and understanding of the guidance. In these cases ignorance could be blamed rather than subversion or deviance. The study therefore set out to explore 'under the radar' connections as identified by Davies and Cranston (2008) but ended up identifying and exploring practice that went beyond this term.

Davies and Cranston's (2008) research commissioned by the NYA explored youth work's capacity and responses to social network sites within the frame of youth work principles. This would therefore constitute 'above the radar' engagement with social networking sites that would involve practice that includes navigating the risks and opportunities of social networking that is officially sanctioned and therefore agreed by informed line managers and in line with disseminated guidance. This thesis is not an exploration of 'officially sanctioned' youth work engagement with social network sites. Instead, this thesis focuses on the 'unsanctioned' engagement which includes all interaction taking place through the personal profiles of youth worker practitioners as identified by Davies and Cranston (2008b) as part of the action research aspect of their research that informed their policy guidance and recommendations. However, through the constructivist grounded theory approach, the research developed to include connections created due to misunderstanding of policy and guidance, and those wrongly perceived to be sanctioned by the participants.

Further connections between young people and practitioners through work profiles were also identified during this study. Even though these connections appeared to be sanctioned, due to line manager agreement, because they were not set up within the county guidance and also not used in the agreed manner, I argue that these were problematic in nature and should also be considered unsanctioned and under the radar interaction. The data focussed on personal profile connections as well as work profile connections between practitioners and young people, and for this reason both are included in the findings and discussion.

## ***1.2. Research aims***

This research aims to explore the perspectives and experiences of young people and youth work practitioners concerning the practice of 'under the radar' social network site interaction between young people and youth work practitioners. The term 'young people' includes young people who access youth work provision, but also those who in addition act as young people volunteers. 'Practitioners' includes paid practitioners from a Connexions, but also youth service background and also adults who volunteer within youth work settings.

Social network site usage for work purposes has been the focus of few youth work studies (Davies and Cranston, 2008; Melvin, 2013). However, as they did not focus exclusively on the unsanctioned interaction, there is much that we can learn about this under-explored practice. In the exploration of this engagement, the focus is on where this interaction takes place, how and why this takes places and the impact of this interaction on youth work practice and the participants. The three themes on which this thesis focuses were identified by drawing on a social constructivist grounded theory approach. The research aims to explore:

- The significance of social network site spaces for young people and practitioners.
- Young people and practitioners' perspectives regarding the use of these spaces for 'under the radar' youth work practice.
- The impact of this interaction on the formation and development of trust between young people and practitioners, but also between practitioners and the organisations that they are employed by.
- The consequences of this interaction on practitioner boundaries, but also those boundaries that are important to young people.

### ***1.3. Research question***

Within the above context, the research proposes to address these aims from both young people and practitioners' perspectives. The research question focus on the exploration of 'under the radar' interaction between young people and youth work practitioners on social network sites. The overall research question is:

Why is 'under the radar' social network site interaction between young people and youth work practitioners taking place, with specific reference to space, trust and boundary management?

#### ***1.4. Justification for the research***

Youth work, as a profession, aims to meet young people where they are at, both emotionally and physically (Davies, 2005). Social network sites created 'new' spaces that young people frequent. Youth workers are using this space to engage with young people, and a large number of youth workers are interacting with young people unsanctioned due to slow dissemination of guidance and lack of understanding of the technology. Why this is happening and how it is manifesting is addressed through the inter-linked themes of space and place, trust and boundary management. This thesis explores young people and practitioners' perceptions, experiences and implications of this engagement.

In 2011 and 2012 when this research was conducted, practitioners were all working in the same post structure as youth support workers at different levels, with backgrounds in either youth work or Connexions Intensive Personal Advisers. During the NYA study in 2008, only one Connexions practitioner and no adult volunteers was part of the study 'Youth Work and Social Networking' (Davies and Cranston, 2008a, b). My research now incorporated practitioners from different backgrounds undertaking the same roles. The impact of the merger on the relationships practitioners develop with young people, and how they build and develop trust, but also maintain boundaries concerning the practice of 'under the radar' interaction, became important to explore. This is in order to gauge whether practitioners from different backgrounds place similar emphasis and understanding on issues, for example, where, how and why it is appropriate to work with young people and in what manner.

Due to the unsanctioned nature of this interaction, very little is known concerning the motivations for practitioners, but also young people, for engaging in this practice. As this practice is considered by many as 'not allowed', responses by managers and heads of service, when I contacted them about my proposed

research, suggested that because it was not allowed, it did not happen within their jurisdictions. Therefore, this practice could easily be ignored, but as research evidence suggested that it occurs, it is important to explore how and why it takes place and to identify some of the potential implications for youth work relationships and further practice and policy development.

These changes also brought with them a greater reliance on especially, adult volunteers, in order to ensure the continuation of universal or generic youth service provision. How volunteers perceive their relationships with young people and their responsibilities to young people, both inside and outside youth clubs, as well as their views on and potential experiences of this engagement, were therefore necessary to explore. What the expectations were on these as well as young people volunteers and how it could or should be enforced or not, necessitated a focus on these practitioners within this study as key role players within youth club settings and in youth work relationships.

### ***1.5. Boundaries of the research***

The research was undertaken in one local authority (LA) within England. However, all Local Authorities in England and Wales experienced similar changes within the time frame of this research, and therefore variations of some of the issues experienced in one Local Authority, have a high probability of being experienced in others as well. The time intensity of the mergers that took place, combined with the sensitive and unsanctioned nature of the topic area, lend it to limiting the study to one geographical space, as both these factors complicated the process of gaining access to a Local Authority.

## **1.6. Methodology**

Chapter two details the methodology used within this thesis. Drawing on a social constructivist grounded theory approach, an inductive research process was followed. The over-arching themes were identified, not through a literature review, but rather through the thoughts and perspectives of the participants. Participants were all from the same local authority, as this provided a boundary to the research.

As different local authorities have different policies and ways of working, an in-depth analysis of one authority was considered rigorous. How and why the situations and perspectives of participants developed can be compared and contrasted with the background of the guidance that the LA followed as a shared foundation. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with a range of different participants, which included young people, young people volunteers, practitioners and also adult volunteers. Ethical considerations were identified before any contact was made with participants, and these considerations were adhered to throughout the research process.

## **1.7. Background to youth work and its changing nature**

### **1.7.1. Policy and its impact on youth work**

Policy that relates to youth work has undergone significant changes during the previous Labour and current Coalition governments. Documents such as *Every Child Matters* (2004), *Youth Matters* (2005) and *Youth Matters: Next Steps* (2006), under the Labour government, but also *Aiming High for Young People* (2007) and *Positive for Youth* (2011) under the Coalition government

orchestrated a number of priority changes and directives. An increased focus on multi agency and partnership working led to a major Children's and Young People's Service's restructure in 2008. This was followed by the merger of Connexions and Youth Services in 2011 and the creation of one role for former employers of these two practice backgrounds. Central government devolved service delivery to local authorities and local authorities had to prioritise their funding to meet their local needs (Buckland, 2013). Local authorities are under no obligation to provide youth services, but they have to attempt to respond to local need. The impact of this was evident during the field work part of this research as the holiday provision for over sixteen's, that I considered accessing for my fieldwork, was closed, as was some other term time universal access provision for young people over the age of sixteen.

Central government, nonetheless, still expects high quality youth work provision especially for those who are at risk of poor outcomes. The focus, therefore, should be on vulnerable young people, for example, young people who are in care, young carers, those involved in, or at risk of committing crimes, etc. This focus is more in line with the expectations that were set for Connexions Intensive Personal Advisers (IPA's) than the purposes of youth work. This expectation necessitated a need for increased specialist one-to-one service provision with a resultant reduction in funding for universal open access provision. This is also in line with the Department of Children, Schools and Families' (2009) directive to target provision across services for children and young people to those who needed targeted and specialist provision.

Working in collaboration across local authorities, with health services, youth justice systems, the voluntary sector, with young people, families and communities, became expected within local areas. Increased use of non-publicly funded services, volunteers and aiming to keep provision open in order to avoid impacting negatively on provision for young people, became key tasks (Great



Britain, DfE, 2011). Commissioning emerged as a key aspect within Positive for Youth and generic or universal services started relying on volunteers in an effort to continue providing these universal services. Buckland (2013, n.p.) suggested that:

Just at the point when the National Youth Agency recognised that the minimum requirement to qualify people to work with young people in such an influential role should be at degree level, the hike in student fees alongside the likelihood of limited paid work at the end of it is very likely to consign youth work to church groups and voluntary organisations run with well-meaning and enthusiastic volunteers.

This increased reliance on volunteers also made government consider to:

...restore commonsense and proportionality' by 'reducing unnecessary burdens related to vetting and checking adults who come forward to volunteer to work with young people (Great Britain, DfE, 2011, p. 5).

However, within a system that views young people as 'at risk' and vulnerable, this seems at odds with directives, guidance, policies and laws that came before, that emphasise the importance of safety of young people and trying to ensure that deaths like that of Victoria Climbiè's do not happen again (Great Britain. House of Commons Health Committee, 2003). It remains to be seen what the impact of these directives will be on the experiences of young people and volunteers as major partners within the provision of universal youth work provision.

### **1.7.2. Youth work as a distinctive way to engage with young people**

Youth work is viewed as a distinctive way to approach and respond to young people within professional practice based on key values and principles. The National Youth Agency (NYA, 1999), in its statement of values and principles,

provides the purpose of the profession which includes several of the key elements of youth work as a profession:

The purpose of youth work is to facilitate and support young people's growth through dependence to interdependence, by encouraging their personal and social development and enabling them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and society (NYA, 2000, p.3).

Sapin (2009, p.2-3) provides a clear definition that includes the key elements of youth work as a profession that are needed for it to fulfil this purpose:

...a process of working with young people in voluntary relationships to design and implement activities, projects and services based on their own concerns and interests, rather than those that are exclusively societal. Youth work practice promotes change and development through a commitment to relationships based on respect for young people, listening to them and mutual learning.

Davies and Merton's (2009) inquiry into the state of youth work and the impact of policy changes on its nature explored the five foundational aspects identified in Bernard Davies' *Youth Work: A Manifesto of our Times* (2005):

- Youth work starts with the young people - where they are, both geographically and socially, and focuses on meeting their needs as identified by them.
- It provides the support and access to opportunities to enable young people to go beyond this.
- Voluntary engagement of the young person is fundamental, but through the years this has been adapted to include helping the young person to move on from 'having' to engage to 'wanting' to engage.
- Focus on young people's voice and participation in all aspects that are relevant to them.

- Youth work is not only concerned with individual aspects of the young person but rather views young people as individuals, but also as a part of other societal groups and communities.

What follows is a brief introduction to the aspects and elements of youth work that distinguish it from other types of work with young people.

### **1.7.3. Starting where young people are**

According to Davies (2010), starting from where young people are provides an opportunity to commence from what is important to the young people rather than where practitioners might want them to be or what practitioners feel should be important to them (Davies, 2010; Ingram and Harris, 2005).

Even if practitioners feel the young people have particular needs or issues that need dealing with, youth work is about building up relationships with young people in order to find out what they want to work on. What Russell and Rigby (1908, p. 19) suggested still holds true today:

... the first object (is) Recreation ... the compelling force which brings members to the clubs... The second object we may call Education, ... The first object in itself leads to the second ...

Providing 'things to do and places to go' was a main point of *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2005, p.26), and this is especially important in areas where access to leisure and other facilities for young people is scarce. Ensuring that the spaces that are used to engage with young people have positive associations for the young people, to ensure that they will access the provision, is hence an equally important starting point (Bradford and Byrne, 2010; Barton and Barton, 2007). This is, however, complicated through the changes to youth work practice in 2011, as will be discussed below.

#### **1.7.4. Voluntary engagement**

Young people choose to take part in youth work within their leisure time. Voluntary engagement increases the potential for young people to take ownership of their achievements within the setting. Conversely, some young people have mandatory engagement due to a referral by another agency that could have stemmed from a variety of different reasons (Davies and Merton, 2009). This presents a challenge to youth work practitioners, but they aim to maintain the notion of voluntary engagement by supporting a young person through the process of 'having to engage' to 'wanting to engage' (Davies and Merton, 2009; Ord, 2009; Merton et al, 2004). This thesis focuses on young people that attend universal open access youth work provision, and therefore none of the young people interviewed were in the position of 'having to engage'.

#### **1.7.5. Developing trusting relationships with young people**

Youth work's foundation is the development of trusting relationships with young people. Trust in the practitioner is needed for young people to feel comfortable and confident to share information with them, but also to facilitate open and honest communication (Davies, 2010). These trusting relationships have to adhere to the professional and ethical principles of youth work. This includes, for example, respecting young people, to adhere to personal and professional boundaries, to promote young people's right to make their own decisions and support them in this (NYA, 1999). Minimising the impact of the power imbalance between young person and practitioner is also needed in order to develop mutual respect and shared trust (Davies, 2010). This is illustrated by a quote from a young person in Davies and Merton's (2009) inquiry: 'Youth workers are like friends, with authority'. This makes youth work's offer unique, but also

creates and magnifies the potential for boundary crossings within how the relationship between practitioner and young person is perceived and experienced by both parties, but also others.

#### **1.7.6. Participation in the process, not just outcomes**

Youth work focuses on young people's participation in the process rather than only focussing on outcomes. Part of this process is the skills development and involvement of young people in the identification, planning, delivery and evaluation of provision that meets their needs (Davies, 2010). Youth work is about allowing young people to participate and have a say in decisions and services that impact on them (Sapin, 2009). This focus on participation enables youth work to be youth-led (Davies and Merton, 2009).

#### **1.7.7. Working with groups**

Davies (2010) emphasises that due to voluntary engagement during leisure time, group work is a natural means to engage with young people within their friendship and peer groups. Young people are more likely to access settings and projects if they are able to attend with their friends. This is especially the case with universal open access provision. Quotes from Davies and Merton's (2009, p.22) inquiry illustrates the importance of group work for a youth work practitioner: 'Others are good at one to one – youth workers are good at group work...' and also, 'The kernel is group work'. Engaging with young people through SNS allows for a continuation of group work due to the group nature of SNS.

### **1.7.8. Informal education**

A key element of youth work is the focus on informal education of young people in their transition from childhood to adulthood (Batsleer, 2008). Youth work emphasises the social, emotional and moral development of young people as part of their overall welfare (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). Adolescence is marked with periods of transition - physically, mentally, but also with regard to schooling, responsibilities and expectations placed on young people. Youth work aims to support and enable young people to manage these transitions (Davies and Merton, 2009).

### ***1.8. Social network sites as spaces***

SNS, whether it is, for example, Facebook, MySpace or Bebo, share a number of common features that differentiate them from other forms of social media. This thesis refers to social network sites rather than social networking sites. boyd and Ellison (2007) suggested that people use social network sites in unique ways, and that they are not only about meeting new people online (which networking implies), but rather allowing people to articulate and develop existing connections. This thesis concerns interaction between young people and practitioners that were known to each other before they connected on SNS, and therefore the term social network site was considered more fitting than social networking site.

Many other social media tools allow for networking with others, known and unknown alike, but what makes social network sites unique is the features that they combine to create networked publics (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2007). Social network sites aim to connect people to each other and, therefore, profile

holders predominantly use their own names and real details. This is in contrast to some earlier forms of social media where the focus was on identity play, anonymity and the use of pseudonyms, as is so aptly portrayed by the cartoon that states: 'On the internet nobody knows you're a dog' (Steiner, 1993).

In general these sites include photographs and personal information ranging from age, sex, work and education to hobbies and personal interests. It is up to the profile holder how much of this information they disclose.

These sites enable users to add people they want to interact with, generally referred to as 'friends', to their profile so that they can view, but also comment and share on each others' profiles. Those who were 'friended', become co-constructors of each others' profiles. Friends can view each others' 'Friend Lists' and this way 'friend' other mutual connections, old friends or make new friends. Profile holders can also view the profiles of those that they are not friends with, if their privacy settings are not set to private, but remain on the default of public access (boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Users are able to interact through different features. The most common of these is the status update function, in which users write short updates about what they are thinking. Friends can comment on this synchronously (at the same time) or asynchronously (at different times), and all 'friends' of the profile holder can see the comments. These are displayed through the newsfeed function that is updated in real-time and displays all friends' most recent updates and contributions to mutual friends and the profile holder (Ellison and boyd, 2013). Every user has a profile page on which they have a 'wall'. This is a space where people can leave messages for the profile holder; however this is a public space that all those 'friended' by the profile holder can view and contribute to. All the friends, therefore, are able to interact with each other on the shared friend's

profile. An additional communication feature is the private messaging function that allows for private communication in real-time or asynchronously.

### **1.8.1. Social network site policy and guidance available for youth work practice**

Within the Local Authority where the research took place, guidance on how and when social media could be used for practice purposes has been available since August 2010. Facebook was one of four commercial, approved social media channels within this authority. The guidance, as well as the Social Network and Blog Policy that was available since 2009, includes processes and procedures that had to be followed before these sites could be used for work purposes (Organisational policy, 2009; Organisational policy, 2010).

BECTA, a government agency that provide support in enabling the use of technology in learning, produced information and checklists for Local Authorities and Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) in a publication entitled *Safeguarding children online: a guide for local authorities and local safeguarding children boards* (2006). BECTA e-safety guidelines needed to be referred to and the risk assessment proforma completed if engagement with young people through social network sites was an aim.

A long list of procedures had to be followed before interaction with or creation of social network site profiles, pages or groups was able to be approved and implemented. Social Media Champions were in existence to share guidance and make recommendations. The social media use request then had to be approved by the Head of Service.



Davies and Cranston (2008a) suggested that practitioners struggled to identify how current policy and practice methods could be used online. Various Local Authorities identified the need for assistance on how to develop policies and guidance for interaction between practitioners and young people on social network sites. Davies and Cranston (2008a) reported this gap in policy, but also the capacity to engage with social network sites as a positive tool for youth work engagement.

Other studies (Byron 2008; Ofcom 2008; Withers and Sheldon 2008) that focus on policy and guidance development were concerned with the challenges, fears and risks involved in social network site use by young people. Melvin (2013), writing a few years after the NYA study, confirmed this position with regard to policies that were since developed. These policies tended to be more restrictive and limiting of practitioners' interaction with young people online. Davies and Cranston (2008a and b) and Melvin (2013), rather, were interested in how the opportunities that social network sites create could be utilised effectively by youth work. Even with the four year gap between Davies and Cranston's research and Melvin's research, it seems as if policy and guidance were still considered restrictive and, as Davies and Cranston (2008a, p.4) described it, as 'blocking first' rather than focussing on 'capacity building first' with regard to young people's use of social network sites.

### ***1.9. Outline of chapters***

Chapter two identifies and explores the chosen methodology for the study, and explores why another approach was not taken. How the key themes emerged is explored. The research design and participant criteria are explored for the semi-structured interviews. The explored ethical considerations and the limitations of the study end this chapter.

Chapter three is an exploratory literature review on the first of the three overarching themes identified, by drawing on a social constructivist grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis. It explores the importance of geographical and also social network site spaces for connections between young people and practitioners.

Chapter four identifies the literature drawn on for exploring the importance of trust development within a relationship between practitioner and young person. Approaches to interpersonal, and also impersonal trust, that are needed to develop, firstly, initial trust and then deeper trust, are identified and explored.

Chapter five introduces the literature pertaining to the importance of boundaries within youth work, and how social network sites can impact on these. The way people choose to disclose information about themselves identifies how complex boundary management is. Whether a situation is viewed as a boundary crossing or violation is impacted on by a variety of factors and is explored.

Chapter six outlines the findings for the first theme of this thesis. The findings regarding space and place are explored from the perspectives of the participant groups: young people and young volunteers, as well as practitioners, and adult volunteers.

Chapter seven presents the findings relating to the importance of trust development within a youth work relationship and online interaction, specifically.

Chapter eight outlines the findings relating to boundary management and how the different participants manage this within a social network site environment, where the emphasis is on disclosure and sharing.

Chapter nine discusses the findings across the three key themes organising the discussion based on those that viewed their relationships with each other as 'more than a work relationship' or 'like a friendship' and those that viewed their relationships as professional relationships or 'just a youth work relationship'. This way of organising the discussion centred the discussion around the nature of the relationship perceived to be developed, as this appeared to be crucial to the decision of whether to connect through personal profiles or not for all the categories of participants.

Chapter ten considers the implications of the research for youth work practice, and sets out suggestions for youth work practice, but also further research. Final conclusions are drawn, linking back to the original aims of the thesis.

### ***1.10. In summary***

This chapter briefly introduced the research topic of this thesis, the research aims and the research question. The need for this research at the time of the study was justified, and the boundaries of the research explained. The chosen methodology was briefly introduced. Background to the field of youth work and social network sites as tools for interaction was briefly stated and the chapter ended with an outline of the thesis.

## **Chapter 2: Methodology**

### ***2.1. Introduction***

This chapter details the research processes employed for this thesis. Due to the relative newness of online social networks, and the limited awareness of 'under the radar' interaction between young people and youth work practitioners, only two other studies acknowledged this practice as part of wider studies on the use of social network sites as youth work tools. This, combined with other factors discussed in this chapter, contributed to the decision to draw on a social constructivist grounded theory approach for the research design and analysis of this thesis.

This chapter introduces the chosen methodology and explores an appropriate alternative and the reasons for not choosing it. The chapter sets out how the initial themes and categories were identified and later refined through drawing on some appropriate aspects of social constructivist grounded theory.

Ethical clearance was crucial for this study and the process taken to get this approved is explored. Gaining access to young people participants was a time intensive process involving a top-down approach through a gatekeeper, various managers, youth support workers, sessional staff and eventually young people participants. Gaining access to practitioner participants was less difficult as they

were the managers, youth support workers, sessional staff and volunteers. Theoretical sampling impacted on both groups of participants.

The data collection method that corresponds with social constructivist grounded theory, as well as the continuous data analysis process that starts with emergent analysis, is also detailed. In order to test the rigour of the research, the notions of objectivity and subjectivity, reliability and generalisation are evaluated. The chapter ends with a discussion on the limitations of the research methodology in this study.

## ***2.2. Chosen methodology***

Understanding what the participants thought and felt about the topics considered in this thesis, and the meaning they attached to them, was important. For the purpose of this thesis a qualitative methodology is utilised. This allowed the study to explore what was happening, how it was happening and also why it was happening.

As a result of the unsanctioned nature of the interaction, participants might have experienced different levels of exposure to, and participation in, this phenomenon. For this reason, gaining multiple views on the phenomenon, in order to capture the different realities and viewpoints of the participants, was important. At the time when I started this research in 2010 only one study had been identified that started to explore the phenomenon of 'under the radar' interaction. Therefore, very little was known about this practice, informing the decision to draw on grounded theory as the theoretical and analytical starting point for this thesis. At a fundamental level, grounded theory methods:

consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves...

Grounded theory begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis (Charmaz, 2014, p.1).

Grounded theory is useful in studies where very little is known about a phenomenon and where the researcher aims to find out what is happening and what people think about the topic under study. Therefore, I started with no hypothesis to prove or disprove but rather I was looking for insight and information about this identified practice. I wanted to develop and build theory from the bottom-up by listening to and analysing data I gathered from participants themselves. However, I also tested the theory and literature from youth work and that I borrowed from other fields of study, for example migration studies and business studies as well as professional practice, for example psychology, counselling and nursing. The reason I did this was because very few studies linking youth work with unsanctioned SNS connections has been done, but also because of a lack of theory and literature pertaining to trust and boundary management within youth work but also linking these topic areas within youth work literature and theory.

The variation of grounded theory drawn on in this research is social constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). The term 'constructivist' acknowledges the subjectivity and the interpretation that the research brings to the study design, construction and also interpretation of the data gathered. It acknowledges that people's participation and experience of the world is socially constructed and not a given and therefore different people can have different experiences, but also reasons, for participating or not in the same phenomenon. According to this theory, it is important to locate the phenomenon within the web of connections and constraints that impact on it. There is therefore not just one 'reality' or experience, but a plethora of experiences and related realities.

As this is such a new area of study, and also a potentially contested and sensitive practice, some participants had direct experience of this phenomenon, others heard stories about the phenomenon, others had co-workers who interacted with young people through SNS unsanctioned and others had no experience of the phenomenon. Therefore different experiences and perceptions were bound to be shared (Richards and Morse, 2013; Smith et al, 2009).

### ***2.3. Alternative approach considered***

Based on the above discussion an interview, as a process, cannot be 'a telling of a story or experience from beginning to end', but rather, in some cases, a hypothetical run-through asking questions like 'What would you do if....?'. For this reason, phenomenology was not used as a data collection approach. Phenomenology works best with a conversation or unstructured interview where the assumption is that you can only understand people within their context - what is happening to them and within their lived realities. People's perceptions of experiences and phenomena gives us evidence of the world how they perceive it, i.e. their lived reality (van Manen, 1990).

This approach is similar to social constructivist grounded theory except that the data collection methodology is through unstructured interviews with participants who have directly experienced a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). For some participants the phenomenon might not be part of their experience and therefore their 'story' might be 'thin', and reliant on other people's experiences, i.e. second hand accounts. Phenomenology relies on direct experience as a starting point (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). This thesis aimed to collect detailed and rich descriptions of what participants were doing or not doing, or what they might consider doing or not do in future, and what their perceptions

about it were. Van Manen (1990, p. 10) provided a further reason why phenomenology would not be appropriate for this thesis:

....A person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience. For example, if one tries to reflect on one's anger while being angry, one finds that the anger has already changed or dissipated. Thus, phenomenological reflection is not introspective but retrospective. Reflection on lived experience is always re-collective; it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through.

For this purpose I had to ensure that any 'conversation' or 'interview' aspired to elicit more than just an 'I don't know' response from participants who had not experienced the phenomenon before - either first or second hand. Grounded theory allowed for the creation of semi-structured interviews that enabled me to ensure that the questions elicited thinking, reflection and engagement by the participant. This also ensured fair reflection of the various perspectives that young people and practitioners could take with regards to unsanctioned interaction. Therefore, participants were not limited to those with experience of 'under the radar' interaction, but also included those that met the initial participant criteria, discussed later in this chapter, in order to provide insight into their experiences and thoughts on the matter.

Social constructivist grounded theory also acknowledges the role of the researcher within the study and that my interpretation, as researcher, of the studied phenomenon itself is a construction (Charmaz, 2006). One of the myths of grounded theory is that the researcher should not read about the study area before conducting the research. However, what Glaser and Strauss (1967) meant is that by using grounded theory the researcher does not start with a theory to prove or disprove, but should be open to be led by the data.

Any researcher should, therefore, not start their research with a blank slate, but has to ensure that what they read does not 'stifle or contaminate or otherwise



impede the researcher's effort to generate categories' (Glaser, 1992, p. 31). After all, why do any of us decide on a topic to research? I would suggest it is because it holds some sort of intrigue for us, based on a perception or view that we might hold about it - however embryonic the idea or perception might be. This is part of the human condition, and as such needs to be acknowledged as part of the research process.

With grounded theory, interpretation does not start with the analysis of the data, but also in identifying the initial key themes or categories around which the questions are based. Grounded theory differs from other approaches in that analysis starts from the inception of the research idea and is a constant process. Analysis is not left until after all the data is collected, but the data drives the data collection process and as such is key in generating categories. There is therefore a 'continuous interplay between analysis and data collection' (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 273).

#### ***2.4. Categories and themes explored***

The initial key themes or categories of this thesis were identified after completing my first year doctoral assessment. The aim of this assessment was to write an article, of publishable quality, exploring the topic area of this doctoral thesis. In 2000, I completed a master's degree within an inter-disciplinary context, studying 'Contemporary Social and Cultural Differences'. For this I completed an ethnographic study entitled: 'Community@cyberspace.com. An ethnographic account of community and commerce on the Internet'. This initial interest, combined with the boom in the use of online social networks by young people since 2004, and my background as a youth worker and youth work trainer (focussing specifically on boundaries and developing appropriate relationships),

made me suspect that these new spaces might create new challenges and opportunities for working with young people.

A key factor in my decision to undertake a Professional Doctorate rather than a PhD was my own background as a youth worker. I worked as a youth worker since 2001 and qualified as a professionally qualified youth and community worker in 2008. During my time in practice I worked in a variety of different roles and settings. As a youth work manager and in a further role as youth work trainer, the issue of boundaries between practitioners and young people often raised its head and it was a focus area within youth work training.

As a practitioner it was drummed into me that 'you can be friendly but never their friend' and that it is a professional relationship only. This is the way I aimed to practice and therefore I had some clear biases and preconceived conceptions concerning 'under the radar' interaction between practitioners and young people. This accounts for why the 'under the radar' notion in Davies and Cranston's (2008) research resonated with me. As part of my professional training and practice experience I could not comprehend why practitioners would engage in this type of interaction that fell outside the social norms, and professional principles of youth work.

I ended my youth work career in early 2009 and the field work part of this research took place in 2011-12. As stated in chapter 1.7.1., the merger between Connexions and Youth Services took place in early 2011 and therefore practitioners came from different professional backgrounds and with different job descriptions as me when I was a youth worker. According to Pew Research Center (2011) between 2008 and 2011 the amount of adults using social network sites has doubled, which means that the use of social network sites was more prevalent under youth workers then when I was in practice.

As a researcher using constructivist grounded theory I acknowledge that my interpretation of the research is a construction in itself (Charmaz, 2006). However, I knew that my experiences and thoughts could have been different from other participants' and I really wanted to gather current practitioners' and young people's thoughts and experiences rather than focus on my own. Reality is socially constructed and I wanted to ensure that their voices are heard and explored and that these voices drive the data and research rather than my own.

The NYA confirmed this notion in their *Youth Work and Social Networking - interim and final report*. This study identified that 'under the radar' interaction on social network sites was taking place. The NYA's research focussed on how youth work could support social network site usage by young people, and how it could be integrated in 'above the radar' interaction. However, the meaning of 'under the radar' interaction, and how youth workers justify this, even after the training they receive (especially about boundaries) was pertinent in my eyes. As a user of social network sites and a former youth worker, 'under the radar' interaction made me curious about youth workers' perceptions concerning appropriate boundaries or if these boundaries are even possible within these spaces.

Through studying Davies and Cranston's (2008) NYA reports, as well as danah boyd's (2008) doctoral thesis on young people and social network sites in America 'Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics', I was able to identify a number of recurring themes and categories. Initially my themes were quite narrow and very focussed, for example, communication practices and the possibility of misunderstandings, personal and professional boundaries between practitioner and young person, the role of trust and also

young people's supposed views that they do not want to interact with adults in these spaces.

On completion of my first year assessment in 2010, I started reading further about youth work practice to ascertain how and where the themes mentioned above would fit in. It was apparent that the initial themes fitted in with the principles of youth work as discussed in chapter two - developing appropriate relationships with young people and maintaining boundaries within the different settings of youth work. In order to ensure that my pre-conceptions, based on my research above, did not preclude the possibility of exploring and finding different themes or categories, I devised a broad, semi-structured interview that relied on a range of open questions that would allow participants to identify new and relevant aspects. I undertook my field work over a twelve month period mostly focussed in the time periods just before, during and immediately after the summer months.

What participants were sharing within the pre-determined categories was different to my pre-conceptions. For example, I never thought that young people viewed practitioners as similar to friends or that boundaries other than personal and professional boundaries existed for the participants. The selected themes or categories ended up exploring the importance of space and place, developing youth work relationships with a focus on trust and, lastly, the misnomer of personal and professional boundaries as part of youth work relationships from young people's perspectives.

## ***2.5. Ethical clearance***

Permission and ethical clearance to undertake the research was obtained from the Institute of Applied Social Research (IASR) ethics committee at the University of Bedfordshire before any local authorities were formally approached for access. After receiving ethical clearance from the University of Bedfordshire, I applied for ethical clearance at the Local Authority who agreed that the research could take place within their settings. I applied for this permission through the Local Authority's Research Governance Committee.

In line with a social constructivist approach I wanted to ensure that I included perceptions and experiences from both young people and practitioners. The research area is considered sensitive because of the 'under the radar' and unsanctioned nature of the interaction but also because it involved young people.

### **2.5.1. Age of young people**

Young people are considered vulnerable and therefore, in a bid to minimise this vulnerability, I opted to interview young people over the age of sixteen only. This also removed the necessity to gain parental consent as is required when interviewing young people under the age of sixteen.

As my focus was youth work, my starting point for the research process drew on the original principles of youth work engagement - voluntary engagement within an informal education setting (Davies, 2005; NYA, 1999). With regard to voluntary engagement my concern was twofold. Firstly, parents might be keen for their child to take part in a research study and therefore give consent even though the young person might not want to. This puts unnecessary pressure on the young person to take part.

Secondly, in line with universal youth club access, a young person might attend one week and not the next. The practical concern here was that a practitioner, or myself, might have handed out consent forms to young people to get their parents to sign, and then they do not turn up the next week. Other young people, in turn, might turn up to be interviewed, but did not attend the week before so they do not have permission from their parents. Or, the young person turns up and forgets the signed permission letter at home or misplaces the permission letter altogether. As a former youth work practitioner, these three scenarios were all frequently experienced by myself as part of the process of organising trips and outings.

### **2.5.2. Access to young people**

I was also under the illusion that deciding to access young people through youth clubs would enable me to complete a big number of interviews in one youth work setting. In retrospect, this was naive considering the amount of work I had to put in, in order to get young people to a point where they would want to share some of their leisure time with me in a youth club setting.

The youth club setting, combined with the types of relationships that young people foster with adults within these spaces, necessitated modelling the practitioner relationship and starting with initial relationship building. In some youth clubs this took time, and some practitioners insisted that I come and meet the young people first and 'hang around'. This ensured that the young people felt comfortable in my presence before I interviewed them. In other youth club settings, the practitioners discussed my intent with the young people first, and asked who wouldn't mind being interviewed. In these settings I had no presence before my interview dates, but on arrival was introduced to all the young people to be interviewed, offered a space to work from, and left to negotiate the order

and length of the interview. Further youth clubs left me to my own devices to build relationships, interview young people and find a safe space in the setting to do this.

All these approaches provided me with some rich data. However, periodically the last approach wasted a lot of time as I would get to a youth club and no young people over the age of sixteen would be in attendance. This is one of the challenges of universal access that youth work practitioners deal with - a result of the voluntary nature of engagement. It did, however, make me feel that if the practitioners discussed the research with young people, more over sixteen's might have attended the setting the night of interviews. The reverse might also be true, however, and in some instances practitioners rang me after they discussed the study with young people in their setting, to tell me that the young people did not wish to partake.

### **2.5.3. Voluntary engagement**

Young people and practitioner participation was entirely voluntary. All participants were presented with information about the study (in a written and verbal format) in order to give informed consent. For a young people's information leaflet, I took into consideration their age and level of understanding (both understanding the research and 'under the radar' interaction), without being condescending or 'dumbing down'. This information is attached as Appendix A. I did not want to make assumptions that young people might have information about policy and guidance, or the nature of the type of relationships that practitioners were supposed to foster with them. Practitioner participants also received information leaflets explaining the research study to them in a format that they could take away. This information leaflet is included as Appendix B.

I went through the information leaflet with the participant at the start of each interview. I also created different consent forms for the different groups of participants. The consent form for practitioner participants is included as Appendix C and the consent form for young people is included as Appendix D. I went through the consent form with them and provided them with the opportunity to ask questions before they signed it, to ensure that informed consent was given. I made it clear to both groups of participants that they could withdraw this informed consent at any time during the process, and I pointed out clearly where on the information leaflet the information could be found in order to do this. No participant withdrew their contribution throughout the research process.

#### **2.5.4. Anonymity and confidentiality**

The identities of all the participants remained anonymous and confidentiality was strictly observed. I have changed the names of all young people, the practitioners that were mentioned by young people and also place names in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of participants and the county in which the fieldwork took place. In sharing direct quotes as illustrations and examples I have anonymised the young people, however, practitioner examples I shared not by anonymised name but professional background. This is because the data revealed a difference in perspectives ranging from the different professional backgrounds and I wanted that to be openly revealed in the data. Within the information leaflets, as well as in the consent forms, anonymity and confidentiality was emphasised and explained. I ensured that I kept my consent forms and interview schedule notes in separate spaces in lockable filing cabinets. Audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews were also stripped of personal information, and electronic copies saved on a password protected computer.



The transcripts were saved with the same participant number as the number given on the consent form, rather than by name of participant. Keeping the consent forms would have allowed individual participants to withdraw informed consent, but this did not happen.

The Local Authority in which I undertook this research study will not be named within this thesis or any further publications resulting from the research. This will further enhance anonymity and confidentiality of participants.

#### **2.5.5. Duty of care**

I had a duty of care to pass on practice that might have been considered illegal or against the rules and also situations that might have been shared where a participant might have been in some sort of danger or a danger to others.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research, but also crucially because what was considered acceptable and what not was so varied in my findings, what constituted a disclosure and what not was a challenge. Before I started my fieldwork I anticipated that if a disclosure were to happen that it would be a clear-cut case of disclosure where harmful intent was evident. However, I had no disclosures of issues that have not been dealt with already by the relevant Local Authority.

The strategy documented in my ethical clearance from both the IASR and the Local Authority suggests that, as documented in the previous section, all identities of participants will remain anonymous and confidentiality will be observed. This anonymity and confidentiality would have been breached in situations where information was disclosed to suggest that the young person,

other young people or vulnerable adults were suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. If any information was disclosed to suggest that practitioners were abusing a position of trust, confidentiality would also have been breached.

I dealt with potential disclosures of harm or illegal activity by clarifying to all participants at the start of an interview that I had a duty to pass on information that revealed illegal activity or information that made me suspect that they were experiencing harm or likely to experience harm. My ethical clearance states that I would then have discussed with my research supervisor to ascertain the most appropriate action to take. I would then have passed on this information to the most relevant person or organisation with the necessary haste and in the most confidential and sensitive manner possible. If safe to do so, I would also have discussed the process with the relevant participant.

As part of the initial research design, I planned to sample young people and practitioners from different localities (separate geographical parts of the county where the fieldwork took place). The intention was to minimise potential feelings of discomfort and distress that might have been caused by the research to either young people or practitioners. Despite this planning, the positive desire by the young people to be interviewed, even if their practitioners were interviewed, emerged as well. Young people in these cases were keen to share their views. By explaining the research carefully, in order for them to give informed consent, I made sure young people would not experience discomfort. However, this only took place in one instance and the person made contact with me herself.

## ***2.6. Participants and sampling***

My initial aim was to interview twenty young people and twenty practitioners during the summer of 2011. These figures were initially randomly chosen as a sensible number for research that will be qualitative in nature and potentially yield plenty of audio and transcribed information to analyse. I knew in advance that if I set out to only interview participants that had direct experience with 'under the radar' interaction that I would struggle to find practitioner participants willing to speak to me. Also, to access young people I was reliant on practitioners letting me into their youth work settings. While the overall gatekeeper might be positive about the research study, the individual practitioners and settings might have felt more vulnerable due to the nature of the research study. As a result, I did not focus my sample on participants with direct experience but aimed to find participants that met some basic criteria (discussed below) willing to engage in an interview with me.

As experience of the interaction was not a prerequisite to partake in the study I wanted to explore in-depth thoughts, feelings and meanings attached to the phenomenon, as expressed by young people and practitioners. In essence, I wanted to obtain rich data rather than limit the focus of my study to only those with direct experience and end up with no data. In line with the spirit of grounded theory, this forced me not to limit the study from the outset based on my preconceptions and interpretations. If I did this, I would have missed out on extensive data that I used in the comparison phase. If I decided to only focus on those participants with personal profile connections with young people, I would have missed the rich data concerning connections through work profiles which, according to the analysed data, turned out to be another manifestation at the time of unsolicited interaction. Gathering data in this manner allowed analysis 'up' from the data and enabled me to make comparisons between situations, experiences and thoughts in order to attempt theory building (Urquhart, 2013). In order to recognise potential participants I structured participant criteria based

on the essential and desirable criteria that would meet the ethical requirements of researching a sensitive topic and fit in with the grounded theory approach.

The two participant categories were created by identifying different criteria for participation. The participants fell into two broad categories that were then subdivided.

### **2.6.1. Young people participant criteria**

#### **Young people participants had to access some sort of youth work provision**

I did not initially set out to interview only young people who accessed universal youth work provision, but this happened for a variety of reasons:

- Youth work has traditionally been more focussed on universal access as part of group work, based on voluntary participation (Davies and Merton, 2009). For this reason voluntary engagement with young people participants could be negotiated within their youth club time.
- One to one specialist provision traditionally takes place within school time and more often than not in a school environment. If I wanted to access young people during school time I would have had to contact every school of potential participants to gain access and permission.
- Also, as discussed in chapter three, feelings and meanings are attached to certain spaces and I did not want to limit my research to formal education settings and times. This could potentially have had an impact on the quality of engagement. For example, young people could have seen it as

part of something that they 'have to do', as specialised provision is usually referred, rather than voluntary. They could therefore potentially have given perfunctory answers to 'get it over with' rather than voluntarily engaging. As interviewing in a formal education setting would have had to be arranged on an individual basis and not all young people discuss their specialist provision with their friends or peers, the likelihood of snowball sampling, as discussed later in this chapter, taking place would have been limited.

### **Young people had to be over the age of sixteen**

As discussed in the section on Ethical Clearance young people had to be sixteen or over at the time of being interviewed. The reason for this is twofold; firstly, to minimise the potential vulnerability of young people as part of a research study, especially in a case where the research can be considered to be sensitive in nature. Secondly, to avoid the added complications involved in aiming to gain parental permission within a setting that young people voluntarily engage with.

Due to the changes in youth work priorities discussed in chapter two, gaining access to young people over the age of sixteen proved extremely difficult. Not only did the voluntary engagement nature of generic/universal youth work provision mean that young people attend clubs sporadically, especially when the weather is dry and the nights light, but there were also less generic youth work clubs running during the time period that I undertook my field work.

### **Young volunteers**

Analysis, using the constant comparative method, suggested that a young volunteer that I interviewed had different experiences, thoughts and meanings attached to social network site interaction than young people that accessed youth work as young people only. For this reason I used theoretical sampling in order to interview more young volunteers to explore the similarities and differences in their perspectives and experiences in comparison to young people who did not volunteer.

Young people can become volunteers in two ways. Firstly, they could become more involved in youth club until they are at a stage where they are sharing decision making and additional responsibilities with adults. At this point, they can become young volunteers, also known as young leaders (Hart, 1992).

Secondly, a young volunteer role can be offered to a young person who needs specialist input to build, for example, confidence and self-esteem. This happens when practitioners know that interaction in the youth club setting will provide the young person with the outcomes they have to reach, but the young person would not access the club as a participant due to low confidence, for example. However, suggesting to a young person that their help is needed within a setting as a volunteer provides a confidence boost and allows for participation. None of the young volunteers that I managed to interview became a volunteer through this process. No young volunteers were accessing specialist, one to one input from youth work staff at the time of interviews either.

For a young person to be classified as a young volunteer rather than an adult volunteer, they had to be attending a youth club as a young person themselves as well and be under the age of nineteen. The reason why I suggested nineteen is because young people are able to access the county universal youth work provision up to, and including, the age of nineteen.

Based on the criteria outlined above, the table below summarises the final sample of young people participants.

**Table 2.1: Young People Participants**

Category	Number of Participants	Sex		Age	Universal access	Additional specialised provision
		Male	Female			
Young People Participants	9	6	3	16-19	9	5
Young Volunteers	5	1	4	16-19	5	0

### **2.6.2. Practitioner participant criteria**

**Practitioners had to have a contract of sorts with the Local Authority to engage in youth work with young people**

This criteria was rethought when snowball sampling allowed me to interview a qualified youth worker working in partnership with the Local Authority. This forced me to rethink my original criteria of thinking about practitioners as only those directly employed by the relevant council, and made me analyse the similarities and differences in experiences and perceptions that partnership working created. Adult volunteers would also have a volunteer agreement that provided them with the same rights and responsibilities as paid practitioners.



### **Practitioners had to practice in the localities that I identified as areas to interview practitioners in**

As explained during the Ethical Clearance section of this chapter I aimed to interview practitioners in different localities than the localities in which I set out to interview young people. I did maintain this position, however, as already mentioned, in one instance when interviewing young people it turned out that a practitioner was working in the locality where the interviewed young person was accessing youth work provision. However, as far as I could ascertain this did not cause young people any discomfort. If it did I would have immediately ended the interview and ceased all attempts to gain access to other young people within the locality.

#### **2.6.3. Sampling**

My first approach to sampling was purposive (Thomas, 2013) in the sense that I contacted three local authorities that had universal youth work provision, and I was interested in studying the experiences and perceptions of youth work practitioners. I had no indication in advance whether unsanctioned interaction took place in these three areas or not. However, due to the nature of my research question this did not matter. However, based on Davies and Cranston's (2008) study the perception was created that this could take place in any authority that provided youth work provision. One Local Authority responded to my request by stating that what I want to study is against their policies and therefore does not happen within their jurisdiction. Two other Local Authorities were willing for my fieldwork to take place within their authorities.

I decided on the Local Authority that was geographically closest to me to minimise additional travel hours. As a majority of youth clubs run at night, this also avoided possible problems with access to rural clubs due to lack of public transport to small rural areas at night, for example, by bus. This meant that the setting furthest from my home was just over an hour away and the closest setting I accessed was a ten minute drive away.

### **Arranging access**

Even though I had a gatekeeper who supported my study, it was still hard work to contact and arrange access to and within the different areas and their smaller sub-sections. My gatekeeper contacted the numerous area managers to ask for their support on my behalf. Only two responded that they were happy for me to contact the youth work managers of the various localities to arrange potential participants. In the distant past I had worked in one of the localities and therefore I ruled this locality out to avoid any concerns about insider research. This locality was also in the area where the manager did not agree for me to undertake my fieldwork in. This ensured that I have never worked with any of the participants that I interviewed. As this was a large County Council in England, overlap with practitioners in other localities was minimal (and insignificant) to non-existent.

### **Snowball sampling**

I exchanged numerous phone calls and e-mail messages with the youth work managers, and also interviewed two of them as part of the process of arranging access to their members of staff. Due to the time I put into this initial process of contact, effectively 'selling' my study to managers and then participants, the study took on a snowball sampling approach. Practitioners realised that this was

not some kind of county sponsored 'witch hunt', and that I was not employed by the county as a consultant, but rather that it was a study to find out more about modern youth work and how social media was impacting on relationships and practice.

Young people, in general, found the process of being interviewed enjoyable. More often than not, this resulted in them telling their friends to be interviewed as well. Taking part in the study became so popular that I had requests from under sixteens to be interviewed, but due to the restrictions on my ethical clearance this was not permitted. I feel that perhaps a follow-on study might benefit from collecting the views and experiences of younger young people, as they are more likely to have grown up with computer mediated communication than young people that were over sixteen in 2011-12. I also wonder if younger young people view their relationships with practitioners differently? This may make a difference with regard to the categories and themes that were identified in this research study, but comparison using the same themes and categories found with the older age range will be insightful for developing theory concerning youth work relationships and practice.

### **Theoretical sampling**

Due to drawing on a grounded theory approach, I did not complete all interviews before commencing to transcribe, code and analyse the data. Starting from the first interview, I used emergent analysis to guide the direction I took relating to the type of participant to interview next based on the type of information that was emerging through the study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Due to the diverse nature of my participants, and in line with what Glaser (1978) suggested my sampling only became theoretical after a number of interviews and their subsequent analysis.

As an aim of grounded theory research is to generate theory, comparing my data and identifying similarities and differences in experiences, meanings and feelings attached to the practice of 'under the radar' interaction suggested that the two categories of participants (practitioners and young people) have different experiences but also interpretations of the nature of their relationships with each other. Emergent analysis made me identify the need to interview more adult and young people volunteers. Young people volunteers were more likely to think and act in the same way as the youth work practitioners that they knew before they became a volunteer. Adult volunteers tended to be more experimental than paid practitioners in their perceptions and interactions with young people on social network sites and did not lack in civic courage as introduced in chapter three. These findings will be discussed within the relevant findings chapters.

Adult volunteers within the county were predominantly members of the community in which the youth club ran, and in many cases their own children attended the setting. Some of the adult volunteers wanted future paid work with young people, and this was a way to gain experience and insight into the profession. The only adult volunteers I was able to gain direct access to were volunteers that fell into the latter group. This was not due to not wanting to or trying to gain access but rather because the adult volunteers in the first group were too busy, as the majority of them held full time jobs as well and also had family commitments. County policy and guidance suggests that all volunteers should be Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked and trained, and upholds that all volunteers have the same rights and responsibilities as paid practitioners. At the start of my research this made me think that adult volunteers would have exactly the same experiences and thoughts about 'under the radar' interaction as paid practitioners. However, the constant comparative method and the resultant

theoretical sampling made me realise that the reality was more complex for adult volunteers.

Davies and Cranston's (2008) study only included one practitioner from a Connexions background as a respondent in their survey. As discussed in chapter one, just before starting my fieldwork, the County Council went through a restructure and this resulted in the amalgamation of the Connexions and youth work services. This led to the creation of the IYSS and the new role of youth support workers. Hence my fieldwork included practitioners with a youth work background and also practitioners with a Connexions background. My first interview with a Connexions background practitioner, and the subsequent analysis, made me aware of the perceptions that Connexions background practitioners held about youth work background practitioners with regard to the nature of their relationships with young people and their personal and professional boundaries. This led to more theoretical sampling through interviewing of more practitioners with a Connexions background. This enabled me to compare and contrast the experiences and expectations of the practitioners from these two different backgrounds with each other. This is significant as they were now undertaking the same roles with similar codes of conduct and job descriptions.

As a pilot interview, I interviewed a former youth work manager who is now working in a different role outside a county environment. My emerging analysis of this pilot interview made me reflect and think about whether current managers have similar or different experiences and opinions than previous managers, based on, for example, when they were practising, the recent changes but also the increased adoption of social network site usage by young people and adults, and their geographical location within the county. It also made me consider whether youth work managers would hold the same views as practitioners that tended to undertake more face to face work with young

people than managers. For this reason, using theoretical sampling, I interviewed more managers.

The reality with theoretical sampling, of course, is that you can't 'make' someone agree to be interviewed. Where this happened I used the data I had and in my findings chapters and in the conclusion of this thesis I acknowledged the limitations that my sample offered, for example, not being able to find adult volunteers that had their own children who attended youth club settings to interview. In these cases I suggest future research to be undertaken to broaden the sample. The table below summarises the participants that were interviewed. In presenting the data in the relevant findings chapters I have reduced the practitioner participants grouping to represent; youth work managers, youth work background practitioners, Connexions background practitioners and adult volunteers.

**Table 2.2: Breakdown of Practitioner Participants**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
<b>Youth work managers</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Youth support workers- youth work background (old JNC level 3)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Lead youth workers (level 2 Youth support worker)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Youth Support Worker- Connexions background (IPA)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Adult Volunteers</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

#### **2.6.4. Limitations of the sample**

Through purposive, snowball and theoretical sampling I aimed to gather a sample of participants for the research.

As a result of the sampling methods, practitioners that were interviewed were those who felt they had nothing to hide or that were not practising against the expected social norms. The sample might therefore have hidden the potential sharing of other perspectives and experiences. An additional method to gather data, for example, an anonymous e-mail or online survey might have provided information or data by further participants who might have been unsure about the nature of their practice. In fact, during an interview a young person identified a practitioner connected to young people through his personal profile. This practitioner was practicing within the areas that were included in the sample but he did not volunteer to be interviewed. I wonder if an anonymous survey might have reached more practitioners like himself?

Due to changed public spending and the changes in practice priorities I found it difficult to meet my goal of 20 young people over the age of 16 to interview. As indicated, a number of younger young people wanted to be interviewed but due to the limitations of my ethical clearance I was unable to do this. (This is a recommendation for further research in chapter 10).

The sample also only included participants from one Local Authority. I can therefore not suggest that all aspects of my research findings are generalizable to all other Local Authorities. In line with constructivist grounded theory I can state that my research is a reflection of the time and space within which it was undertaken within the limitations discussed concerning the sample.

#### **2.7. Data collection method**

As mentioned, my end of first year professional doctorate assessment allowed me to explore the relevant literature and research studies available at the time. Initial categories or themes identified through this process were useful in developing the semi-structured interview schedules. These are included as Appendix E: young person participant interview schedule and Appendix F: practitioner participant interview schedule. However, I ensured that my questions enabled participants to explore their thoughts and feelings rather than limiting them to my initial themes identified. This approach is in line with the social constructivist approach to grounded theory, and allowed an inductive approach in which I wanted to explore and find out what is really going on and why, rather than a deductive approach where I wanted to prove or disprove a hypothesis. I achieved this by allowing for a number of open questions and asking for thoughts on interaction and relationships in general as well. Through this approach more categories emerged during emergent analysis, eventually establishing the final categories and themes that were explored (Allan, 2003; Heath et al, 2009).

Grounded theory allows for semi-structured interviews even though unstructured interviews are the preferred method (Creswell, 2013). Unstructured interviews ensure that the researcher avoids preconceived ideas and notions that limit participants when exploring their ideas and perceptions. I was fully aware of this, and, by completing my first assessment, I had some ideas that I wanted to explore with participants in the study. According to Heath et al (2009) interviews are viewed as a 'young person friendly' research method. The way in which I structured and phrased the interview questions allowed young people to share their thoughts, feelings, perceptions and expectations in their own words and very much on their own terms. It also allowed the young people to identify and explore ways of viewing relationships between young people and practitioners that I, as an adult and researcher, would not have been able to identify or comprehend.



Heath et al (2009) suggests that this avoids the situation where a young person's behaviour and thoughts are either assumed or interpreted by adults. The semi-structured interview process dismissed the ignorant assumptions I held about young people and how they viewed and experienced their relationships with practitioners. However, as part of the research process I still had to interpret the data through analysis and constant comparison with the perceptions and experiences of other young people, and also with those of practitioner participants. This allowed the analysis of young people interviews to be emergent and inductive rather than forcing data to fit theories and ideas in line with the practitioners' views, views I potentially shared as an adult and a professionally qualified youth worker.

I am unsure whether the young people realised that they held the power in the interviewer/interviewee relationship. It was up to them how much they wanted to share. All I could do was to facilitate this process and to use my youth work communication skills (verbal and non-verbal) to make them feel at ease and valued as individuals and not only as sources of information. I did this by greeting them politely, introducing myself and listening closely to everything they wanted to tell me about themselves. I tried not to focus the participants on the interview questions only, but allowed them to explore other thoughts and feelings as these were broached as part of the process.

## ***2.8. Interview process and data analysis***

As stated before, in gathering and analysing the data I drew on a grounded theory approach and theoretical sampling was used as part of the identification of participants. I wanted to explore and 'make sense of how, when and why specific processes, practices and structures happen' (Rapley, 2011, p. 282). As

mentioned earlier in this chapter, part of the reason for drawing on grounded theory was the lack of available data and limited research on the study area. I also wanted to ensure that my positionality and my assessment from 2010 did not close down and limit my openness and willingness to explore with the participants their feelings and thoughts on the topic area.

The twenty-one practitioner interviews lasted on average an hour each. Interviews where 'under the radar' interaction was taking place or had taken place in the past lasted upwards of two hours. On average the fourteen young people interviews lasted forty five minutes each, due to the time and setting in which these interviews took place (an informal education space during young people's leisure time). I purposefully ensured that young people interviews would not run over an hour through design of the semi-structured interview schedule. However, I would not have stopped young people from going over the time but this never happened. With an average length of youth club provision of two hours I was limited to a maximum of two interviews in a youth work session. I only managed to achieve this in settings where the youth worker spoke to the young people the week before and identified consenting participants.

In most instances I did not have a say concerning where interviews were going to take place. In some instances the interview setting was conducive to the nature of the conversation and topic area, and in other instances less so. With practitioner interviews, the settings were locality offices and youth centre offices or coffee shops. Practitioners allowed an hour or more in their schedules which created a more relaxed atmosphere without other pressures interfering directly. This was even more the case in coffee shops away from interruptions by phone, knocks on office doors, etc. However, background noise was a concern in these settings. This created a more neutral space for practitioners to think, reflect and share their feelings and perceptions. The space in which interviews took place impacted on the length, and in one case a practitioner suggested meeting at her

home. This interview took the longest to conduct and the practitioner shared the most information, albeit most if it was more about how technology works and identifying 'above the radar' ways to interact with young people on social network sites.

The practitioners that facilitated my access to young people confirmed that I was Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked (now replaced by DBS), and ensured that interviews took place within youth work time and in visible (to them) spaces. Within youth work settings, spaces to interact with a relative stranger were not always the most conducive for an interview about potentially sensitive matters. For example, a hallway, outside during a barbeque, in a corner of a youth club, a kitchen that staff used, etc. In a small number of cases practitioners allowed me to use a room adjacent to the main youth work space, but this was very much reliant on the setting - the physical space it provided, activities planned for the evening, level of training of the practitioners involved, etc.

Elwood and Martin (2000) suggest that the physical setting will have a direct impact on the quality of the interview and it is therefore of crucial importance and needs to be considered. In undertaking research with young people through a gatekeeper, the settings are negotiated by the gatekeeper as the safety of the young people is paramount. Frosh et al (2002) suggest that young people who are interviewed in an education setting might find the interview similar to a 'difficult and frustrating lesson' hence my reason not to interview young people who access specialist provision only. The link with space, its functions and the potential meanings attached to different spaces are explored in chapter three and informed my decision. A number of the settings that I visited were based in adjacent youth centres on school grounds and took place outside school hours, but I was still very aware of the tension between formal and informal education and how my research could be perceived by young people. Drawing on my youth

work skills was crucial in these circumstances in order to minimise a 'formal education' experience or feel for the young people.

All interviews were audio recorded with permission from the relevant participant, and I also made notes on my interview schedule at the same time. I found making these notes valuable during the interviews for several reasons:

- By explaining why I was taking notes as well as an audio recording, participants felt reassured that what they were telling me was important and valuable.
- In the event of an audio recorder failure, the notes would be all I had to rely on.
- In some settings in which interviews took place the audio was sometimes unclear but my notes enabled me to reflect on what the participant was referring to.
- My notes additionally allowed for cross-checking for accuracy after transcribing the audio.
- Participants found it easier to open up and share with me within a situation where I was not staring at them the whole time. Due to the 'newness' of the topic area participants valued the time to reflect and think about their youth work relationships without feeling rushed or uncomfortable because someone was looking at them.

In two instances young people wanted to be interviewed with a close friend. I did not see this as an obstacle, as I was asking young people to give up their leisure time within an informal education setting in order to interact with me. During youth club time, informal education segments take place that limit young people's time to interact with their friends. My interviews therefore had to account for this as well by allowing multiple participants to maximise their joint leisure time.

Both pairs of joint participant interviews made it clear that if I did not interview them together I would be unable to interview them at all. Due to the difficulties in finding young people over the age of sixteen to interview I agreed to this request. With the one pair, I also had the feeling that one young person was more confident than the other one. This feeling was confirmed within the interview and the presence of the more confident young person enabled the less confident young person to contribute and share their feelings. I counted joint interviews as separate participants and took separate notes for each young person involved.

All interviews were transcribed by an external transcription service, with a confidentiality agreement in place and with a reputation for reliability. I attempted to transcribe the first interview myself and it took very long. I decided that I would rather use some of that time to read through the transcripts a few times directly after transcribing, to regain some of the closeness to the data that I might have lost due to not transcribing it myself. All the audio sound files, transcribed interviews, field notes, memos and reflections were stored securely in electronic format and in hard copy.

Grounded theory starts at the beginning of the research process and, as a result, I analysed and coded data as I completed interviews. This allowed for initial or emergent analysis using the constant comparative method, which enabled me to identify further data that needed to be collected (Urquhart, 2013). The constant comparative method allowed the initial coding to highlight both the similarities and differences in experiences and thoughts of participants. The constant comparative method and theoretical sampling of grounded theory allowed me to explore the data without my preconceived ideas and knowledge of youth work hindering or binding me to prove or disprove a position (Thomas, 2013). It also avoided drowning out the voices that I worked so hard to hear and listen to.

After completing an interview, I recorded my feelings and reflections concerning the interview. I used the opportunity to analyse where an interview fitted in with previous interviews and if there were similarities and differences. After transcribing an interview, I highlighted areas that I thought seemed significant in relation to other interviews. Initial coding took place on NVivo. I used the in vivo coding approach used in grounded theory for coding, in other words, I used the language of the participants to code before organising these into categories. Initially I planned to code data from young people and practitioners together, but due to the very different perceptions these two categories held I found it simpler and more meaningful to separate them.

Initial coding through emergent analysis and my reflections after interviews, combined with the data from participants, meant that the study developed more questions than answers. I saw the grounded theory approach as a cyclical process and this allowed me to move towards focussed coding and categories or themes that were now broader but also more focussed on relationship than my initial categories. This then allowed me to build theory that will be explored in the relevant findings and discussion chapters. This cyclical process that started with my first year doctoral assessment in 2010 is diagrammatically represented below.



**Figure 6.1: Cyclical representation of grounded theory approach adapted from Tweed and Charmaz (2011, p.133).**

## **2.9. Overview of the themes**

The final key themes that emerged through data gathering and analysis were similar to the three themes identified earlier in the research process. The key themes identified focussed on the type of relationship that was perceived to have developed, and how this impacts on where and how participants wanted to connect with each other on SNS, and how they perceived these connections. Undertaking this study through drawing on a grounded theory approach allowed me to gain a wider insight and understanding about some of the fundamental

aspects of youth work practitioner and young people relationships, and more specifically these aspects as they manifested within unsanctioned connections on social network sites.

**Table 2.3: Overview of the Three Key Themes**

The Core Theme		
An exploration of unsanctioned connections between young people and youth work practitioners on social network sites.		
First theme:	Second Theme:	Third Theme:
The use of space and place for connections	Developing relationships in youth work focussing on trust development	Boundary Management within SNS spaces

### ***2.10. Testing the rigour of the research***

'We stand within our research process rather than above, before, or outside it' (Charmaz, 2014, p.321). Being part of the research, my study relied on my interpretation from beginning to end. Objectivity therefore is not considered a necessary or even helpful part of the social constructivist grounded theory process. According to Charmaz (2014), the research process itself is interpretive and relies on the interactivity afforded between researcher, data and the participants as part of the emergent analysis and theoretical sampling.

As mentioned earlier, social constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the role of the researcher and that the research itself is socially constructed by them.



The influences and methods that piqued my interest in this research area, as well as how I identified and allowed the data to refine the themes and categories, acknowledged the social constructivist nature running through this study.

### **2.10.1. Reliability**

This does not mean, however, that the research findings are not reliable. If I were to repeat or reproduce my research in another similar county or geographical area and were able to do so at a similar time the results should follow the same categories or broad themes. If a different researcher undertook this same research study in the same geographical area at the same time, we would code roughly similar findings or code in roughly similar categories and along similar themes. However, the analysis and the interpretations of these could differ based on the impact of the different researcher (Curtis and Curtis, 2011). My research study is a true reflection and a reliable analysis of the situation as it was at the time and place within which I undertook it.

According to Bryman (2008), generalisations to populations are not the focus of qualitative research but rather generalisations to theory. However, some qualitative researchers, including myself, would suggest that we can produce some generalisations despite the interpretive nature of the research process and the small scale of the study. Williams (2000) suggests that researchers make generalisations from certain aspects under study, and that these can be seen as instances or examples of the phenomenon. Williams (2000) also rightly suggest that we, as qualitative researchers, make generalisations by making comparisons to the findings of other research studies. In fact, this thesis does it through the introduction of the available literature on the topic area. Also by drawing on literature from other areas concerning the key themes as these can be considered to be under-explored in youth work literature and by then exploring

and discussing the findings of this research study in relation to these. I suggest that generalisation is possible when considering the research as examples of perspectives and experiences under certain conditions by the sampled participants.

### **2.10.2. Validity**

Validity is another aspect commonly used to test the rigour of the research process. According to Hammersley (1990, p.57), validity refers to 'the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers'. Within this research, validity exists in that it accurately reflects the perceptions and experiences of the participants that I interviewed in the particular timeframe and space. The research took place during a time of uncertainty due to the restructure of youth work services and resultant role changes. Ambiguity concerning expectations whilst policy creation and dissemination was trying to catch up with the changes in computer mediated communication existed and this is reflected within the research.

### **2.10.3 Timeliness of the data and its relevance to the present**

Unbeknownst to me, the period I set aside for conducting interviews was right after the merger of Connexions and the Youth Services in 2011 and at a time of greater focus on targeted provision for those young people in need of services. There was therefore less universal youth club provision, and holiday club provision was severely affected. This impacted on my sample size of young people.

It also created feelings of tension and unhappiness especially under the youth work background staff. The start of my fieldwork in 2011 was a time of transition for them into their new roles and in some cases unhappiness with the changes was very evident and led to discussion on their part when filling in their demographic information concerning current job role, etc.

One could consider that this was not an ideal time to conduct interviews. However, restructures and change is constant within youth work and therefore no time would be ideal to conduct interviews. As I was interested in participants' experiences but also crucially perspectives this was not altered through the restructure. In fact, the restructure added an additional dimension to the study in that the perspectives and feelings of previous Connexions practitioners were now also included.

If my fieldwork took place a year or even six months earlier this would not have been the case and my research would have far less relevance today within an Integrated youth service as it would only have provided insight into the practice and perspectives of youth work background staff. Young people's contributions would also have been limited to their interactions with youth workers and would not have included their insights about their relationships with their Connexions background practitioners.

As the data and findings focussed on relationships and how and why participants wanted to connect with certain people and not with others in a constantly changing practice environment, the findings and the theory created from it remains relevant for the situation as it is today.

### ***2.11. Limitations of the research method employed***

### **2.11.1. Time**

With the young people participants time was often a limitation. A very insightful and thoughtful interview with a young person had to be cut short, for example, as the practitioners wanted to leave the setting as soon as the club ended. This meant that we rushed through some parts of the interview, and when I returned the week after, this young person was not in attendance. In other cases, young people wanted to be interviewed but did not want the process to take too long, because youth club was their time to socialise with their friends.

During one interview the practitioners ended a session early, due to negative behaviour from a large portion of the young people attending. Luckily we were close to the end of the interview, but this created a distraction as I interviewed the young person in the reception area just outside the main hall. As a result, we were interrupted by other young people walking past, and also by noise coming from inside the hall. This is not necessarily a limitation of my research method, but rather the realities of interviewing young people in practice settings. This also provided me with further evidence that I made the right decision to make use of semi-structured interviews, rather than unstructured interviews or conversations, as the distractions in the interview environments would have made the interview process impossible, for example through stop-start conversations and people losing their train of thought.

### **2.11.2. Interview spaces**

As discussed in an earlier section, interview spaces were diverse and some more conducive to interviews than others. This is, however, the reality of interviewing participants. With practitioners, interviews took place in offices or coffee shops. Even though the coffee shops were positive in the sense that they took the

practitioner out of their work environment, and hence gave us more time to reflect and think without interruptions, the sound quality of the audio files was more problematic. In these cases I had to rely heavily on my own notes, and also on re-listening to the audio files to minimise the negative impact of this level of noise.

### **2.11.3. Geographical separation of categories of participants**

A further complication involved trying to separate the geographical areas where I sampled practitioners and young people from. The county in which field work took place was very large. In some instances, I would interview a practitioner in one locality and that practitioner would then be mentioned while interviewing a young person in another locality. Due to the sessional nature of employment for some practitioners, they often end up working in more than one locality. As I did not have access to this type of employer information, the study as originally planned would've been impossible to complete if I'd been adamant to continue as is. I could have focused just on young people's perceptions or just on practitioners', but as my overall focus in this thesis is on relationships and interaction between practitioners and young people, the nature of the topic area, and the principles of the profession, it necessitated perceptions and experiences from both parties.

### **2.11.4. Theoretical sampling**

A limitation that stemmed from drawing on a grounded theory approach was that where my data suggested a need for theoretical sampling, in reality I was not always able to make this happen. For example, one young person mentioned by name a practitioner that he had been interacting with through the practitioner's online, personal profile. The young person was comfortable in providing me with this type of information. This suggested that I would need to theoretically sample practitioners who actively interacted with young people through their personal profiles or the young people that were involved in this interaction. This was, however, not possible to achieve due to the sensitive nature of the interaction. In some locations, co-workers of practitioners made

me aware of practitioners who interacted with young people, but these practitioners never responded positively to the invitation to be interviewed.

Theoretical sampling also suggested a need to interview more adult volunteers. Sadly, the only adult volunteers that were willing to be interviewed were young adult volunteers hoping to pursue a career in working with young people. Based on experiences and perceptions shared with me by other participants, adult volunteers who live and volunteer in the same communities, and potentially also have their own children who may or may not attend the setting, predominantly had a very different experience and perspective on 'under the radar' interaction. Despite painstaking efforts, I was unable to engage with this sub-category of participant directly. I wish to explore their experiences and perceptions further during a later research study. Gaining access to these participants will have to be carefully reconsidered and a case study or phenomenological approach might be more effective in engaging them. Both of these approaches would allow for small, selective sample sizes, and an opportunity to gain rich data through sharing of their individual journeys, starting with their connection to their geographical area and why they volunteer.

#### **2.11.5. One space at one point in time**

A limitation of the scope and nature of my study is that the data I gathered was limited to one particular geographical space. This provided me with an in-depth understanding of perceptions and experiences of this particular geographical space and time, but not of other areas or across different time frames. Some might argue that a potentially helpful addition would have been to include a national survey in order to find out the similarities and differences in other counties. However, I would have risked ending up with statistically insignificant results, as in some counties I might have had one or even no respondents. The

situations in different counties at the time fieldwork took place were also different as not all counties restructured their services for young people in the same manner and at the same time.

I found that young people would often initially answer 'no' to certain questions during interviews. For example, 'Do you interact with youth work practitioners through Facebook?' Later in the interview, they would realise that they do or might want to. Therefore, the nature of this study lends itself better to qualitative smaller scale research than large scale quantitative methodology. I suggest in my thesis conclusion the potential for a follow-on study in a different county to explore the similarities and differences in experiences and perceptions through a constant comparative method with the data that I hold for this county, bearing in mind the differences that would exist in the timeframe that would impact on the relationship that practitioners, young people and policy have with social network sites and their usage.

### ***2.12. In summary***

This chapter detailed the research processes applied during this study, from its inception through to the completion of the analysis stage. It explored the chosen methodology and the reason for this choice where other approaches to qualitative research exist. Phenomenology, for example, was explored as an alternative. Ethical clearance was a very important consideration due to the potential sensitive nature of the study, as well as the age of participants.

Gaining access to young people participants was a challenge due to the changes in focus area of the Local Authority in question, which led to a greater practice focus on specialised services rather than universal services with voluntary access. This impacted on the sample size of young people over the age of sixteen. This is,



however, a reflection of the practice environment at the time the interviews were conducted. I also found it very difficult to gain access to adult volunteers, but my emergent analysis suggested that theoretical sampling of this participant category would provide new insight and new perspectives. I was able to access three adult volunteers directly, but had to rely on accounts and perceptions from paid practitioners in order to get a greater understanding of this area.

Semi-structured interviews allowed me to structure the interviews based on the initial themes and categories identified. This interview format did not limit the focus of the research on these categories only, but allowed for emergent analysis through coding 'up' from the data. Due to my initial research and practitioner background, the initial categories or themes were valuable. These were both refined and broadened to allow for contextualisation through the voices and perceptions of the participants. Data analysis was a continuous process, starting with emergent analysis through to final analysis, through a process of constant comparison and finding and exploring the similarities and differences in experiences of the various categories and sub-categories of participants.

The chapter concluded with an exploration of the limitations of the study, which included the realities of space and time. I carefully considered different geographical areas in which to interview young people and practitioners to minimise feelings of discomfort. However, in reality these artificial geographical boundaries were more problematic than I thought. The spaces within which interviews took place were not always the most conducive, but this is a reality of undertaking research within informal education setting. I needed to embrace this in order to access this type of participant. It also allowed me to interview young people safely, within a space that they felt comfortable in, and at a time that they were willing to engage with me. A potential limitation was that the study was set in a particular Local Authority at a particular time. It therefore reflects the experiences and perceptions of a small number of participants in a particular

space. However, this is in line with the nature of social constructivist grounded theory, although a further study might provide further insight using a different geographical space and the participants bound to that space.

This thesis now moves on to consider the relevant literature that was explored as part of this research process. The literature review is organised around the three key themes as identified in the research; the significance of space and place, first in youth work in general and then specifically to social network site spaces as spaces for connection. The second literature review chapter explores trust as an important facet in the development of relationships and the final literature review chapter explores the literature around boundary management within online spaces as a means to maintain a measure of control within and between various relationship connections.

## **Chapter 3: The relevance of space and place to young people and youth work**

'Space is the opportunity; place is the understood reality' (Harrison et al, 1996, p. 67).

### **3.1. Introduction**

Youth work aims to offer services to young people in places where young people can choose to participate. According to *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2005) and *Youth Matters Next Steps* (DfES, 2006, p.13) 'things to do and places to go' were fundamental in the Labour government's vision for young people. However, due to *Aiming High for Young People* (2007) and *Positive for Youth* (2011) under the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition government priorities changed. Local Authorities had to respond to local need and it was feared that this would have an impact on universal youth service provision .

Space, in youth work provision, is traditionally thought of as physical or geographical locations or settings. This perspective on space and place will be explored in this thesis, and linked to unsanctioned social network site interaction between young people and youth work practitioners. It is necessary to incorporate social network sites into our understanding of 'where young people are at' and 'places to go', to ascertain the impact these new spaces have on youth work practice.

Urban semiotics and cultural geography and Castells' (2010) space of place provide the theoretical starting points, as much can be learnt about what is important within physical spaces, and how and why space can become place for

the role players. Due to the virtual nature of these spaces, Castells' (2010) notion of space of flows is explored. The idea of non-places, due to the template nature of these sites, is investigated, because young people are more interested in the interactions within these spaces rather than the space itself. However, because young people's interactions within these spaces are not transient and fleeting, the concept of networked publics is considered an appropriate framework within which to explore the findings concerning space, trust within relationships developed between young people and practitioners, and boundary management in chapters six to nine.

### **3.2. Youth work spaces**

In youth work the focus of the terms space and place has always firmly been on the setting or location of the youth work provision. Traditionally, different types of youth work have been provided in a variety of settings. Youth work can be divided into four different types:

- Group work
- One to one, intensive work
- Detached work
- Outreach work

#### **3.2.1. Group work**

Traditional open access youth work is defined as youth work with voluntary engagement by young people without limiting membership criteria (Williams, 2011). Open access youth work incorporates a wide variety of activities that predominantly take place in groups and can be described as the 'bread and

butter' of youth work (Davies and Merton, 2009). Group work enables young people to navigate the transition between being a child and an adult together with their friends and peers. According to Bradford and Byrne, (2010, p.20) 'youth work offers young people safe spaces in which they can meet with peers and develop trusting relationships with sympathetic youth workers'.

Westergaard (2013, p.168 ) provides a definition for group work, for young people within a defined category of requirement: 'a group made up of individuals with shared needs who will benefit from the opportunity to work with, and learn from others in order to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes'. Group work traditionally takes place after school hours; either in a youth club or youth centre.. Other spaces are used , for example, village halls, scout huts and other settings in areas where a school or youth centre is not nearby (Ingram and Harris, 2001).

Some groups were created through targeted provision, based on need , and young people would be referred. This raised questions concerning the voluntary nature of engagement. Targeted provision has been less affected by funding cuts and raised in profile by changed policy direction, and mostly takes places within schools and youth centre settings (Davies and Merton, 2009).

### **3.2.2. One to one, targeted provision**

One to one work is traditionally used for complex individual needs or issues and/or might require a measure of privacy. The nature of the young person's need can be such that addressing it within a group setting would be inappropriate and could lead to disengagement with the service, misunderstanding and/or bullying from other young people. A misfit between the need being addressed and the needs of other young people could also exist.

Connexions Personal Advisers and Intensive Personal Advisers used to be engaged in intensive one to one work, especially in cases where a young person had more complex needs (Watts, 2001). Since April 2003, Connexions services have been delivered in England through 47 local Connexions partnerships that consists of schools (LEA's), youth services, career services, health services and organisations within the voluntary sector (Oliver, 2004).

The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (Great Britain, DfEE, 2000) created the Connexions strategy to integrate the different services provided to a young person in order to create a joined-up approach that is reliant on high quality and individualised support, and to ensure that young people reach their goals for adulthood. Like Career Services, Connexions was based within schools and also local libraries during school times and school terms (Oliver, 2004). This not only put a perimeter around the spaces in which they worked, but also limited the time that they were available within these spaces. The spaces in which they engaged with the young people most in need of their services; young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), or at risk of becoming NEET, were the very spaces that they might have negative feelings and connotations to (Barton and Barton, 2007).

Youth workers also provide one to one support when needed. This could also take place within a school setting, a locality office, or a youth centre, in many instances still located on school premises. Barton and Barton (2007) highlight this as an issue for youth work provision, as youth centres on school grounds can create barriers to access by young people, due to the negative feelings and emotions they might hold towards these formal education spaces. Yet, this is still the direction that current legislation and policies with regards to young people's services in England is taking. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (Great Britain, DCSF, 2009) highlights the need for preventive services through a

joined-up approach that focuses on intensive and specialised support targeted towards the young people who need it most.

Cooper (2012a) uses Davies (2010) to suggest that youth work is increasingly responding to government policies and agenda that are influenced by the economic realities. As a result of this, youth work 'concerns itself with the creation of 'safe spaces'; safe from all sorts of risk'. A space can be safe in terms of where it is, but if young people do not feel comfortable within the space, do not voluntarily engage and are isolated to what extent is it truly a 'safe space'?

### **3.2.3. Detached youth work**

Detached youth work takes place in spaces not connected to a physical youth club setting. These spaces might not be spaces of choice, but, a lack of physical spaces for young people to interact, and also negativity of other factions in the geographical communities, spaces, for example, youth shelters and skate parks, become spaces that young people attach meaning to. These are mostly adult-free spaces at the time when young people access it, where young people can interact with friends with minimal adult constraints. Detached youth work has as its origins a way of engaging with young people who are considered to be 'unattached' to society. The *Albemarle Report* (Great Britain, MoE, 1960) highlighted the concerns for these young people, who were disengaged and unattached young people (Whelan, 2010; Crimmens et al, 2004).

Detached youth work is a means of engaging with young people in an alternative space at a time and in a manner that suits them. Within a detached youth work relationship the approach to power, authority and control needs to be negotiated and shared to a much greater extent than in building-based universal youth service provision, where young people walk into the setting signalling willingness to be in the space and the potential for engagement (Tiffany, 2007).

The aim is not to encourage young people to engage with a club, but to work with them on their terms in their spaces.

For the detached youth worker the focus on space is therefore more prominent than in the previous two youth work approaches. Before finding young people to engage with, it is imperative that the detached youth worker becomes familiar with the geographical spaces where young people gather or choose not to gather. Connecting the 'social to the physical dimensions of public space' is a key part of the detached workers role (Whelan, 2010, p.52)..

boyd (2008) suggested the availability of digital detached youth workers to interact with American young people online. Within the exploration of modern approaches to youth work within England this is on the agenda, and numerous online platforms and engagement tools are put into practice (Davies and Cranston, 2008a,b; Melvin, 2013). However, in the meantime unsanctioned interaction is the response by a number of practitioners.

#### **3.2.4. Outreach work**

Outreach work is street-based youth work that takes place one to one or in groups, and is a way of encouraging young people to access further youth work provisions. Outreach work can therefore take place in any of the above spaces.

All the types of youth work listed above take place in specific spaces. Where these spaces are and how young people feel about them, both in terms of the physical space and interaction and engagement is considered next.



### ***3.3. Meanings attached to spaces***

Barton and Barton (2007) explore space and place in a youth work context in their article 'Location, Location, Location: The Challenges of Space and Place in Youth Work Policy'. They draw on urban semiotics; which involves the social and emotional connotations and meanings that young people can attach to certain spaces. Urban semiotics focuses on spaces, such as buildings, streets neighbourhoods and signs that create and hold meaning for people. During my research a relatively even split of urban and rural settings were visited. Most youth work was building based and for these reasons I suggest that an urban semiotics perspective provides a foundation to explore space and place within a youth work context. As SNS are templates that provide various different spaces, designs and means of engagement with different meanings attached to the different spaces used, I argue that an urban semiotic approach is relevant for these virtual, rather than physical, spaces. For example, writing on a SNS profile's wall is considered public engagement open for all those 'friended' (and depending on privacy settings potentially a wider audience) to view and interact with. Private engagement in private spaces is possible through the private messaging function. Urban semiotics focuses on the meaning created and attached to urban structures, and the social connotations that they create based on the signs, symbols feelings and associations present. As a result of these, young people might be more or less likely to access a setting; not necessarily because they don't want to access the services, activities or practitioners available, but because of the space in which it is taking place and the meaning they have attached to the space.

From an urban semiotic approach, all spaces are not value free, but prejudiced through the signs, symbols and meanings attached to them (Crawshaw, 2001). According to Barton and Barton (2007), a space that young people might have negative experiences and therefore negative connotations to, is, a school. In

their article, Barton and Barton (2007) do not address virtual spaces. However, from an urban semiotic approach, the feelings and meanings attached by young people to social network sites are reflected by the huge numbers of young people active on these sites and others still joining (Peter et al, 2009).

Barton and Barton (2007) also draw on cultural geography, which focuses on how cultural norms and outcomes remain the same or change between settings, developing an argument about relationships of young people with youth work spaces. If young people have a negative connotation or meaning attached to a space, the space are problematic for youth work purposes. *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2005) and *Youth Matters, Next Steps* (DfES, 2006) suggests youth work functions are given back to schools, Barton and Barton (2007) argue this thinking is flawed for young people who are most likely to meet the criteria for youth work attention, for example, NEET young people. They will be NEET for a variety of reasons, and positive feelings and meanings attached to school settings might not exist. Other articles Barton and Barton drew on (Thomas, 2005; Robertson, 2000) supported that if young people have a positive meaning or experience attached to a space, they are more likely to engage in service provision in this space and vice versa. Positive meaning and experience have various meanings for participants, for example, a space that is adult-free or free of adult interference, dry, and out of the way. This finding is echoed by Thomas (2005) who suggests that young people vote with their feet - if they do not feel happy with a setting or a service, they will not attend. Therefore, identifying the 'right' space to interact with young people is crucial to facilitate effective engagement. Drawing on these approaches, I argue that practitioners need to have a clear understanding and indication of the social network site spaces that young people choose to frequent, and why these and not others, before engaging with them within these spaces. However, the functions afforded by the structures - the virtual neighbourhoods, streets and buildings - so to speak, and how young people want to engage with practitioners in these needs to be known.

An interlinked view, from Castells (2010, p. 441) considers that space 'cannot be defined without reference to social practices'. Castells refers to the notion of 'space of place' as places that have function and that people interact within. According to Castells (2010, p.441) a 'place is a locale whose form, function, and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity'. It could therefore be considered that both urban semiotics and cultural geography support Castells (2010) perspective that space becomes something more than just a geographical area through interaction with others, but also through emotional connections with the space itself. These emotional connections can be constructed through daily routines or relevant previous experiences within the space, creating a place where people feel they belong or don't (May, 2011). To what extent is this notion of getting the space 'right' in terms of emotional connection and interaction with others, relevant to 'under the radar' interaction between practitioners and young people? This is explored in chapter six with regard to what spaces in social network sites young people and practitioners preferred to connect with each other.

### ***3.4. Space becoming place***

From this analysis of space from an urban semiotic, cultural geography and also Castells' sociological perspective, I assert that for space to become place for some at certain times, two criteria need to be met. The space needs to make those accessing it feel connected at the time of use, and the space should be conducive to interactions with others.

#### **3.4.1. Feeling connected to the space**

Being able to access online social network sites does not automatically mean that young people will feel connected to the space itself. Social network sites, in general, have a number of common features that distinguish them from chatrooms and other virtual communities. Social network sites provide a template or a design (in urban semiotics terms) that allows users to customise or brand their space with their interests, tastes and presentation of self. A profile can become like an online bedroom in terms of providing a sense of autonomy, privacy and, to a certain extent, control. The template nature makes it relatively easy to navigate and customise within set perimeters. This familiarity with the 'architecture' and functions of the site can create feelings of comfort and ease for participants (Pollara, and Zhu, 2011).

By 'friending' others, young people populate their profiles and this increases connectedness to the space. This connectedness is linked to interactions with, mostly, known others (Ellison et al, 2007; boyd, 2008; Joinson, 2008).

Social network sites have also endeavoured to make access easier and more convenient. Not only are sites like Facebook accessed through personal computers and laptops, but through most devices linkable to the internet. Applications (apps) have been developed that create constant mobile access and interaction through notifications that are delivered to an account holder's phone and e-mail instantly. The space therefore is constantly 'with' the user and facilitates interaction with minimum limitations (van den Beemt et al, 2011). The limitations of interaction are created through friending someone or not, and as discussed in chapter two, through the use of security settings. .

### **3.4.2. Aspects that reduce feeling connected to social network sites**

There are a number of aspects that reduce young people's feelings of connectedness to social network sites.

### **Constantly changing nature**

Social network sites regularly make alterations and revisions to templates and available features. Some research evidence suggests that young people are slowing down in their adoption of Facebook and might start an exodus to another site (Moulds, 2007). Some consultation does take place with users of Facebook before changes are made, but the extent to which users feel this is achieved or considered is marginal (Stelter, 2009). Changes that sites make that do not meet the approval of specific user groups lead to mass departure of these user groups to other social network sites

### **Migrants rather than indigenous**

As discussed in chapter one, social network sites were not originally created by young people or for young people to access. According to boyd (2008), the first social network site that young people used was Myspace.com. These young people were known as 'early adopters' and used MySpace to follow bands or older family members. Facebook started as an university network for Harvard students and then allowed membership from other pre-approved universities before extending membership to all universities in America. In September 2005, Facebook extended to include secondary school networks and in 2006, Facebook opened up membership to everyone.

Bebo, launched in 2005, was extremely popular in English speaking countries. In July 2007, Bebo overtook Myspace as the most popular social network site, resulting in Myspace being sold to the Murdoch News Corporation in 2005. Bebo

were sold to America Online (AOL) which resulted in Facebook overtaking Bebo as most popular social network site. (Smith, 2009).

## **The impact of adults in these spaces**

Research suggests that some young people move to further social network sites as these spaces become over-populated with adults, for example, parents (Sorbring and Lundin, 2012; Wiederhold, 2012). According to these authors, the increasing membership of adults can feel like an invasion of their space and an intrusion on their interactions. The autonomy from parental control provides young people with a sense of agency and freedom to interact that is ever more constrained in physical spaces (as discussed in the next section) (Peter et al, 2009). However, other authors, for example, boyd (2008) and Ohler (2010) contend that SNS interactions with certain adults, for example digital youth workers could be welcomed by some young people. The findings of this thesis provides some insights concerning whether this is the case.

### **Lack of concreteness**

These are not physical or geographical spaces, but rather online, virtual spaces. Crowe and Bradford (2006), studying the online gaming world Runescape, found young people use and experience virtual spaces in the same manner as offline spaces. However, the lack of concreteness, combined with lack of ownership or longevity, makes feeling connected or entirely comfortable in the space more difficult. Therefore, could these spaces really claim to adhere to the space becoming place notion?

To summarise, young people overwhelmingly make use of social network sites as spaces. However, they abandon these spaces if they are not content with what is happening within them. Young people view these spaces as similar to other

spaces, but they do not control them and they do not entirely control what happens in them. A key consideration to young people's connectedness is the presence of their offline networks/friends within these spaces.

### **3.4.3. Connections with others**

#### **Continuation of off-line relationships online**

Young people experience online social network sites as spaces where they can interact with friends, family and other connections (Livingstone and Haddon, 2012, boyd, 2008; 2010; Ellison et al, 2007). As discussed above, young people do not view social network sites as new or different interactions, but rather a continuation of off-line interactions and relationships.



### **Provides space during a time of space deficit**

Social network sites provide young people with spaces to interact , at a time when public and private spaces for young people are less available. Due to financial constraints, young people and their families have less expendable income to spend on leisure, meaning that there are fewer spaces where young people can interact with their friends. Combining this with the reduction in universal youth work , this leaves young people with a shortage of spaces to interact positively with others.

Gill (2008) links this deficit in space, and the relating decreased opportunities for socialisation, to an increasingly risk averse society. This is partly due to an increasingly perceived fear of crime against children and young people by strangers in physical spaces. A further reason is the demise of public spaces due to demand for housing. As explored earlier in this chapter, increasingly public spaces for young people to congregate and socialise are positioned on the sidelines of community life. This is as a result of funding cuts, but also community pressure relating to noise levels, the impact of the lights needed in these spaces, for example skate parks, on the neighbours of these spaces and perceived anti social behaviour (Williams, 2011).

### **Space as potential use of power**

Some parents insist on 'friending' their children within these spaces in a bid to 'keep them safe', but also to see what they are getting up to (Madden et al, 2012; Doty and Dworkin, 2014). In this sense social network sites resemble other spaces that young people are frequenting or are keen to call their own. There are efforts to supervise and 'check up' on young people by parents and also

potentially other adults (Doty and Dworkin, 2014; Kanter et al, 2012; Madden et al, 2012). Due to the limited nature of what is observable on social network sites, this supervision can create confusion and conflict between parents and young people (boyd and Marwick, 2011). Wiederhold (2012) and West, Lewis and Currie (2009) asserts that the invasion of parents precedes a decline in connectedness with the relevant social network space. However, other studies, for example, Kanter et al (2012) suggested that whether young people perceive their parents' friending as an invasion into their private space or not depends on the quality of the offline parent-child relationship. How young people perceive their relationships with practitioners therefore might lead to a decline or increase in connectedness if they connect on SNS.

In summary, young people feel connected to spaces through their interactions with their friends within these spaces. They might not feel connected to these spaces all the time but when it is available and at other times others might feel connected to it and attach meaning to it (Bradford, 2012). Young people are able to cultivate interactions with others in these spaces . As social network sites are not geographical spaces, a further criteria has to be met for the space to exist. Castells (2010) developed space as place further by incorporating the impact of globalisation and networks, for example, computer networks and the role of the internet.

### ***3.5. Space of flows***

Due to globalisation and the movement of information, communication and money through networks, rather than physical spaces, Castells coined the phrase 'space of flows'. Accordingly 'the space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows' (Castells, 2010, p.442). This includes the flow of electricity and information through a network like the internet. With the space of flows, the focus is therefore on the sharing of the social practices within a space that is indefinite and removed from a geographical locale. Social network sites are not 'spaces of place' but more akin to 'spaces of flow' due to the need for technology, equipment,, power and the internet. Social network site spaces are homogenous and modelled on a template, and what endows them with meaning are the symbols, signs and interactions that users add to personalise their space within the uniformity offered. This uniformity and equivalence of social network sites is similar to urban semiotics, however, due to the space of flows, the template nature of the space and the transient nature of membership, Castells' notion of non-places are considered more relevant for this thesis to developed the discussion concerning space and place.

### ***3.6. Social network sites as 'non-places'***

Non-places are spaces where people can meet and interact, but they do not have defining features that distinguish them from other similar spaces (Castells, 1996, 1997). Castells describes, as examples, the physical spaces of an airport or shopping mall that are similar across locations. These spaces do not have specific characteristics and can be located almost anywhere. According to Auge (1995) and Castells (1996, 1997) 'non-places' tend to be transient places that people move through as strangers. However, interaction takes place with some of

these strangers - the airport personnel that facilitate the process of air travel and service staff.

I assert that social network site 'templates' can be viewed as 'non-places' facilitated through Castells' space of flows. Connection in these online 'non-places' is facilitated by the flow of information through the internet. Indeed, within this thesis, Castells' (1996) 'space of place', 'non-place' and 'space of flows' provides useful conceptual frameworks to initiate research into young people's online interaction. Social network sites allow young people to transcend their ever-more restricted 'space of place' continue their interaction through the 'space of flows'. Social network sites have opened up a whole new space that young people, like others, can inhabit and customise (Hargittai, 2008; boyd, 2006). It can be seen as a virtual recreational ground where young people can socialise; maintaining interaction but also creating further and new interaction.

### **3.7. Networked publics**

. Users are co-constructing these templates into meaningful places. This is where social network sites deviate from non-places. These uniform templates allow for individualisation and inhabiting by the profile holder and those they 'friend'. Pinch and Bijker (1984) coined social construction of technology and boyd (2008, p. 15) explains that 'the social construction of technology explicitly accepts that technology shapes and is shaped by those who use it and the society in which it is embedded'.

boyd (2008; 2010) suggests the ability to create an audience or public constructs networked publics. boyd (2010, p. 41) contends that 'networked publics are publics that are restructured by networked technologies; they are simultaneously a space and a collection of people'. Therefore, for a networked public, a network or networks facilitated through the space of flows is needed, but also others to connect with. Livingstone (2005), writing from a media background, suggested the term 'public' can be seen as synonymous to audience; however these audiences are not always passive, but rather, they become co-constructors of the profile and this creates to a joint place with shared meaning. This reinforces the notion that it is not only the space that is relevant but also who young people engage and connect with. Networked publics as a term illustrates the connections between individuals that are made possible by the space of flows within online spaces.

On social network sites, a profile is needed in order to view someone else's profile. The profile holder can search for a person's name and if their profile is public, therefore devoid of privacy restrictions, anyone will be able to see what they share. If their profile has any privacy settings applied to it, an acceptance to a friend request will be needed to access the profile. These are all active steps

that need to be taken in order to 'view' and also to 'share' as a member of the 'audience' or 'public'. Social network sites by their very nature encourage interaction and sharing through a number of features. boyd and Ellison (2007) identified the combination of features that make social network sites unique from other forms of computer-mediated-communication.

The starting point of becoming part of the networked public is to create a profile, as discussed above, that can be public, semi-public or private.

This leads to the second defining feature - the friend list. According to boyd (2008; 2010) and others (Lenhart and Madden, 2007) young people, like others, do not only add their nearest friends and family. The majority add those they consider part of their social worlds. boyd (2010) states that when deciding membership to their friend list, they consider more the implications of not accepting someone's friend request than the benefits of 'friending' them. According to boyd (2008; 2010) the most controversial requests are from others who have power over the profile holder, and the examples boyd uses are parents, teachers or line managers. Madden et al (2012) found that sixty six per cent of adults friend their children on SNS. Parents use it to interact with their children or to more passively lurk and observe their children's behaviour on SNS and as a reflection of their offline lives (Doty and Dworking, 2014; Madden et al, 2012). The friend list becomes the audience or public that the user is presenting himself to and interacting with. The use of the term 'friend' to classify the varied participants forming part of the networked public caused concern that it has trivialised the meaning of friendship and how young people perceive and experience it (Amichai-Hamburger et al, 2013). This befriending does not have to be permanent and profile holders can 'unfriend' friends for a variety of reasons (boyd, 2010; Sibona and Walczak, 2011).

The third feature is the various communication tools included. Friends can communicate on the profile's 'wall' if the profile is private but all Facebook users can write on a wall if the profile is set to public. These sites allow users to add status updates - friends can then comment on these updates or 'like' their update or a comment that someone else made on the update. Users do not have to be friends with the other friends on the profile in order to do this, and this strengthens the argument that these sites can be considered networked publics. Social network sites also make possible the creation of groups based around shared interests, and do not necessitate 'friending' group members. Groups allow for interaction around a common theme or interest whilst not revealing the self-representation and disclosure on a profile.. However, joining a group becomes part of the self-presentation as group memberships are listed on the user's profile and visible to friends. Interaction is displayed a constant newsfeed that is updated in real-time (Ellison and boyd, 2013). This creates a sense of being immersed with the experiences and lived, everyday realities of those they friended .

Personal messaging is possible and at the time of interviews these could only happen on profiles and not through groups or pages. These are not broadcast or shared with the rest of the networked public but are fully private.

Therefore, as a networked public, social network sites are the spaces created by the networked technology and also the interaction that is afforded within these spaces where technology, people and their interaction integrate (boyd, 2010). This supports my assertion that due to this 'coming together' of technology and people connectedness is achieved and forefronts the primary importance of spaces as allowing for connections between individuals. boyd (2008; 2010) identified four affordances of networked publics. These are that social network site profiles are searchable, scalable, replicable and persistent. According to Papacharissi and Gibson (2010) share-ability is the fifth affordance of social

network sites as public spaces. I contend that these affordances of social network sites should be considered part of any thought process or preparation before attempting to engage with young people - either sanctioned or unsanctioned.

On social network sites as a networked public, the architecture and design of the templates are geared towards sharing of information and experiences. The default setting for privacy is set to public, and it is up to the individual user to change it so as to define and capture the audience or public that they want to be networked with. Stutzman (2006) confirmed that this links to the inherent sociality of social network publics, and that this default 'sharing' of information accounts for the high levels of self-disclosure within these spaces. What users tend to share about themselves, to what extent and whether they self-enhance or self-verify will be explored in the next chapter but also the relevant findings chapter.

Content in networked publics can be accessed through search. However, searchability does not only refer to searching information that a person posted and searching through their photo albums. It can also play a role in finding someone's geographical location, through for example, school uniform and signs in photographs but more recently also geo-tagging of posts and updates (Ellison and boyd, 2013).

The potential visibility afforded by networked publics is big. However, according to boyd (2010, p.47), 'scalability in networked publics is about the *possibility* of tremendous visibility, not the guarantee of it'. Content on social network sites, like on other online spaces, is duplicable. The concern with this is that what is replicated can also be altered. It becomes difficult to ascertain what the original was and what the duplicate and who are therefore responsible.



Online contributions are automatically recorded and archived. Therefore, content becomes persistent (boyd, 2010). Conversations offline can be considered to be liquid as they flow from the speaker's mouth to the listener's ears and then disappear. However, as part of the networked public, interaction becomes solid and persistent. This is similar to writing a letter or taking a photograph offline. This allows for asynchronous communication to take place on a wall or for users to comment on a status or photograph whenever they want to. This potentially makes context problematic and also exposes participants to misunderstandings when read out of context or at a later date (boyd, 2010).

Harrison and Dourish's (1996, p.67) notion of interaction in online virtual spaces, rooted in the virtual experiences of multi-player synchronous virtual worlds, for example, multi-user dungeons or domains (MUDs) or text-based online virtual reality systems to which multiple users (players) are connected at the same time (MOOs), sums up the concepts of online space and place perfectly - 'Space is the opportunity; place is the understood reality'. Through the literature I assert that social network sites are considered networked publics and therefore the understood reality contends with the affordances and also dynamics that shape them, for example the ability to share online what others have posted, adapt posts and photos and view information and posts out of context and possibly relating to the past. These affordances can all impact on young people and participant connections and therefore need to be contextualised.

### **3.8. Civic courage**

In this thesis, the reasons and motivations for unsanctioned engagement with young people are explored. Innovation, in relation to youth work services, involves exploring the boundaries and what is considered to be professional knowledge and practice (Merton, 2009). Within any exploration of new areas of engagement I assert that trail blazers and explorers are needed in order to cross over into these uncharted territories with only current professional knowledge and practice as a guide.

This is reminiscent of Agnes Heller's (1976) notion of civic courage, of standing up against what authority dictates. Civil courage therefore is an individual act that a person has to take that goes against the grain of what is expected of them. Civil courage involves risk. It involves potentially getting it wrong. Civil courage is therefore closely aligned to civil disobedience. Civil courage is the state of mind that makes it possible to commit a deed of civil disobedience when one does not agree with an unjust law or unjust political system. Civil courage links to the notion of challenging the expected social norms and through this extending how and why we practice in ways that at first thought might have been considered 'under the radar' or unsanctioned.

In an informal conversation at a conference about digital youth work, a youth worker told me that he would continue to add young people to his Facebook profile even if he gets fired for it. He held this very strong position against organisational policy due to this act of civil disobedience being instrumental in saving the life of a young person. Bonhoeffer (1959) in his letters from prison after his plot to murder Hitler wrote that the civic courageous puts the spirit of the law above the letter of the law. He asserts that the civic courageous wants to stay within the confines of the law or return to it as soon as possible but they need to make a difference. The civic courageous risk not knowing the further

consequences. They risk their work/life balance but they do it because they think they have to, to help, support and advise young people.

This adheres to testing out of youth work principles that practitioners adhere to and trail blazing new and different ways to respond to new spaces when policy and guidance is constantly trying to catch up with technology and the networked publics that it creates.

However, as will be discussed, some practitioners 'pushed back' and explored new ways of working with young people by engaging with social network sites. This allows academics, practitioners, managers and policy makers to learn through these experiences, and to incorporate this into what is known about the young person-practitioner relationship and how it is viewed and experienced by young people and practitioners.

### ***3.9. In summary***

Social network sites are new(er) spaces that are similar to geographical spaces in that they provide young people with spaces that can become places through their interactions within these spaces. For space to become place young people need to feel connected to the space that they are interacting in and they must also be able to experience positive interactions with others within these spaces. Research suggests that, to a degree, both these aspects are available to young people on social network sites. Due to the online nature of these spaces, urban semiotics and cultural geography provide a solid foundation to consider these spaces as places.

Research suggests that young people's loyalty is with their friends and if they are unhappy with space, even if it became place for them, and their friends start to leave, that they will leave with them. These points, along with the virtual nature

of these spaces that is reliant on space of flows to create and sustain these spaces, support the reader to consider these spaces as non-places. However, the points made by boyd (2008, 2010) in her research of social network sites suggest that these spaces should be viewed as networked publics, due to the importance placed on interaction and also co-construction within these spaces that is made possible through networks.

The thesis now moves on to explore the development of relationships between young people and practitioners with a focus on how trust develops between client and practitioner.

## **Chapter 4: The significance of trust as part of relationship development in practitioner and young person relationships**

### ***4.1. Introduction***

As mentioned in chapter three, a large number of young people interact on social network sites in order to have adult-free spaces. However, they are followed online by adults, for example, parents and youth work practitioners.

'Under the radar' interaction has implications for trust and trustworthiness for the role players (young people and youth work practitioners), but also for those on the periphery of these interactions - others who are 'friended', those who are not 'friended' and also other youth work practitioners and potentially practitioners from partner organisations.

This chapter focuses on the different approaches to initial impersonal trust development, and then moves on to the approach needed for deeper trust development. This chapter also explores the role of institutional trust, as part of interpersonal trust, in creating a code of conduct to aid the development of trust between young person and youth work practitioner. Due to the limited amount of literature pertaining to trust within youth work, but also in relation to social network site interaction between practitioners and young people, literature will be drawn from the helping professions, for example, counselling (Bratt, 2010), nursing (Witt, 2000), psychology (Lannin and Scott, 2013) and migration studies (Hynes, 2003). These disciplines were drawn on as they involve the development of relationships between clients and practitioners where one participant could be perceived to have power over the other due to the nature of the relationship.

#### ***4.2. Defining trust***

Trust is needed in all types of relationships, whether they are considered personal relationships or professional relationships. Flanagan (2003) suggests that trust is relational and can be between individuals that are either known or unknown to each other, or who might be known to each other through organisations or groups. Flanagan (2003, p. 166) suggests that:

The essence of trust is the belief that others are fair, that they will not take advantage of us, although they could. The latter point is essential to the phenomenon of trust. That is, trust is premised on freedom. Because

the behaviour of others is not under our control, trust is an act of faith, never fully certain.

Conley et al (2011) suggest that trust is based on a person's belief that the other person in the relationship is being honest and open about their past, future and present intentions in a relationship. Golbeck and Hendler (2006, p.501), in their article 'Inferring Trust Relationships in Web-based Social Networks', suggest that 'trust in a person is a commitment to an action based on a belief that the future actions of that person will lead to a good outcome'. This definition has as key points 'commitment' and 'action'. Therefore, in a trusting relationship, the trustor commits to an action based on how they view the other person and their actions. This definition leaves unaddressed the uncertainty that can be involved if the trustor is not certain that the outcome will be positive. The definition that will be drawn on for this chapter states that trust is 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party' (Mayer et al, 1995, p.712). This definition, unlike the others, emphasises three factors particularly relevant to this thesis.

This definition highlights three key characteristics of trust development:

- Vulnerability
- Expectations
- Lack of control

The vulnerability in the definition by Mayer et al (1995, p.712) refers to the willingness to take a risk. Trust is the expectation that the trustee will perform a certain action or task, or engage in interaction that is of value and importance to the trustor, but no guarantee of this exists.

Organisations and individuals aim to manage perceived risk through a variety of different ways, for example, gaining more information, risk assessments and guidance (Gefen et al, 2008). However, when youth work practitioners are interacting with young people on social network sites 'under the radar' a number of risks can be considered, but some risks might not even be known to us yet. Risk taking behaviour by young people in general, but also online, is widely explored in a variety of different topic areas. These include, for example, pornography (Rovolis and Tsaliki, 2012), bullying online (Lampert and Donoso, 2012), sexting (Livingstone and Görzig, 2012), meeting new contacts online (Barbovschi et al, 2012), excessive internet use (Smahel and Blinka, 2012), propensity to online grooming (Whittle et al, 2013), coping and resilience in dealing with online risks (Vandoninck et al, 2012), etc. Potential risks with regard to unsanctioned interaction between young people and youth work practitioners has not been explored as yet.

I argue that vulnerability and risk are not only increased for the young people, but for practitioners as well. The risk and increased vulnerability for both parties is based on the unknown dimensions of the relationship that one engages in, and the intentions of the other party and also of the unknown others. Luhmann (2005) suggests that if there is no risk then there is no need for trust, but rather an expectation or confidence that a certain action will take place. Misztal (1996) clarifies that even though we have a common term for believing in an action or outcome despite the uncertainty, that we do not hold the same expectations towards everyone when we trust them. The trust young people place in practitioners online would therefore be different from the trust they hold towards their peer group, friends or parents. Trust relates to the relationship that is developed. The qualities of the youth work relationship are defined and encapsulated in the National Youth Agency's (NYA, 1999) *Youth Work 'Statement of values and principles'*. It raises the issue of trust by stating that the behaviour of everyone involved with youth work provision must be such that it can provide

the basis of trust between young people and youth workers and, also, trust between the different organisations and services and the parents and young people involved with them. Trust within this statement relates to trust between individuals, but also trust generated between an organisation or organisations and others.

Both parties have expectations of each other within the relationship. These expectations could be based on personal preferences or based on labelling. Labelling suggests that groups or individuals belonging to a certain group or profession will behave in a certain way. Therefore, young people might have the expectation that youth workers are there to help and support them in an informal education manner. Youth worker practitioners might expect that young people who access universal services are there to relax and engage with their friends, and potentially to be involved with some informal education aspects. The expectations that practitioners and young people hold of each other during these interactions are explored in the findings chapters. Whether a trustor trusts another person or organisation or not is influenced by the degree to which the expectations are perceived to be met or not.

According to Giddens (1990) and Fukuyama (1995) trust is negotiated between individuals. Both Giddens (1990) and Fukuyama's (1995) focus on interpersonal trust suggests that trust in the individual representatives of a system, for example the youth service, is needed in order to trust the system. Therefore if young people did not trust individual practitioners they would not trust youth work provision at all. Giddens (1994) labels this as faceless and face work commitments. Face work between individuals is what develops trust, so that individuals can perceive whether they are willing to trust someone or not. Trust is to take a leap of faith (Simmel, 1950) and is based on inferences drawn from past experiences with the hope that in the current situation similar types of results will be achieved. Therefore, if a practitioner provides young people with



advice and support off-line then the inference can be drawn that the practitioner would behave and act in a similar way online. Giddens (1991) therefore states that trust is only needed where there is no certainty, as trust is not needed in a situation of complete knowledge.

Luhmann (1979, p.16) argues that 'one should expect trust to be increasingly in demand as a means of enduring the complexities of the future which technology will generate'. Luhmann (1979) viewed trust as multi-dimensional and as involving individuals but also systems. Trust in individuals according to him relates to trust in the system that they belong to and vice versa. Luhmann's perception of trust is useful in the context of social network site usage between practitioners and young people. For young people and practitioners to connect with each other 'unsanctioned' or against the social norms, trust is needed. Young people might not always be aware of the unsanctioned nature but they still need to trust the individual they connect with and also the system to which the practitioner belongs. Trust is also needed in the social network site in general in order for participants to use it in the first place, in other words for these online spaces to become places for them.

Therefore, Giddens (1990) suggests that people need to trust practitioners first due to face work before they will trust the systems, and Luhmann (1979) suggests that trust in the system combines with expectations of individuals. Therefore, a web of interaction is needed (Lewis and Weigert, 1985). A web of interaction and connection between face work and faceless is needed in order to bridge the divide between interpersonal and institutional. This is so that they can work together rather than potentially against each other. This can be achieved if guidance is carefully thought through, but also shared and disseminated to ensure that a similar approach is taken by all.

Both parties are unable to control how the other person responds or what the other does with the information shared on social network sites, or how they perceive the relationship itself. In a relationship based on trust, full monitoring or control of the interaction and intentions is not possible (Gilson, 2003). As discussed in chapter three, the networked publics nature of social network sites makes all aspects that are posted, duplicable and therefore also alterable and searchable (boyd, 2008; 2010). This does not only relate to words but also to photographs, videos and any other form of posting. This adds to the potential uncertainty and vulnerability created by the interaction between young people and practitioners.

Some approaches to trust weigh up the potential consequences of interactions, and the government, and also organisations, aims to put policies, guidance, codes of conduct and procedures in place that aim to monitor and control relationships between practitioners and young people. This will be further explored in the section on institutional trust. This can be perceived as monitoring and control, and can be viewed as a lack of interpersonal trust, but also as a means to protect young people and practitioners from increased vulnerability, or to clarify the expectations that each party can have of the other from an organisational viewpoint (Babiliute and Krisciunas, 2011).

The different approaches to trust and trust development touch on these different aspects. However, the first three approaches focus on trustor and trustee. I would suggest that both parties play both roles within any youth work practitioner/young person role. However, due to the inherent power imbalance in a practitioner/young person relationship, and also because of the age of young people, the focus is overwhelmingly on the young person as trustor. Trust is needed to overcome the imbalance created by the power dynamic within the relationship (Brien, 1998). For both parties, the above three aspects - vulnerability, expectations and lack of control - lead to an increase in uncertainty

in a relationship as the intentions of the other party are not always clear and hence trust is needed.

### ***4.3. Uncertainty of intentions***

For the reasons given above, this chapter focuses on interpersonal trust, i.e. trust between individuals, but also institutional trust - trust between an organisation and its practitioners or another institution. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, trust in youth work literature is mentioned as important as part of relationship building, but not theoretically explored, and this thesis aims to explore trust theory and literature relating to this topic area. In youth work literature, when mention is made of trust, it is mostly in the context of information sharing and safeguarding (Great Britain, DCSF, 2009a) or as a general part of the youth work relationship without full unpacking of what trust is and what it relates to (Davies, 2010; Davies and Merton, 2009).

Anthony et al (2010), in *'Internet Exchange and Forms of Trust'*, suggest that any social interaction that increases uncertainty is viewed as a problem for trust. Due to the unexplored nature of unsanctioned social network site interactions uncertainty is increased. As uncertainty increases in a relationship, the vulnerability of the participants also increases. As set out in Mayer et al's (1995) definition, a degree of risk is always involved in trust due to the uncertainty involved in the act of trust. This begs the question - what types of uncertainty are involved with interaction between practitioners and young people on social network sites? Due to the networked publics and social nature of social network sites, and the potential nature of relationships between young people and practitioner's, I argue that uncertainty could be explored in terms of:

- Intentions of the practitioner

- Intentions of the young person
- Intentions (if any) of the invisible audience
- The potential impact of the interaction on others - young people, practitioners, etc.
- Whether this practice is perceived to be allowed or not and in what form
- Long term consequences of this type of relationship

As not much is known about the above points, and because uncertainty and intentions are crucial aspects of trust, the impact of these will be explored within the relevant findings chapters.

#### ***4.4. The development of trust***

Tunstall and Allnock, (2007) confirmed that trust is needed in order for a young person to feel able to share information or experiences with a practitioner. Trust is therefore a key component of the young person and practitioner relationship. However, during unsanctioned interaction, a trusting relationship encapsulates much more than this, because of the nature of the interaction, the uncertainty of the intentions of both parties, as well as the potential involvement of the invisible audience.

#### ***4.5. Approaches to trust development in a helping relationship***

In a literature review regarding developing a trusting, helping relationship with clients in the field of social work, psychotherapy, nursing and medicine, Behnia (2008) explored three different approaches to trust development. Each of these approaches focuses on a different aspect of the relationship:

- The trusting nature of the trustor
- The professional's trusting characteristics or trustworthiness (as they are perceived by the client)
- Characteristics inherent in the relationship between client and practitioner

Behnia (2008) suggests that the trust described by these three approaches refers to the initial trust that develops, but that more is needed to develop deeper trust in order for a client to feel that they can comfortably disclose information that can be of greater significance in the relationship. He proposes that a social interactionist approach to trust development is necessary to develop deeper trust. Within this approach the complex interactional process in which the client and practitioner find themselves and the meaning they attach to the interaction would be considered.

Initial trust is needed for a young person to even consider accessing a space where youth work is taking place. This initial trust can be born out of the need for somewhere to go in order to interact with their friends. The mostly voluntary nature of engagement in universal services makes initial trust in a space and service easier as the young person knows that they can withdraw their interaction at any time (Davies, 2005). As initial trust is so important in order to develop professional relationships with young people, this chapter explores the three approaches to initial trust building that Behnia recognised in his literature review, before moving on to the further approach needed to develop deeper trust.

#### **4.5.1. Dispositional based approach to trust**

The dispositional based approach to trust focuses on a person's ability to trust others. According to this approach, people can be grouped into 'high trustors' and 'low trustors' (Heirman et al, 2013). A criticism of this approach is that it assumes that an individual will always be more likely or less likely to trust based on a variety of factors, for example the quality of the attachments they formed during infancy. Raghallaigh (2013) refers to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, which proposes that during infancy children either develop a predisposition to trust or mistrust depending on the experiences they have at this life stage. This also links with Bowlby's (1965) attachment theory discussed earlier in this chapter. It is widely recognised, however, that trust and mistrust can develop during further life stages as well. Therefore, I would suggest that grouping into 'high trustors' and 'low trustors' might be too simplistic. A person can leave infancy with a high rate of trust, but due to further life events, either a single traumatic event or prolonged exposure a tendency to mistrust can develop (Santrock, 2002). However, trust is also not only dependent on the propensity to trust or not but is also dependent on the situation:

Trust is also situation-specific; trust in one environment doesn't directly transfer to another environment. So a notion of context is necessary. Despite this situational nature, there's some agreement on a dispositional aspect of trust as a measure of your propensity to believe in others' trustworthiness (Cahill et al, 2003, p.53).

### **Social trust**

According to Behnia (2008) social trust is a version of dispositional based trust. As a result of the predisposition to trust or not, trust is not individualised, but rather incorporates a whole social group or context. He draws on Messick and Kramer (2001) and Tyler (2001) for this assertion. With regard to 'under the radar' interaction, this raises the concern that a young person might friend a youth work practitioner to their profile based, not on their own propensity to

trust or not, or the trustworthiness of the practitioner, but rather through social identity with the rest of the youth group participants that added the practitioner. Hynes (2003), in her study on refugees, explored social trust with regard to refugees' propensity to trust someone because the group as a whole trusts them, rather than on an individual basis.

Universal youth work provision is focussed on group interaction in youth clubs and centres. I suggest that this could lead to social trust development, as it refers to the process whereby people trust that others that are part of the same group, organisation or society will behave in a positive or caring manner towards them due to the shared experience or opportunity (Zucker, 1986; Tyler, 2001). Hardin (2002, p.19) suggests that 'shared interests make for the reliability of the trusted'. Social trust therefore stems from being able to relate to someone else. Young people can relate to their friends at the youth club and also to the practitioner if the boundaries mentioned earlier were reduced, as this enables open conversations that are able to facilitate the exploring of shared interests.

A young person in a friendship group with high trust, might friend a youth work practitioner; not because the practitioner can be considered to be trustworthy, but based on social trust and a propensity to copy what others do. As social trust is not based on the trustworthiness of the trustee this can cause young people to friend adults or practitioners that they might not have considered to engage with online.

The dispositional based approach to trust, including social trust, increases the vulnerability of young people. Vandoninck et al (2012) identified that young people who were more vulnerable offline, tended to be more vulnerable online. Livingstone and Haddon (2012) reported on the vulnerability hypothesis employed during the European Union, *EU Kids Online* project. They suggested that vulnerability could be contextualised as both demographic factors, for

example, age and gender, but also psychological factors, for example emotional problems, self-efficacy and also the propensity to take risks or not. High trust can therefore equate to high vulnerability, and, as youth work practitioners assist young people, especially the more vulnerable young people in their transition from childhood to adulthood, they are potentially very aware of young people's individual levels of vulnerability.

However, these 'shared interests' might not be the only interest of the practitioner interacting with young people 'under the radar' (leading to increased risk and vulnerability, especially where the young people might be 'high trustors'). In summary, the dispositional based approach to trust only identifies one aspect to be considered when deciding to trust someone or not. The next section identifies a further approach to trust development that does not focus on the trustor, but rather the trustee.

#### **4.5.2. Credibility based approach to trust**

The credibility based approach to trust refers to the individual characteristics of the practitioner or the person that the trustor is deciding to trust or not. This is interpersonal trust, as it is based on the individual characteristics of the trustee and not on a social group or organisation. According to Hardin (2001), characteristics make a person trustworthy, rather than the propensity of the trustor to trust or not. Therefore, in order for a person to be trusted by another, they need to be considered to be trustworthy. Certain characteristics are seen as increasing trustworthiness and other characteristics as decreasing trustworthiness. According to Behnia's (2008) literature review, numerous studies set out to identify trustworthy characteristics. These characteristics mostly relate to personality traits of the trustee and incorporate, for example, openness, non-judgemental, warmth, goodwill, interest, friendliness and



reliability (Jarrett et al, 2009; Blomqvist and Stahle, 2004; Mishra, 1996). Crimmens et al (2004) found that with street-based youth work (detached and outreach work) longevity in a project provides a practitioner with the opportunity to become known to young people which increases the trustworthiness of the practitioner. However, these studies did not identify 'how much' of each of these characteristics is needed, and in what measure each is needed in order to develop trust.

According to young people accessing youth work provision, these are also some of the characteristics that draw them to certain youth work practitioners and not to others (Davies and Merton, 2009). Young people are drawn to the practitioners who adhere to young person led services, and who are focussed on the young person (Spence and Devanney, 2013). This was evident through practitioner interaction with young people in the inquiry by Davies and Merton (2009), but also how practitioners responded to the verbalised and non-verbalised needs, issues and aspects that are important to young people. A practitioner in the inquiry showcased his trustworthy characteristics by making statements that suggested that he listened and was attentive to the needs of the young people. He suggested that: 'You pick up the mood ... when a comment is personal' (Davies and Merton, 2009, p.15). Some of the young people echoed this from their perspective and shared that: 'Youth workers get to know you', 'go out of their way to help you' and they 'treat you as an individual'. Youth workers are 'friendly' and they don't talk down to you like a teacher' (Spence and Devanney, 2013, p.77).

Research within health care settings had similar findings - Haiat et al (2003), for example, found that children in a health care setting are more willing to trust practitioners that play with them than those who don't. The reason for this is that playing with a child shows the child that the practitioner is not only interested in their medical condition, but in the child itself. Eriksson and Nillson's

(2007, p.2356) study with district nurses highlighted the importance of communicating beyond the initial reason for interaction with the patient: 'I try to listen to what they tell me. It may be about a sick spouse at home or they have a sore knee or something. Even if I cannot do anything about it and it is not relevant to the visit, I listen to them anyway (IP 6)'.

In answer to the question 'What is distinctive to youth work?', the responses received by Davies and Merton (2009, p.17) focussed on the relationship with young people. One practitioner responded that: 'You have to win their trust' (p. 17). Some young people echoed this: 'J... helps us and we trust her. She's funny but she can be strict and serious too...'

These characteristics can lead to the formation of a strong bond between trustor and trustee, which can lead to the exclusion of others that might have other beneficial characteristics and resources that they could contribute in a relationship (Babiliute and Krisciunas, 2011). Some trustors might rate some of these characteristics higher than others, for example, friendliness, that initially might be identified through gregariousness, which could mean that the quieter practitioner, that might be friendly, reliable, full of goodwill and warmth when you get to know them, might be excluded where the credibility based approach is used for initial trust development.

This raises questions about to what extent this happens when young people and youth work practitioners friend each other on a social network site? Do some practitioners get excluded from being 'friended' online by young people due to the lack of attractiveness of their trustworthy personality traits?

The acceptance of these trustworthy characteristics is not universal. Young people will and do disagree on the trustworthiness of others, based on their own background, experiences and disposition to trust or not. One can also start out

trusting a person, but depending on the circumstances and after obtaining more information about the person with regard to their capability and reliability, it can lead to diminishing of trust or mistrust (Anthony et al, 2010).

#### **4.5.3. The relationship based approach to trust**

The relationship based approach to trust in literature refers to the value of the relationship rather than on the characteristics of the trustor or trustee. According to this approach, there is something in the nature of the relationship that will act as a deterrent or a motivation to both the trustee and the trustor to partake or not in the relationship. Therefore both parties make a rational choice concerning engagement. According to Hardin (2003), the trustor is able to trust the trustee as it is in the trustee's best interest to behave in a co-operative manner with regards to the mutual relationship. For example, if a youth work practitioner disappoints or over-steps the expectations of the young person in relation to the relationship, the young person could share this with other young people and other practitioners which could damage the professional reputation of the practitioner. Potential damage to a professional reputation can act as a deterrent to breaching trust.

Best interest can be based on two different approaches; firstly the deterrence based approach which has as its aim the avoidance of certain negative outcomes. In this case the trustee will not break the trust of the trustor, as the threat of sanctions is bigger than the positives to be gained from a breach of trust (Shapiro *et al.*, 1992). The second approach is broader and relates to the acknowledgement of the role of sanctions, but also incentives to encourage trusting behaviour. For this approach to be effective the trustee needs access to something that will be of value or importance to the trustor (Rousseau *et al.*, 1998; Nooteboom and Six, 2003).

For the development of initial trust in youth work provision, this creates a rejuvenated relevance for the different categories of youth work activities. According to Ingram and Harris (2001), catching activities are instrumental in accessing young people. These are the activities that motivate young people to access universal youth work provision, and to initiate contact with youth work practitioners, for example, pizza evenings, sporting events and discos. Holding activities are the ones that will encourage the young person to come back to the setting, as these will be activities of value or interest to the young person, and will therefore act as an incentive or motivator, for example, a pool table, free internet access, a place to hang out with friends and a cheap snack bar. These catching and holding activities play a key part in developing initial trust through providing a friendly environment, to meet, connect with and start to develop relationships with practitioners. Initial trust can then develop further to allow for deeper discussions and eventual helping and support (Trojan and Yonge, 1993).

### **Criticism against these approaches to initial trust development**

The relationship-based approach to trust development has been criticised, as, in line with rational choice, the nature of the relationship developed might not be based on trust, but rather on the value of the incentive or the fear or dislike of the sanction. From a youth work perspective, some young people will access youth work facilities not because they trust or even like the practitioner, but because the pool table or access to other resources are a stronger motivator than not attending. Young people might perceive entry to youth club and the use of the facilities as cheaper than the nearest alternative, and as better than staying home or hanging around on the streets or other recreational spaces.

These three approaches focus on different individual aspects of developing trust. However, the development of deeper trust can't be accounted for by only one approach in isolation. A combination of these approaches is needed in order to develop trust within relationships. A person can surely be a medium trustor or a high trustor in some instances, and a low trustor in others. Also, a person can have some trustworthy characteristics that are relevant for some situations but not for others. Rational choice also does not necessarily necessitate trust, but rather an incentive to be gained or a sanction to be avoided. These different approaches in isolation or together can account for the development of initial trust. However, Behnia (2008) suggests that a further approach is needed to develop deeper trust.

#### **4.5.4. Symbolic interactionist approach to trust**

Behnia's (2004; 2008) further approach to allow for initial trust to develop into the much needed deeper trust relies on symbolic interactionism and the meaning created by the role players during interaction, so called interactional cues. Behnia (2004; 2008) suggests that the trustor will collect interactional cues during the interaction based on three aspects:

- How they perceive themselves within the interaction - their self-concept.
- How they think the practitioner perceives them.
- Their interpretation of the practitioner which links back to the trustworthiness of the practitioner - warm, caring, competent, friendly, etc).

Behnia (2004) identifies role-taking and role-making behaviour within this approach. These are the everyday behaviours that practitioners are expected to display, and that allow for the creation of appropriate responses. According to this, practitioners and young people will know the accepted rules of engagement, for example, 'to be friendly, but never a friend' to a young person. Both parties have different roles to play, and the identification with these roles aids the development of further trust. Within youth work practice, one can engage with existing social and professional norms (the way we do things around here) in order to formulate an appropriate youth work response and interaction. However, in a time of flux and change what is considered 'social norms' can be impacted on and be unclear. Within youth work provision, social norms could have been considered to be in a state of flux, not only the interaction of young people on social network sites, but also due to the changes in government priorities, funding and the resultant restructure.

As youth work is not a practice in isolation, involving only practitioner and young person, but is impacted on by government direction and other outside influences, a further dimension and approach to trust is needed.

#### ***4.6. The role of institutional trust***

Institutional trust refers to the trust that an organisation and its regulating body places in employees and the safeguards that it utilizes to ensure this trust is adhered to (Bachmann and Inkpen, 2011). The advent of technology and its increased use by young people has created a struggle between adults and young people with regards to agency - the free will of young people to take part in what they want, where they want - and structure, the relationships and institutions that strive to negate what young people are involved in. As discussed in chapter one, young people are seen as at risk and vulnerable, and the media has further portrayed this image through the spread of moral panic and fear with regard to the safety of young people online (Green and Hannon, 2007; boyd, 2008; Byron, 2008). This fear, uncertainty and lack of control has been reflected by laws, policies and guidance relevant for practitioners.

Children and Young People's Services guidance is seemingly clear with regard to interaction between practitioners and young people on the internet in general: *The Guidance for Safer working Practices* (2009b) states that practitioners should be cautious with their communication with young people, including communication via the internet as this can lead to disciplinary or even criminal investigations if they fall outside agreed guidance and policy (Great Britain, DCSF, 2009b). Practitioners interacting outside of agreed guidance and policy also increases the potential vulnerability of young people and their friends on social network sites, as their motivation is unclear.

With social network sites this interaction can be even more problematic, as the young people and others they friended online are able to upload photographs and material, which as discussed in chapter three, are searchable, replicable, scalable and persistent. Others, as part of the networked public, can therefore download this material and adapt it or find inappropriate content and images featuring young people displayed on their internet devices through the newsfeed function. I suggest that this could create the potential for an argument to be made that a friended practitioner were in possession of potentially inappropriate content and photographs if these were shared by young people or young people's co-constructors on their profiles. The five affordances of social network sites create opportunities for content and context to overlap or be confused with situations referred to within the *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2010) guidance. For example:

11.96 There is some evidence that people found in possession of indecent photographs/ pseudo photographs of children are likely to be involved directly in child abuse. Thus, when somebody is discovered to have placed or accessed such material on the internet the police should normally consider the likelihood that the individual is involved in the active abuse of children. In particular, the individual's access to children should be established, within the family, employment contexts and in other settings (for example, work with children as a volunteer or in other positions of trust) (Great Britain, DCSF, 2010).

Guidance like the above, as well as policies and codes of conduct, provide youth work practitioners, but also institutions, with guidance and direction to steer practice and relationships in a direction deemed appropriate by the organisation (Melvin, 2013).

Despite the above, one of the few reasons practitioners have shared in previous research for using social network sites, unsanctioned, is because policies and guidance are considered too restrictive and are creating barriers to effective online engagement (Melvin, 2013; Davies and Cranston, 2008). Policy makers



and organisations seemed to be erring on the side of caution rather than embracing online technology, for example SNS, as tools for alternative engagement. According to Green and Hannon (2007, p. 15):

The current generation of decision- makers - from politicians to teachers - see the world from a very different perspective to the generation of young people who do not remember life without the instant answers of the internet or the immediate communication of mobile phones. It is these decision-makers who shape the way that digital technologies are used in the system and who set them up to limit their use and role in everyday life.

Policy and guidance, as vehicles of institutional trust, can therefore lack behind the innovations and changes in the practice environment as discussed in both this and the previous chapter. The exploration of new spaces as areas to engage with young people, civic courage as well as interpersonal trust development and the slow evolution and sharing of institutional trust created conditions for 'under the radar' practice to take place. These aspects created the conditions for boundaries that are increasingly perforated and ambiguous. The impact on boundaries is discussed as the final part of the over-arching themes in the next chapter.

Institutional trust can safeguard inter-personal trust (Gilson, 2003). I suggest that this is because the guidance and codes of conduct define the perimeters of the relationships that practitioners are sanctioned to develop with young people. This allows practitioners to know what is expected of them but also for young people to know what they can expect from the practitioner. According to Bachmann and Inkpen (2011), this safeguard comes in the form of 'taken for granted' knowledge that is shared by all the practitioners in the organisation. It is included in the code of conduct of the organisation, the professional ethics of the profession and the relevant laws and government guidance. However, I argue that this is not always the case as during a period of organisational change, as

experienced in the youth service provision in England, and the new roles that this resulted in, this 'taken for granted' knowledge can be severely altered, misconstrued but also lost. However, the vehicles of institutional trust can also survive through, for example, the majority of practitioners within a setting being from a particular background. This slows down the distillation of the messages contained within institutional trust due to the slow changing nature of organisational culture (Hill and Lynn Jr., 2009).

#### ***4.7. Trust, privacy and technology***

Social network sites encourage open sharing of information. The default privacy settings are public rather than private. Privacy relates to who is able to view what, but also crucially what they are able to do with the information that they view. O'Neill (2012) suggests that trust in relation to the internet has been linked to increasing confidence in the safety of children online. However, as suggested by Luhmann (1979) where you have confidence, trust is not needed. Trust is needed where absolute confidence or certainty is lacking. Adults' perspectives on trust and privacy online suggest that due to the perceived risks associated because of young people's age, trust in the system is needed as adults' connection or interacting with young people online cannot be trusted.

The European Commission identified numerous considerations in order to ensure that trust is increased online. The focus used to be on commerce online but increasingly it is also focussing on communication systems online. With the increase in the use of social network sites by young people the focus of trust is on relationships between people (Dutton and Shepherd, 2003). Trust is equated to privacy and security of data online. If a young person under thirteen creates a Facebook profile the default privacy setting for them is private. They then need to opt to make their profile public or semi-public.

This thesis is not an exploration of privacy and safety but there are concerns about trust coming from all participants as they are concerned about their privacy. What others can view about them but also what others can contribute and how that will impact on what the other role player within the youth work-young person relationship thinks of them. Therefore the trust that participants place in each other impacts on their privacy both offline and online.

boyd and Marwick (2011) suggest that privacy is a social construct that is open to interpretation. Pew Internet Research conducted by Hampton et al (2011) found that there was no difference between the privacy setting usage between young people and adults. Young people were just as likely as adults to set their privacy settings, to either private, semi-private or to keep it public. The structure of SNS itself also encourages public and sharing rather than private (Papacharissi and Gibson, 2010). boyd (2008) suggested that young people view this socially constructed concept of privacy differently from adults. Young people overwhelmingly use social network sites to connect with known friends and friends of friends. For this reason they feel that the information they disclose are already known to the majority of people on their profile either because they know them, for example, what school they attend, or because they were part of the situation being shared. Others in the networked public are also co-constructors therefore these are considered shared experiences and therefore public.

However, audiences and co-constructors overlap and also collide on social network sites and not all messages are intended for all of the networked publics. Young people suggest that the way they write and word posts indicates who it is for (boyd, 2008). Therefore they do not want people to comment on a status update for instance that does not concern them. Due to the 'taking the offline

online' nature of social network sites, contexts becomes collapsed and the entire networked public have access to the information shared. Privacy therefore does not only relate to what is shared on SNS but also what should be responded to, by whom and in what manner. When friending practitioners young people run the risk that they might not know about or understand young people's social construction of privacy and might breach these social norms and respond on posts that do not concern them.

Additionally, young people realise that the structural tools for privacy are not foolproof as people access accounts and information through other means - reading over shoulders, through accessing someone else's account, etc. For this reason some might create more than one account or speak in code, this is known as 'social steganography' (boyd and Marwick, 2011). Young people suggest that just because a message is public online does not mean they want others to access it. Young people therefore aim to limit access to meaning rather than limiting access to content. Young people are not trying to be public but they are trying to be in the public.

Trusting a person enough to friend them online therefore allows them into the networked space and opens up the boundaries that young people set between that which is private and that which is public. For young people privacy does not only relate to access to information or not - it is more subtle than that, privacy is also about control over how information flows, or, in other words, control over the social situation (boyd and Marwick, 2011)

#### ***4.8. In summary***

Trust, as a term, is often used but never fully explored in youth work literature. This chapter drew on material from counselling, nursing, social work and other related fields to explore the nature of trust development within a youth work relationship. The literature explores different approaches to developing trust. The three approaches to initial trust development focus on different aspects. Firstly, the dispositional based approach to trust focuses on the propensity of someone to be trusting or not. The credibility based approach to trust focuses on the trustee's 'trustworthy' characteristics. The relationship based approach to trust is based on the rational choices that trustor and trustee make in a relationship based on the benefits to be gained from a relationship, or to avoid or deter certain negative outcomes.

However, these approaches can be criticised for being too simplistic and ignoring other factors that are needed to develop deeper trust. After initial trust development, Behnia suggested that the social interactionist approach to trust development takes into account different aspects in the process of negotiating the relationship. For example, how the trustor thinks the trustee perceives them, the trustworthy characteristics of the trustee combined with the expected behaviours from both parties.

Lastly, the role of institutional trust was explored in enabling the development of a professional relationship between young people and practitioners. It is important to have a working knowledge and understanding of the different approaches to trust in order to grasp the nature and relevance of the developing relationships in order to formulate appropriate, informed practice and policy decisions.

Trust between trustees and trustors, as well as between practitioners and their organisation or the government, provides confidence that boundaries will be maintained and adhered to. Boundaries within practitioner and young people relationships in general are crucial. How practitioners that connect with young people unsanctioned through social network sites interpret and maintain boundaries provides a fresh impetus within the profession to explore boundary theory and management. This thesis therefore explores the literature with regard to boundary management within youth work practice in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Boundaries in youth work practice as impacted on by unsanctioned social network site interaction**

'So conflict of interest is a bit of a way of life for us, and we need keen ethical sensibility, and sometimes a kick in the pants from our colleagues, to keep our practice clean' (Sercombe, 2007, p.15).

### ***5.1. Introduction***

Maintaining boundaries is important in working with young people. However, it is not always straightforward to identify and navigate boundaries within youth work in general, or with 'under the radar' interaction on social network sites. This chapter aims to define boundaries and the role of boundaries in youth work. Who sets boundaries and why they are set is discussed. How practitioners aim to manage their boundaries on social network sites with line managers, co-workers and young people is a focal point of this chapter.

For boundaries between employers and employees, the most significant area of research is Business and Management Studies. For boundaries between practitioner and client, the prevalent areas of research and literature are the Human Services, with a strong focus on social work, counselling and the health professions (Fronck et al, 2009). Youth work as a profession draws heavily on especially social work and counselling fields for knowledge and skills with regard to personal and professional boundaries and the concepts of values and ethics as they pertain to practice.

According to Facebook's Chief Privacy Officer, only 20 per cent of Facebook users set their privacy settings in order to differentiate between different audiences (Stross, 2009). Donath and boyd (2004) suggested that even though people can divide and segregate their audiences and activities and the people who are part of these in their day to day lives, people are less likely to do this online. Maintaining and strengthening social capital has never been easier or quicker to achieve, however I argue that for youth work practitioners, this has created a further space to maintain boundaries in.

## ***5.2. Defining boundaries***

According to Cooper (2012b, p. 11):

professional boundaries are a set of guidelines, expectations and rules which set the ethical and technical standards in the social care environment. They set limits for safe, acceptable and effective behaviour by workers.

Roberts (2009) suggests that boundaries are dividing lines that demarcate what is acceptable and what is unacceptable within a professional youth work relationship.

Pawlukewicz and Ondrus' (2013) study found that human services students were able to identify boundary issues within the classroom, but when out in practice environments they found it much more challenging. This is due to the nuances and the need for snapshot decisions in practice without always having the time to consult someone or to reflect on the issue, as is possible in the classroom. According to Pawlukewicz and Ondrus' (2013) study, boundary training and discussion took place in the classroom but are not further explored or developed



after completion. This made the assumption that practitioners and managers were able to navigate the 'complex, ambiguous and potentially harmful situations' that they encounter in practice (Fronek et al, 2009, p.162). The extent to which this is true within unsanctioned interaction is discussed in chapter eight.

Boundaries espouse to provide practitioners with the security of knowing safe limits for practice - safe for both the practitioner and the young person - through making clear what is acceptable and what not, in order to be effective within practice (Welfel, 2002; Cooper, 2012b, NYA, 1999; Roberts, 2009). However, Fronek et al, (2009, p. 161) states that 'professional boundaries, often imprecise and nebulous, define appropriate professional-client relationships'. Boundaries therefore are guidelines to be followed on a path to safe practice, but do not always clearly set out the demarcation line. This position is confirmed by referring to the professional and practice principles of youth work that refers to maintaining of boundaries.

A 'professional principle' of youth work is the need for practitioners to recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life. This is formulated by the NYA (1999, p. 6):

Practice principles include:

- Recognising the tensions between developing supportive and caring relationships with young people and the need to maintain an appropriate professional distance
- Taking care not to develop close personal, particularly sexual, relationships with the young people that they are working with as this may be against the law, exploitative or result in preferential treatment. If such a relationship does develop, the youth worker concerned should report this to the line manager to decide on appropriate action
- Not engaging in work-related activities for personal gain, or accepting gifts or favours from young people or local people that may compromise the professional integrity of the work
- Taking care that behaviour outside the work does not undermine the confidence of young people and the public in youth work.

I argue that youth work professional and practice principles, as well as the current literature on boundary management in youth work, only provide half a story - no mention is made of the boundaries that young people might want to maintain within their relationships with practitioners.

Boundaries in youth work practice are necessary not only to safeguard young people, but also to keep practitioners and volunteers safe and effective within their practice. Keeping practitioners safe and effective within practice refers to any situation or instance that can bring youth work into disrepute. Roberts (2009) focuses on the management of funding and finances, sexual and intimate relationships with young people, as well as the potential abuse of power by a practitioner within the relationship. The incentives that a practitioner, for example, could gain within the relationship based approach to trust, could lead to the abuse of the power differential that exists within the young person-practitioner relationship. Boundaries aim to curtail the potential for abuse of trust within the young person and practitioner relationship.

Sercombe (2007) suggested that the young person/youth worker relationship is intentionally limited or constrained in order to 'create conditions of safety within which a client can make themselves vulnerable' (Koehn, 1994 cited in Sercombe, 2007, p. 13). This follows on from the necessity of young people being able to trust practitioners, in order to develop the deeper trust needed for young people to open up, and share information, deeper feelings and thoughts with youth work practitioners.

Professional boundaries are encased within the relevant code of conduct of a profession, and could also be included in organisational policies and guidance. Where a new area of work or new way of working is involved, these boundaries might only be formulated after practice has started. Boundaries, therefore, are encapsulated within the institutional trust that exists between practitioner and

the organisation that they work for, as well as placed in them by the professional bodies that regulate a profession.

As discussed in the literature chapter on space and place, youth work as a profession aims to work with young people in new ways and in new spaces, and this creates tension with regard to walking the tightrope of boundary management. However, working in new ways in new spaces necessitates clarification of boundaries. The rate at which guidance is developed and updated to reflect changes in online spaces and also how this is shared needs to be reconsidered and thought through for the new environment. The vagueness of boundaries leaves practitioners vulnerable and open to being misconstrued in their actions and motivations.

Boundaries refer not only to what practitioners do, but also where they do it, when, with what resources and also with whom. Sawyer and Prescott (2011) stated that boundaries do not only refer to the structural dimensions of a working relationship, but also include the interpersonal dimensions of the relationship between the client and the professional. I contend that boundaries, therefore, do not only impact on the structural social capital, i.e. who is interacting with who, but also on the relational social capital, i.e. what is shared, why and how it is being shared (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). It is therefore not only structural social capital, but also what is shared and in what manner this is done and why, that will be explored. I contend that in the youth work profession, building based, detached and outreach work, and online space, the 'where' this happens should also be part of relational social capital.

At this stage it remains to be seen if and how youth work professional and practice principles, and ethics, has impacted on how practitioners and young people prefer to portray themselves online and interact with each other online.

### **5.3. Permeability**

The issue of boundaries and safe permeability was illustrated in a study by Ofcom (2008) through interviews with young people and adults. The study found that some adolescent girls and young women were posting 'sexually suggestive' photographs of themselves on their profiles. In this study, users of all ages commented on these photographs. Some respondents suggested that the photographs made them see the young women in a negative light. The study found that how these young women were perceived online was creating a similar perception of them offline (Ofcom, 2008). This study illustrated that what happens online also impacts on perceptions offline.

However, a further concern this study highlighted is the issue of permeability. A practitioner might have friended some of these young women online. Does this create a tension in the management of boundaries and expectations? Would this situation create a 'duty of care' for the practitioner (Davies and Cranston, 2008a) to 'investigate' and to contact the young people in question? Would a situation like this necessitate the practitioner to go through all the photographs that the young person has ever posted on SNS? Or even look through albums of friends that the practitioner is not friends with, but who have 'tagged' the young person in question? Do they have to make 'copies' of the photographs to provide evidence? Arguably due to the networked public nature of social network sites, boundaries have become ever more complex to anticipate but also manage. This is because the relationship on social network sites does not only include the practitioner and a young person, but additional audiences who are also co-constructors of the space and interaction. This is further complicated by the accessibility of these spaces. In the NYA research, 81 per cent of respondents said that web filters are used in their work settings which make it impossible to access SNS (Davies and Cranston, 2008a). If these web-filters are used at work, it

remains unclear where it leaves the practitioner who goes elsewhere to interact with young people through SNS?

Therefore, I argue that this practitioner might come into contact with photographs and/or written content that can put them at risk of suspicion of an inappropriate relationship, or attempting to foster an inappropriate relationship. If a practitioner friended a young person and these photographs came through their news feed, how does one distinguish the personal and professional boundaries if the practitioner was sitting at home with a glass of wine, or accessing it through their mobile phone or tablet, anytime or anywhere? To what extent the *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2010) guidance discussed in chapter four was relevant needs to be considered.

However, permeability of information shared by young people is not the only concern, but also the nature and permeability of information shared by practitioners. What practitioners and young people disclose about themselves online and how they do this are key considerations within boundary management

#### **5.4. Self-disclosure**

The nature and extent of self-disclosure is a key facet of online boundary management. Zur (2008), in his article 'The Google factor', explains that self-disclosure is sharing of information with a client that is personal rather than professional in nature (Farber, 2006; Zur, 2007).

Self disclosure can be divided into self-enhancing or self-verifying. Self enhancement refers to the practice of only sharing information on a profile that portrays a profile holder and their life in a positive light. Self verification means

that the profile holder shares everything, rather than filtering the content to avoid portraying themselves or their lives in a negative light. Enli and Thumim (2012) referred to self-verification as 'sharing practice' and the desire of a person to share whatever they want to on social network sites. This supports Ledbetter et al's (2011) assertion that the very nature of social network sites encourages profile holders to share personal information, for example hobbies, relationship status, interests, thoughts, etc. as this strengthens the networked publics and encourages others to self-disclose as well. This position reinforces the notion that young people are more likely to self-verify on social network sites, due to their interactions with mostly known others (boyd, 2008; Bryce and Fraser, 2014).

Zur (2008) and Zur et al (2009) suggested that there are different forms of self-disclosure:

- Deliberate self-disclosure can be either self-revealing or self-involving. Self-revealing is where the practitioner, for example, puts a family photograph on their desk. Self-involving is where the practitioner (therapist in this case) shares a personal reaction with the client. This is a personal reaction to the client and/or the setting.
- Unavoidable self-disclosure reveals the facts that are already known, for example, race, age, gender, marital status (through the wearing of a ring, perhaps) This will also include social context cues and body language that include the verbal and non-verbal utterances and behaviours of the therapist.
- Accidental self-disclosure is where the therapist did not intend to self-disclose, but the client witnesses an interaction between them and their family, or the therapist accidentally gives a less guarded response that reveals their personal opinion.

- Forced transparency takes place in situations where practitioners have multiple relationships with a client that transcends into the setting.
- Inappropriate or counter-clinical self-disclosure is where the therapist shares information with the client about their own lives and situations that can put a burden on the client.

When interacting with young people on social network sites, all these different forms of self-disclosure are possible and can have an impact on the practitioner/young person relationship.

A further form of self-disclosure relevant for boundaries within youth work and social network sites, is the deliberate online searching by clients for information concerning their practitioners (Zur, 2008; Zur et al, 2009). Practitioners themselves aren't directly part of this self-disclosure and might be firmly upholding the principles regarding personal and professional boundaries. However, they might not have given thought and active practical consideration concerning their overall online presence, their overall self-disclosure and also what others might disclose about them as part of the networked publics nature of these spaces. Therefore, practitioners should not only focus on their own disclosure and privacy settings online but also realise the consequences of any offline behaviour due to the affordances of social network sites that leads to a loss of control of any situation that was shared with another that has an online presence.

I suggest that a flaw in this literature on self disclosure within a practitioner and client relationship is that the research did not consider the disclosure of the client, and how and why the practitioner might want to access and use the information. The extent to which, for example, practitioners might search for information concerning young people will be discussed in chapter nine. Some of

these forms of self-disclosure can be construed as boundary crossings or even boundary violations.

### ***5.5. Boundary violations and boundary crossings***

Central to the issue of boundaries is not only the distinction between what is appropriate and what not, but also the distinction between what constitutes a boundary crossing and what a boundary violation. Smith and Fitzpatrick (1995) and Jackson (2004) distinguish between boundary violation and boundary crossing. They both suggest that a boundary crossing is departing from the traditional, normal or expected way in which to practice, in order to try something new that may or may not benefit the client. A boundary violation is a departure from the standard or commonly accepted practice that places either the client or the process of work at serious risk (Smith and Fitzpatrick, 1995). It stands to reason as well that a boundary violation will also place the practitioner at serious risk of allegations or privacy violations (Cooper, 2012b). However, Reamer (2001) suggests that a criticism of boundary crossings within practice is that, however helpful they might appear at first, they might become problematic in communities where it is unavoidable. It can also be argued that boundary crossings can create unwarranted expectations that will make it difficult for a practitioner to sustain and to extend to all their clients, in order to avoid being seen to practice favouritism.

Justice and Garland (2010) suggest that clear cut boundary violations are covered within codes of ethics. For example, the blatant violation of fostering a sexual relationship with a young person is clearly addressed in youth work professional principles. Boundary crossings however constitute a grey area that needs careful thought and analysis before embarking on, but also in responding to.



Pawlukewicz and Ondrus (2013) suggest that the key differentiation here is the risk of subtle harm. This risk of subtle harm refers to the possibility of the crossing of a boundary becoming more problematic and turning into a violation through, for example, the sharing of information gained in confidence. Interacting with young people 'under the radar' in these new spaces can be seen as a boundary crossing, violation or not a boundary issue at all, due to the newness of the technology, but also due to the tardiness in the creation and sharing of relevant policy and guidance responses. According to Richmond (2013) a key differentiation factor in this regard would be the intention of the practitioner - is the boundary crossed with the belief that the crossing will benefit the client and the relationship and because the boundaries are still largely undefined? Or, is the practitioner crossing the boundary with an ulterior motive that will not be to the benefit of the young person and the youth work relationship? This will be further explored within chapter nine.

### ***5.6. Multiple relationships***

Multiple relationships refer to relationships where a practitioner is involved with a young person in more than one capacity. According to Bratt (2010), in counselling, a multiple relationship is when a counsellor is involved in a professional capacity with a client, but also has involvement with this client in another sphere. Therefore, a young person might be attending a youth club where a practitioner is based, but they could also be the friend of this practitioner's child. Within mental health services literature, it is advised that multiple relationships should be avoided in order to avoid the situation where the practitioner has another professional or personal relationship with the client that can impact on the mental health relationship (Sawyer and Prescott, 2011).

This notion of multiple relationships features frequently in articles concerning boundaries and boundary management within the wider human services and helping professions, for example, Richmond (2013) and Pawlukewicz and Ondrus (2013). Youth work practitioners, who are working in the area where they live, are much more 'embedded' in the social fabric and therefore multiple relationships, can be common-place (Sercombe, 2007). The youth work role makes up only one part of a practitioner's life in these instances, and various other loyalties and responsibilities fight for attention and preference, and potentially lead to forced transparency as identified by Zur (2008). Forced transparency refers to the situation where clients have more information and insight into the life of a practitioner due to overlap in other shared experiences and roles. A number of practitioners become involved in youth work because there is nothing for their children to do where they live. They might therefore be the parent or another family member of some of their young clientele, and other young people might therefore already be known to them. Similarly, working in a faith or ethnic minority community might create multiple relationships.

A further complexity to be considered in youth work is where a young person takes on extra responsibilities within the setting whilst still being a client (Sercombe, 2007). This young person will then be a service user, but also a service provider. Certain young people will go on to volunteer as adults and from there potentially might become a paid member of staff within their community. This is widespread in youth work and is known as 'growing our own'. This creates a multiple relationship issue that has to be carefully managed. As Howard Sercombe (2007, p.15) so eloquently put it:

So conflict of interest is a bit of a way of life for us, and we need keen ethical sensibility, and sometimes a kick in the pants from our colleagues, to keep our practice clean.

Sercombe (2007) suggests that 'ethical sensibility' might be considered by bearing in mind certain key points. In the maintenance of multiple relationships, conflict of interest, responsibilities and obligations can be a concern. For example, the practitioner might be privy to some information about a young person through their youth work role, but does the practitioner also have a responsibility and obligation that extends beyond this, for example, is the young person related to the practitioner or the child of a friend? What responsibility does the practitioner have to share or respond to the information that was imparted to them in confidence in the youth work setting as part of their further relationship? Or vice versa?

A further question this raises is whether the practitioner who 'friends' a young person could use the information that they are privy to due to this connection, in order to inform their youth work practice? Research that bears a resemblance to this is Justice and Garland's (2010) study of congregational social work. This study highlights the numerous boundary crossings and potential violations that church based social workers might find themselves involved in. Part of this includes the potential use of information gained in a social work session for other purposes, or the potential crossing of personal and professional boundaries as part of having a dual relationship in the congregation - that of church member, but also as resident social worker.

One must also consider the equity of access to the practitioner by all young people. Do the multiple relationships create opportunities for some young people to have more access to the practitioner than others? A further point to consider is to what extent are the activities and projects engaged in, part of the youth work remit or part of the practitioner's personal interest and to their personal benefit? For example, the youth worker might have been 'home grown' and come from the ranks of the young people. They are now employed by the organisation but work with some young people that they might have dual

relationships with. Some of the activities and projects might be things that this practitioner enjoys outside the setting with this group of young people. To what extent is this to be considered youth work, and to what extent private leisure and social time of the practitioner in question? In this case, no direct subtle harm might be the result for young people, or it could result in young people missing out on the opportunities that would have met their needs. Consequently, this could be viewed a crossing or a violation depending on the outcome, but also the original motivation of the practitioner with the choice of activities.

According to Sercombe (2007), where multiple relationships are unavoidable, clear strategies must be put in place to keep the roles and relationships separate and distinct. Very clear, defined boundaries are needed in cases like these, with the responsibility resting with the practitioner to maintain these boundaries, not the young person. This begs the question whether this happens in practice or not. To what extent must the practitioner be supported by their organisation to manage these multiple relationships appropriately? To what extent these relationships cause concerns for practitioners, within the additional spaces on social network sites will be reported and discussed in chapter nine.

### ***5.7. Integration or separation as boundary management solutions***

Boundary management suggests that practitioners might want to integrate or alternatively segment their personal and professional identities on social network sites. The decision to segment or integrate would impact on whom practitioners want to interact with online, but also how they want to structure and manage these ties (Ashforth et al., 2000; Rothbard et al., 2005; Kreiner, 2006). Practitioners who prefer to separate their publics or audiences online were also found to be more likely to proactively aim to keep these publics separate off-line as well. Rothbard & Ramarajan (2009) found that dividing of

personal and professional contacts allows practitioners to avoid the discomfort and issues that can arise through the coming together of two different aspects of their existence - personal and professional lives. In Rothbard & Ramarajan's (2009) study this separation between work and private lives did not involve young people, but colleagues and adult clients within the business sector.

Bratt (2010), in an article concerning the ethical considerations of social network sites for counsellors, supports the shared insight from a variety of helping professions to not engage with clients through their personal profile, and also not to join SNS groups that their clients might belong to (Witt, 2009; Zur et al, 2009). However, in the summary of his article, he suggests that counsellors might want to create a separate profile on a social network site specifically for work purposes. No research is currently available on this, and it is not known how widespread this practice is. Creating a separate work profile would address some of the personal and professional boundaries from the practitioner's perspective, but what about where multiple relationships already exist? Also, how this would be perceived and experienced not only by practitioners but also by young people is explored and discussed in chapter nine.

Wilson, Gosling and Graham (2012) suggest that the choice of self-enhancement or self-verification, as a means of online self portrayal, is important with regard to ascertaining whether a boundary crossing or a boundary violation might be taking place. Practitioners that are interested in self-enhancement are more likely to post aspects of themselves online that will enhance others' view of them, and that will portray them in the best possible light. They are more likely to manage their profile to ensure that this remains the case. Practitioners that are disposed to integrating their professional and personal identities are more likely to self-verify and share both positive and negative information. Self-verifiers display open behaviours online and are less likely to construct

boundaries around their different audiences - they portray themselves as the person they think they are.

Both self-enhancers and self-verifiers practice a variety of different boundary management techniques to attempt to maintain the impression they create about themselves.

### **5.7.1. Audience boundary management**

Not everyone who self-verifies is willing to share everything with all their different connections, and they might take part in audience boundary management (Wilson, Gosling and Graham, 2012). They might create a LinkedIn account for their co-workers and use a more personal social network site for family and friends. Audience boundary managers might not want to add young people to their personal profiles, and might consider a separate work profile to friend young people. These practitioners might also rather interact with young people through SNS groups or pages only.

It is necessary to not only bear in mind the level of trust that a manager feels they can place in an individual practitioner, due to the level of training they have received and the nature and length of their professional relationship (Davies and Cranston, 2008b). Crucially it is important to also consider the level and type of practitioner self-disclosure, their motivation and how they manage their boundaries, as this might create risk for the young people who they might friend. Trust, as discussed in chapter four, and boundary management both need to be evaluated in order to ascertain the potential impact of 'under the radar' interaction on practitioners and young people.

### **5.7.2. Content boundary management**

Content boundary management is practised by those who self-enhance and who prefer to integrate their varied publics. In this case, they will actively control the information that they disclose rather than the audience they disclose to. Lampinen et al (2009) suggests that these practitioners will choose to share information that their professional connections will look favourably on and that will elicit positive feedback.

### **5.7.3. Hybrid boundary management**

Hybrid boundary management constitutes a position of both audience and content management. This allows for content to be tailored to the relevant audience in order to avoid situations that are inappropriate or considered unsuitable for a particular audience. Therefore self-enhancement as well as self-verification is possible with hybrid boundary management.

Content, as well as hybrid boundary management methods, necessitate more time input and skill in order to manage the profile (Wilson, Gosling and Graham, 2012). Due to the twenty four hours a day synchronous and asynchronous nature of networked publics communication on social network sites, this needs to be a constant process. This has further implications for boundary management with regard to time management as well as where and on what device the profiles are managed, etc.

Hybrid behaviours therefore aim to match up information with the relevant audience. This is reminiscent of how information is shared off-line - personal information is only shared with someone after the formation of a dyadic relationship (Derlega and Chaikin, 1977). Hybrid behaviours therefore provide

the role players to disclose and make available information to each other if and when they want to. On SNS this could be complicated through the invisible nature of some segments of the audience after friending.

#### **5.7.4. Open boundary management**

Open boundary management is where no management of the audience or the content that is shared, by either the profile holder themselves or their co-constructors, takes place. Therefore, what might be considered inappropriate behaviour by some could be shared on this profile. This is in line with the ethos of social network sites that privacy and segmentations of different aspects of a person's life is becoming more difficult to maintain (Ledbetter et al, 2011).

#### **Trusty behaviours**

Research (Mayer et al, 1995; Williams, 2001) found that audience boundary behaviours that include hybrid behaviour management are valued in work settings that value discretion. Practitioners that utilise these boundary behaviours are seen as able to be trusted with sensitive information and important decisions. The extent to which this is true within the youth work profession will be discussed in the relevant findings chapter.

Due to the nature of social network sites and its focus on connection and linking people together, it is more time consuming and challenging to segregate audiences than it is to integrate them (Donath and boyd, 2004). Boundary behaviour management is not a one way process; rather it is intricately entwined with how the audience or networked public views the profile holder and also what they consider to be appropriate or not to share or be shared within the space.



### ***5.8. In summary***

This chapter explored the relevant literature related to the issue of boundary management within youth work, by drawing on studies done in business and health and social care professions. It is clear that boundaries within the human services are considered to be a challenge and permeable, rather than solid. Boundaries do not only refer to who we choose to interact with and who not. They also refer to what is shared, and why and how it is shared. This links to the notion of self-disclosure and how this is approached within 'under the radar' interaction.

Self-disclosure takes place in the form of self-verification or self-enhancement. Boundary management tools, for example, audience boundary management, content boundary management, open boundary management and hybrid boundary management are used to ensure that only appropriate boundary crossings, rather than boundary violations, take place. However, distinguishing between what is considered an appropriate boundary crossing and what not, and what is considered a boundary violation is not easy to determine. How the issues of boundary crossings and boundary violations are dealt with within potential 'under the radar' interaction will be discussed in chapter nine.



## **Chapter 6: Findings: The Significance of Space as a space for connection within SNS interaction**

6.1. Introduction The next three chapters present the findings from the data and organise the findings into chapters relating to the emergent themes and categories as discussed in the methodology chapter. These themes are space and place, development of trust and boundaries. The literature for these themes was explored in chapters 3-5 and for consistency the findings are also organised into three chapters mimicking the themes of the literature review chapters. Quotes and examples from the semi-structured interviews are used to illustrate the themes and findings shared.

The intersection of these themes identified the key considerations and theory development of this thesis. The data across the three key themes intersected and identified that, the how and why practitioners and young people connect unsanctioned on SNS was due to the perceived nature of relationships developed. This forms the main focus of the discussion that links the data findings with the literature review in chapter 9.

The aspect of the research question this chapter focuses on relates to the spaces within which young people and practitioners interact with each other. Firstly, it shares the findings considering whether they connect with each other outside of traditional youth work spaces and then considers if they considered connection with each other on SNS. The chapter presents the findings concerning the different social network site spaces within which connections outside of youth work spaces and times took place. The reasons why these spaces and not others were used for engagement are shared, and start to shed light on the nature of the relationships the participants felt they developed with each other.

## ***6.2. Interactions within spaces outside of youth work settings and times***

### **6.2.1. Young people participants**

All fourteen young people participants attended universal youth group provision. This took place predominantly in youth and community centres, based predominantly on school or local authority premises and village halls. Of these fourteen, five young people also attended one to one work with a specific practitioner. This took place within school and college settings as well as youth centres and locality offices. Only one of the fourteen young people occasionally engaged with youth workers through detached youth work . None of the young people and young people volunteers accessed outreach work. This data is represented in the table below.

**Table 6.1: The types of youth work young people accessed**

Access group work	One to one work	Detached Work	Outreach Work
14	5	1	0

Young people accessing only generic youth work did not interact with practitioners outside of the club space and time.

'I don't. I only speak with them when I am here, no contact. Yeah, come on a Monday, just talk to them really' (Joyce, young person interview).

**Table 6.2: Young people who only access universal youth work, interaction with practitioners outside of youth work times and spaces**

<i>Young people who access only group work</i>	<i>Interact Outside Club Time with practitioners</i>	<i>Don't interact outside club time with practitioners</i>	<i>Through what space?</i>
4	0	4	None

The five young people who accessed universal and one to one work interacted with practitioners outside of club and intensive session time, and mostly through phone calls and text messages from the practitioners' work mobile phones. These interactions consisted of information sharing concerning meeting times and spaces. Where practitioners were based in secondary schools, the young people who attended the particular school knew they were able to facilitate contact in these spaces.

Data indicates that interaction between practitioners and young people was common-place where the relationship included one to one work. However, interactions facilitated through the space of flows in these instances were for work related purposes only.

**Table 6.3: Young people accessing generic and one to one work interaction with practitioners outside of youth work times and geographical space**

<i>Young people who access both one to one and group work</i>	<i>Interact Outside youth work time and space with practitioners</i>	<i>Don't interact outside youth work time and spaces with practitioners</i>	<i>Through what space?</i>
5	5	0	Phone, email, school

All five young volunteers had additional access to at least one practitioner through either e-mail or the practitioner's work mobile phone. The additional engagement created by the space of flows through phones and e-mail was only used to share information, for example, when a club was cancelled or if a young volunteer had to cancel their availability.

One young volunteer was not only interacting with a paid practitioner that he worked with for information sharing purposes. This practitioner was not involved in the setting where this young person volunteered. This connection between practitioner and young volunteer was established through their personal profiles. This connection was established for additional support and advice for the young person. The interaction between practitioners and young volunteers is represented in the table below.

**Table 6.4: Young volunteer interaction with practitioners outside of youth work times and spaces**

<i>Young Volunteers</i>	<i>Interact Outside Club Time and space with practitioners</i>	<i>Don't interact outside club time and space with practitioners</i>	<i>Through what space?</i>

			<i>Phone and e-mail</i>	<i>SNS</i>
5	5	0	5	1

The majority of young volunteers therefore connected with practitioners outside of club times and spaces using professional communication tools, for work purposes. For one young volunteer this interaction extended to include personal communication through personal profiles. Why this happened is shared in chapter 7.

Young volunteers, practiced with predominantly younger young people. All of the young volunteers practiced in spaces where they knew some of the young people, including friends and siblings. The young volunteers had these young people as friends on their social network site profiles before they became young volunteers. All interactions outside of youth clubs were personal rather than work related.

**Table 6.5: Young volunteer interaction with previously known young people they practiced with**

<i>Young Volunteers</i>	<i>Interact Outside Club Time with previously known young people</i>	<i>Don't interact outside club time with previously known young people</i>	<i>Through what space?</i>	
			<i>Phone and e-mail</i>	<i>SNS</i>
5	5	0	5	5

Two young volunteers , interacted with young people unknown to them prior to volunteering, outside of youth club times and spaces. Interaction took place through their SNS personal profiles.

**Table 6.6: Young volunteer interaction with previously unknown young people they practice with**

<i>Young Volunteers</i>	<i>Interact Outside Club time and spaces with young people</i>	<i>Don't interact outside club time and spaces with young people</i>	<i>Through what space?</i>	
			<i>Phone and e-mail</i>	<i>SNS</i>
5	2	3	0	2

### **6.2.2. Youth work practitioner participants**

Nineteen of the twenty-one youth work practitioners engaged with young people in youth club settings as part of universal service provision. The two practitioners that did not work within universal provision settings were Connexions IPAs in their previous roles. Both these practitioners engaged in further settings with young people on a one to one basis as part of intensive support.

All practitioners, except for the adult volunteers, practiced with young people in more than one spatial setting. These settings were youth centre, school, children's centre or community centre based. Some practitioners also engaged with young people outside of these spatial demarcations, for example, Connexions practitioners traditionally also worked within community libraries



and still made use of these spaces. Other settings in which practitioners engaged with young people were:

- Streets and parks as part of detached and outreach work
- Village halls
- Church halls
- Locality Team offices

All paid practitioners engaged with young people by texting or ringing from work mobile phones or office phones or through e-mailing from work phones or computers through the council e-mail system.

Two adult volunteers did not interact with young people outside of the youth work setting, and the third adult volunteer used to interact with young people through her personal social network site profile.

Four youth work background practitioners and one adult volunteer interacted with young people through social network sites. In four of these cases it was through their personal profiles and in one case it was through a work profile. None of the practitioners interviewed interacted with young people through group pages as part of or as a result of their youth work or for any other reason. This data is illustrated in the below table.

**Table 6.7: Practitioner interaction with young people outside youth work settings and geographical space**

Practitioner	<i>Interact outside youth work time with young people</i>	<i>Don't interact outside youth work times with young people</i>	<i>Through what additional space?</i>			
			<i>Phone calls, texts and e-mail</i>	<i>SNS- personal profile</i>	<i>SNS- work profile</i>	<i>SNS- group page</i>
Youth work managers	4	0	4	0	0	0
Youth work background practitioners	10	0	10	3	1	0
Connexions backgroundpractitioners	4	0	4	0	0	0
Adult volunteers	3	2	0	1	0	0

The minority of practitioners were engaging with each other through their personal social network site profiles. This point is discussed in chapter 8 as it relates to audience boundary management techniques.

### ***6.3. Engaging with and in social network site spaces***

The overwhelming majority of practitioners agreed that social network sites as potential spaces to engage with young people should be explored.

When Facebook first came on the scene it was very much everybody - everybody that works with youth, with young people felt, oh, my God, this will be a fantastic way to keep in touch with young people which I totally agree with (Connexions background practitioner 1).

However, the majority acknowledged that due to the relative newness of these spaces they were not sure how to use it within a youth work context. The majority of them were aware of a number of practitioners connecting with young people using social network sites and in the majority of cases through personal profiles. Practitioners were non-judgemental, as due to the relative newness of the technology, exploration was common. In the majority of instances practitioners felt that civic courage was instrumental in decisions to connect with young people through SNS. Notwithstanding, this was a main reason why practitioners limited their interaction with each other on SNS. Due to being unsure how and when to use these spaces within a youth work context they were concerned about witnessing practice that they were unsure about.

'It's new isn't it, so we're all just finding our way' (Connexions background practitioner 2).

For the majority of young people social network sites, particularly Facebook, played a big part in their lives. Thirteen of the fourteen young people confirmed that Facebook was significant in staying connected.

Facebook is my life. If I didn't have Facebook I wouldn't be able to get in touch with like barely any of my friends because I've got like 30, 40 contacts on my phone. But I've got like 1400 friends on Facebook (Ally, young volunteer interview).

Thirteen of the fourteen young people accessed Facebook on their smart phones and computers. This ensured that it was accessible from wherever, whenever. Some young people mentioned the ease of access and the lack of cost implications of staying in touch with others. .

'If you haven't got credit, you can Facebook them can't you, if you really need someone to talk to' (Ally, young volunteer interview).

Being connected to others through a shared space was important to thirteen of the fourteen young people. A young volunteer shared how not being able to access Facebook through a mobile device impacted on her when she was younger:

Year seven, eight I would wake up, check my Facebook, go to school, obviously, get home, put my bags down, say hi to mum, go on Facebook till half five, have dinner, go back to Facebook and then it will be bed time and then the next day that same routine every day. I stopped speaking to most people [in person]. I used to be on instant messaging as well and was constantly chatting. This stopped late year nine because that's when I first had a phone with Facebook on, I wasn't on it all the time anymore. When phones first got Facebook it would text me to say 'Sophie wrote on your wall'. Now it is just there (Louise, young volunteer interview).

Even though Facebook was significant in the majority of young people's lives some concerns existed concerning ease of accessibility.

Yeah, but it's a bit of a distraction, cause like, I'll be doing my homework and there's Facebook popping up, it's like I'll just check on there for a couple of seconds and then I'll carry on, just gets you distracted (Joyce, young person interview).

Social network sites made it easier to connect to others in an additional space and to stay connected through this additional space all the time. Only one young person preferred to interact with others face-to-face and therefore suggested that Facebook decreased rather than increased connectivity with people.

On analysis it was clear that young people had profiles on the sites that their friends had and migrated with their friends. This suggested that the space itself was not the main consideration for where they connected with their friends but rather the interaction and connection that it facilitated with others.

I just went on Bebo, because that was the first thing. And then moved to Myspace, because everyone else moved to Myspace. And then moved to Facebook, because everyone else moved to Facebook (Tommy, young person interview).

One young person referred to the possibility of moving sites due to unpopular changes Facebook made. These changes impacted on how connected young people felt to the site as it altered the visual presentation of the profiles. Analysis highlighted that changes that impact on the presentation of the co-construction was not welcomed by young people as they felt it changed their interaction with their networked public.

I don't know why they did that. I can't see why they didn't leave it the way it was. People are going to get so annoyed with Facebook. They're just gonna leave it for something else (Tommy, young person interview).

Young people and practitioners voiced that Facebook was useful for staying in contact with distant family, and to keep in touch with people they used to have physical contact with, and that they would like to stay in touch with but that they do not have easy physical access to. SNS provided them with opportunities to breach constraints of space but also time - enabling users to continue

relationships that would previously have been more difficult to sustain due to distance and also endings of projects, etc. SNS therefore provided spaces for those with a sense of shared history or memory to maintain contact. SNS therefore provided an opportunity to continue relationships through the space of flows that would have come to an end, if only geographical space of place was relied on.

Facebook is like quite good for me to keep in touch with people because I used to do a drama group I did and that drama group got cancelled because of funding (Kayleigh, young volunteer interview).

Young people and practitioners not only used Facebook for existing day to day relationships, and to continue everyday offline interactions online, but also to create and maintain contact with people that were not directly part of their everyday lives, but that they seemed to have something or some space in common. This was the case for the majority of young people and for some practitioners.

People seem to know things like in schools. When I was in Greenfields it was a lot bigger obviously, because people's friend groups were like within the year and some people knew people outside the school. But mostly it contained the year, really. So if something happened, someone put it on Facebook. Everyone had everyone on Facebook then and so everyone knew about everyone (John, young person interview).

On asking the participants concerning their thoughts on staying in touch with each other through personal profiles, or any profile or group page on a SNS, the picture that emerged was different from the actual practice that was shared during the interviews, for example, that only three practitioners were interacting through personal profiles and only one practitioner through a work profile with young people.

#### ***6.4. SNS as connecting spaces between young people and practitioners***

Eleven of the fourteen young people wanted to connect with particular practitioners through the practitioner's personal profile. They suggested that connecting with practitioners through these spaces would provide them with opportunities to receive advice and support from these particular practitioners .

I think it is good idea because people like Ewan he's really understanding and I think he's a friend, I've got quite a lot of things in common with him so getting on well. It's nice to speak about my problems as well because he usually helps to direct me in a way that I think I won't regret doing something, so that's helpful (Fred, young person interview).

As discussed in chapter 2 social network sites do not consist of only one space, but a variety of different spaces, for example groups, work profiles and personal profiles. Analysis of the data indicated that these spaces were not perceived or experienced as similar by young people in their ability to create and maintain interactions with youth work practitioners. Young people viewed these spaces in ways that mimics some of the characteristics and functions that geographical space based youth work provision and settings provided them.

##### **6.4.1. Group pages**

Only five of the fourteen young people considered interacting with practitioners through group pages, but only when personal or work profiles were not an option. One of these five suggested a group page only in cases where they did not like the particular practitioner. One of these five suggested that a group page could be an alternative only if they were not allowed to connect with a

practitioner's personal profile. For one of these young people, a group page was the only other option if interaction through a work profile was not possible. For two of the five young people, a group page was only an option if they were not allowed to connect with a practitioner's personal and/or work profiles.

Analysis suggested that group pages were viewed by young people as a shared space, like the hall within a youth club setting, where everyone partakes and it is universal open access where everyone can see, and potentially also hear, what everyone else was doing and discussing. Analysis indicated that group pages were considered an impersonal space to connect with practitioners, and young people considered it if they had no other option. The data argues that the spaces young people wanted to connect with practitioners were driven by the nature of the relationship they felt they have developed with individual practitioners rather than a 'one space fits all' approach. Two of the five young people stated that, at the time of interview, there was a lack of privacy on group pages and therefore this would hinder communication with a practitioner. Group members were unable to send private messages to each other and therefore all communication would be visible to all the group members.

'Groups don't have that function. You can't communicate privately... no. You just round a wall' (Andy, young person interview).

Young people suggested that geographical youth work spaces provided them with access to shared spaces, but also provided access to additional one to one provision during the same time or an alternative time that other young people would not be aware of unless they were told. For example, sessions at the locality offices, library or a separate room at the youth centre. The same was not true for group pages. However, two further spaces on social network sites provided the potential for privacy; work profiles and personal profiles.



### **6.4.2. Work profiles**

Four of the fourteen young people who wanted to interact through a practitioner's personal profile suggested that a work profile would be an acceptable alternative; only if they were not allowed to interact through the practitioner's personal profile. Two of the fourteen young people said that only a work profile will be acceptable because with a personal profile 'we would see all his friends' (Christine, young person interview).

The data indicates that work profiles were viewed as an alternative space only to be considered if connections through personal profiles were not allowed. Analysis indicates that young people valued the privacy that a work profile afforded through personal messaging and the potential for individualised support and advice. This is similar to a one to one session with a practitioner outside of generic youth work provision. However, they felt that work profiles obscured the nature of the relationship that young people felt they developed with individual practitioners. Data that argues this point is shared in chapter 7.

### **6.4.3. Personal profiles**

Eleven of the fourteen young people (seven of the nine young people, and four of the five young volunteers) wanted to connect with some practitioners through personal profiles.

Some young people suggested that if young people accessed one to one work with a practitioner offline then it should be acceptable to friend them through their personal profile. This is because all the young people and practitioners that were engaged in one to one work already communicated with each other outside of youth workspace and times - but by utilising work, space of flows

tools, for example work mobile phones. Why then do they want to connect through personal profiles rather than continue using work mediums? These participants held a shared perception regarding the nature of the relationship they developed with some practitioners. This space suggested a need by young people to have more direct access to practitioners if and when they needed or wanted it.

Yeah, and if I had Roger on Facebook and I was annoyed about something, I'd say to him on Facebook is it alright if I talk to you alone on Facebook, And it saves me coming here or asking and everyone questioning why and stuff (Aiden, young person interview).

#### **6.4.4. No interaction in any of these alternative spaces**

The young person who did not want to friend practitioners through any profile or alternative SNS space felt very strongly about this.

It's basically fucked, simply. Because youth workers, it's their job. If they overhear something like it's against the law, they have to report it to the police, it's their job (John, young person interview).

He was concerned about practitioners' duty to pass on information. He did not view practitioners as his friends and did not anticipate any potential use for connecting with youth workers in these spaces. He perceived practitioners as authority figures and people with power over him within the relationship. He therefore did not perceive that he developed a relationship with any

practitioners that extended beyond a youth work role. Interactions in these cases with practitioners were limited to and within youth work settings.

### ***6.5 The SNS spaces that young volunteers wanted to use to connect with young people***

Four of the five young volunteers had young people that they volunteered with as personal profile friends. The fifth young volunteer only friended other young volunteers, they were the only young people within her own age range at the setting and she had no siblings attending. All young volunteers worked in club settings within their own offline geographical spaces. Consequently, there were some linkages in these geographical spaces that predated their volunteer roles. These young volunteers confirmed that social network sites were a way to extend and continue interactions with their existing friends with whom they shared a geographical space, and previous relationships.

Three of the five young volunteers did not add any young people (that they did not know before starting to volunteer) to their personal profiles. As one of the volunteers explained:

'half of them that come here is cause I already knew them' (Ally, young volunteer interview).

Only one young volunteer suggested the possibility of work profiles for young volunteers and this was the young volunteer who suggested that she did not want to interact with any practitioner through a personal profile, but rather a work profile or a group page, and who only friended other young volunteers.

The second young volunteer that did not add young people not known to her before she started volunteering, differentiated between the young people she worked with based on where they were from. She had young people on her profile that she grew up with, and has known for a long time, but if a new young person moved into the village she would not add them as she has not had that previous relationship or shared history. This young volunteer also volunteered in a nearby village where she had no shared geographical space or history. She did not friend any of the young people from this setting.

I will not have young people at the other club on my Facebook as I live in this village not there and it is not very professional, and I might get into trouble. Because if the kids see me do things they might think if she can do it I can do it, because we're supposed to be role models (Cathy, young volunteer interview).

The third volunteer who only added known young people added young people that she was friends with before she started volunteering to her personal profile.

Analysis indicated that these young volunteers were aware of the nature of their relationships with other young people. The spaces and capacity within which they met indicated whether they would connect online or not. Therefore, if they met, inside or outside a youth work setting, before becoming a volunteer then they would add them. If they met after they became a volunteer inside the youth work setting they would not add them. These young volunteers therefore had an understanding of the implications of their role, but they only implemented this knowledge and understanding from the time they became volunteers.

All five the young volunteers lived and volunteered in their own geographical areas which created this potential for them to know the young people that they volunteered with before they started volunteering.

### **6.5.1. Friending young people they worked with and did not know before**

One of the two young volunteers that friended young people not known to her prior to volunteering, as well as those known to her, was asked to remove all young people from her Facebook (in the six months preceding the interview).

It is hard in your own community especially. You see the kids every day. You just have to walk down the shop and you see thirty of them (Rene, young volunteer interview).

The shared geographical spaces that facilitated constant contact with young people outside youth work settings and times acted as a justification for this volunteer in her decision to add the young people - they shared a geographical space and unavoidable interactions in the local community.

The second young volunteer 'friended' young people on his personal profile as he viewed it as an additional space and time in which he could provide advice and support to them. He did this through the one to one private communication function. All the young people he volunteered with were significantly younger than himself.

Therefore, for this young person it was not about a shared geographical space but rather because he felt he developed a particular type of relationship with them that warranted additional advice and support in an additional space. The nature of this relationship is further explored in chapter 7.

Shared geographical space but also the nature of the role and relationship as perceived by young volunteers informed decisions concerning connecting with those not previously known.

### **6.5.2. Not friending any young people they worked with**

Only one young volunteer had no young people that she worked with on her profile. She had very clear ideas about what she perceived the rules to be, and only worked with young people that were much younger than herself. The age range was identical for the young volunteer discussed above, who added young people to his profile, as they volunteered together. Therefore the way they viewed their role and responsibilities were different. Analysis indicated that a reason for this was to be found in the nature of the interactions they had with paid practitioners when they were young people only.

### **6.5.3. Friending practitioners that they worked with**

Two of the five young volunteers that friended young people they worked with and that were not known to them before, also friended personal profiles of some practitioners. In both cases this friending took place before they became volunteers. Both these young volunteers lived and attended clubs in the same area that they grew up in. These young volunteers were also the only two who friended young people that were not previously known to them. The data suggested a link existed between living and volunteering in the same geographical space, and the experiences that young volunteers themselves had with practitioners before they started volunteering.

#### **6.5.4. Friending practitioners that they practiced with**

Four of the five young volunteers wanted to connect with some practitioners through the practitioners' personal profiles. As shared, two of these were already connected with some practitioners through personal profiles. Young volunteers perceived practitioners as colleagues. Becoming a young volunteer therefore elevated young people's perception of themselves from client to co-practitioner. Therefore they perceived a change in the nature of the relationship and subsequent boundaries with practitioners.

### ***6.6. Findings identifying the spaces that practitioners wanted to connect with young people***

#### **6.6.1. Personal profiles as personal spaces**

All the youth work practitioners had personal profiles. The majority of practitioners felt that their personal profiles were exactly that - personal spaces that young people clients should not access. However, the majority of practitioners knew practitioners that had young people on their personal profiles. Four of the twenty-one practitioners connected with young people through their personal profiles. One of these was an adult volunteer, and three of these were paid practitioners from a youth work background.

Only the four practitioners that had young people on their personal profiles felt that these profiles could be constructively used with young people. They all initially felt that personal profiles were better than creating a separate work profile, group or page.

No... because it's you they want to talk to, not publicly or anybody else you know. They have a relationship with you within the youth club setting and that is who they wanna talk to (Youth Work background practitioner 4).

The interview process made two of the paid practitioners consider whether they could provide the same level of relationship to young people through a work profile or alternatively a group page. However, these practitioners worked and lived in the same community and a wide variety of relationships within the geographical space existed that predated their work with young people. Also, they felt that the young people wanted to connect with them as themselves, and not as a separate 'sterilised' work profile.

It [a work profile] would work the same, but I think for any sort of issue that a young person is experiencing they would want their youth worker - you - personally (Youth Work background practitioner 4).

The third practitioner also worked and lived in the same geographical space, and, therefore, suggested that his work and life was integrated because of this. He did not consider a work profile as he felt he was a role model to young people through all aspects of his life and at all times. As a result, he thought it appropriate to connect with young people through his personal profile.

The adult volunteer who interacted with young people through her personal profile suggested a group page might be an alternative to the use of a personal profile. However, she thought that this created a lack of privacy and, that interacting with the young people through a group page, rather than through your personal profile, would show the young people that you do not trust them (Adult Volunteer 1).



The findings suggested that all four practitioners that added young people to their personal profiles lived and worked in the same geographical area. Two of these also worked in geographical areas where they do not reside, and they did not add young people from these areas to their Facebook profiles. Analysis of the data therefore indicates that shared geographical space was an important factor for practitioners in considering connection with young people through personal profiles or not. However, not all practitioners that lived and worked in the same geographical spaces added young people. An additional factor was identified through analysis and this involved relationships within these geographical spaces and their perception of the nature of their role.

According to these practitioners, young people wanted to interact with them specifically, as themselves, and wanted to share information with them in a confidential manner, by accessing their personal profile spaces.

The practitioners that connected with young people through personal profiles considered that they created a safe and confidential space to interact with young people.

Sometimes I actually think they wanna add us cause they wanna talk to us about something's that they wouldn't talk about in the club where the people might hear, you know. And if you chat to them in a quiet room everybody's gonna know there's something going on there...

Whereas, on Facebook they can tell you something that they might have been uncomfortable telling you in the club. Ok, we might need to meet up and chat a bit more and you can arrange to meet them in a safe environment away from that, away from prying ears and staff you know. Even if it's a store, nearby there's a store with a coffee shop, there are things you can do to help that young person. Whereas without it that person do not have save access to you and that's something I feel really bad about (Youth work background practitioner 4).

One of the three practitioners that connected with young people through their personal profiles suggested a concern with using their personal profiles to connect with young people. They suggested that if the communication was not taking place through the private messaging function, all other friends became the audience, potential contributors and co-constructors to interactions within this space.

'You've got 5, 600 people reading that young person's life on your wall' (Youth work background practitioner 5).

This was the main reason why the two youth work background practitioners four and five, reflected as part of the interview process that a work profile might have been a better option than personal profiles, as it reduced the possibility of others, not friended by the young person but by the practitioner, becoming involved. An understanding therefore developed that due to the networked public nature of SNS not only their relationships and roles needed to be considered but also everyone else's that they friended.

These two practitioners had as co-worker an adult volunteer in a further locality, who volunteered and lived in the same geographical space, and who still had young people on her personal profile. They found the links she had with young people invaluable. They considered that as practitioners they were able to tap into the benefits of this overlap of spaces.

She's almost like our inside informer, if you know what I mean. She knows young people and she'll bring young people in the club that wouldn't

normally come to club because they all sit on Facebook and she knows their home situations (Youth work background practitioner 4).

A further adult volunteer that practiced with them, in the geographical space that they all lived and worked in, was not simply asked to remove young people from her profile but her volunteering contract was terminated. It transpired that she was using Facebook to foster a relationship that was considered inappropriate with a particular young person. Different responses were given to different volunteers when considering their online connections with young people. Analysis indicated that the perceived benefit for paid practitioners and the perceived risk of harm from the relationships were considered. However, by whom this was considered varied between situations.

The majority of practitioners were aware that their adult and young volunteers who lived and worked in the same community had young people on their personal profiles. Some were not sure if their adult or young volunteers were interacting with young people through Facebook or not, because they chose not to know, by for example not friending them themselves and by not discussing the topic. In the majority of the areas the focus of practitioners was on SNS connections between paid practitioners and young people with a lack of engagement and awareness of what interaction volunteers (young and adult) were having with young people or not. Uncertainty was prevalent when it came to the practice of volunteers. Not only uncertainty concerning what volunteers were doing but also what to do with the information and if they had any right to limit volunteers' connections outside of youth work times and settings.

But again when you've got people moving up, then my volunteers, they're volunteers and not paid workers, where do you? And what's the reason you say? And what rights do you have, do you actually have to say you can't do this, or you can't do this, or you need to change this, wooh, it's very difficult (Connexions background practitioner 1).

Various opinions existed concerning the use of social network site spaces by volunteers, what was considered appropriate use of these spaces and also the appropriate responses for volunteers who lived and worked in the same geographical spaces.

The reasons given for the uncertainty and variety of options for this were:

- This was not an area that they had considered before and it was not on their volunteer paperwork.
- They chose not to know because they were unsure about how to respond if interaction was taking place.
- Where they did know they were benefitting from the information that they received through this, so were loath for it to stop.
- Practitioners did not always agree with the boundaries drawn within these spaces for people who live and volunteer in the same geographical spaces.

Paid practitioners as well as adult volunteers who lived and worked in the same geographical area provided additional information that could be used to reach young people who would not normally enter youth work spaces. This information was considered beneficial to more effectively engage with young people within the limited time of club spaces. These practitioners brought with them not only local knowledge, but also a deeper connection to the geographical space that the young people inhabited, and, therefore, had more of a 'vested interest' in having positive interactions with the young people in these cohabited spaces.

They are members of the community, volunteers become sessional staff, they have children, they live in the local estates, they know everybody

and for a lot of people it is that they have loads of friends on Facebook. You do not think about it and how out there it is and who knows everything (Youth work background practitioner 8).

Therefore volunteers and practitioners who lived and worked in the same geographical spaces brought with them an insight and knowledge that was perceived to be beneficial within the youth work settings and practice - not only for themselves but for the other practitioners as well.

### **6.6.2. Work profiles**

A further practitioner added young people to a separate work profile and this practice was supported by his line manager. He created this additional space with functional intent; to share information and photographs but also to arrange events with and for young people.

It's a process, but a fairly uneven one way process of information in terms of I would pretty much write very long Facebook message and they give very short 'yes, I've read it'. And it would be a kind of... a lot of it was to relay meetings what people needed to bring to the following thing or what we discussed, what we agreed. Quite an instructional space, it wasn't like a conversational space. And then we kind of still use it with them and say, we're involved in some consultation, interviewing stuff. But again we wouldn't do that over Facebook, it would be done ... it would be, 'we're meeting, here, here, here' (Youth work background Practitioner 6).

All practitioners that worked in the same locality as this practitioner were hoping to imitate the creation of separate work profiles . Their line manager was keen for this to happen. The possibility of a work profile made these practitioners feel more in control concerning the relationship with young people, and what was being shared by and about them that young people could view. The practitioner using a work profile identified that he still had access to everything that the young people shared with their friends. The only difference was that the young

people did not have access to his personal profile and the personal aspects shared about him. All these practitioners viewed work profiles as part of a professional relationship.

Work profiles were perceived as a means to gain full access to young people on SNS without them gaining access to the practitioner's life as shared by them or their networked public. It was therefore perceived as creating an appropriate youth work space in terms of access to information and relationship. In this sense it was considered similar to a geographical youth work interaction- young people are encouraged to share about themselves and develop and the youth worker facilitates this process rather than the sharing focus being on them.

### **6.6.3. Youth work pages and groups**

Eleven of the twenty-one practitioners perceived a benefit in having youth work pages or groups to share information and photos of shared experiences. Some mentioned that groups or pages already existed within their locality; however, they did not know who administered it or how to access it.

A lot of the young people wanted to see the photos and, could we put them on Facebook? And apparently there is a Facebook site there somewhere, but no one has ever told me anything about it (Connexions background practitioner 4).

These practitioners were reluctant to find out more about these existing pages, as they were concerned that it would become a further space that they would have had to invest work time in. Others lamented that this was something they wanted to explore, but time to find out what the guidance was and following it effectively was lacking.

At the moment we are looking to set up a Facebook site for the locality so that we all have a locality one. But it is quite a big undertaking really because we obviously wanna make sure that we follow all the county conduct guidance. And sitting down and work it out and saying right what do we want it to do, how can we fit in with guidance and policy and what's the best way of doing it. And who needs access and who doesn't (Connexion background practitioner 1).

Others suggested that group pages as an additional tool or space could have saved time within their roles .

If we had Facebook and we could just send out one message to all of them - because I know they look at it every day. That would've made my life a lot easier. So if we had a group like Facebook, like you would have a youth project Facebook, and then we could put the photos up afterwards and we could've shared, you know, what happened and that would've been nice. And easier and saved me a lot of time (Connexions background practitioner 3).

A number of practitioners suggested that if they were going to have a practice based page or group, they wanted youth work profiles to set up or connect to the group pages to avoid attempts by young people to friend their personal profiles. They therefore did not want to use these work profiles to connect with young people but to avoid friend requests to their personal profiles, which would have brought young people into their personal profile space and into their personal offline space.

The majority of practitioners consequently wanted to avoid having young people on their personal profiles. However, uncertainty existed concerning the practice of volunteers. Practitioners perceived benefits to having access to information about young people. Practitioners wanted access to information about young people that arguably supported them to engage with young people in youth work time. The ease of sharing information with young people was considered a

benefit but mostly if they did not have to take responsibility for the space and if the space did not necessitate the use of their personal profiles to access it.

### ***6.7. In summary***

Young people expressed that they wanted to connect with practitioners through personal profiles in order to have access to them for reasons explored in chapter seven. Work profiles were considered an appropriate space to connect with practitioners by five young people but only if personal profiles were perceived to not be an option at all. Group pages were only considered an option for young people as spaces to interact with practitioners if they had no other choice, or if they did not like a particular practitioner.

Practitioners, on the other hand, preferred the use of group pages as extended spaces to share information and photographs with young people, as long as they did not have to take responsibility for the management of the group space. Some practitioners also wanted to interact with young people through work profiles. This chapter suggested that a link existed between a practitioner and volunteer's propensity to want to connect with young people through their personal profiles and where they lived and worked. Practitioners who lived and worked in the same geographical space were more likely to friend young people online.

A further factor also seemed to be a young volunteer's or practitioner's own experiences - if a practitioner connected with a young volunteer through a personal profile when they were a young person, they were more likely to do the same when they became a volunteer or practitioner. The next chapter shares the findings concerning the nature of relationships that developed between young



people and practitioners, and the role this had in determining who and through what spaces on SNS they wanted to connect and also crucially why.

## **Chapter 7: Developing relationships: The significance of 'trust' in unsanctioned connections between youth work practitioners and young people on social network sites**

'You'd have to fuckin' trust them if you put them on your Facebook' (John, young person interview).

### ***7.1. Introduction***

Chapter 6 highlighted that young people and practitioners perceived SNS spaces differently and that various factors impacted on what spaces they considered engaging in, with each other. These factors can be explored under the core theme of relationship and relationship development. This chapter presents and analyses the findings relevant to relationship development, with a specific focus on trust for young people and practitioners in deciding whether or not to engage with each other. This chapter is organised around two key categories that emerged within the discussion of trust. The nature of the relationship that participants felt they developed with the other party and also why they wanted to interact with each other within these new spaces.

## ***7.2. The nature of the developing relationship for young people participants***

As shared in chapter six, eleven of the fourteen young people participants wanted to engage with practitioners through the practitioners' personal profile.

Analysis of the findings suggested that profile preference, was centred on the nature of the relationship that participants perceived they developed with the other.

None of the young people wanted to connect to a SNS profile with all practitioners. Only four of the fourteen young people considered interacting with all practitioners through group pages. Rather, findings suggested that young people were specific about who they wanted to connect with through any profiles.

If I got to know the youth worker like quite well and I would, because in a way they are, they're like a friend, etc. But, if I didn't really know them that well then it would be a bit weird. I don't think I'd add them (Andy, young person interview).

Young people were specific in identifying the characteristics that they felt differentiated the relationships they developed with different practitioners. The characteristics of practitioners that made young people perceive that they were developing a relationship with them were:

- The willingness of the practitioner to listen.
- Shared interests between the young person and the practitioner.
- The practitioner being perceived by the young person as 'like a friend'.

Young people did not identify these characteristics in all the practitioners that worked with them, only some; therefore these were individual characteristics

and reflects the credibility based approach to trust as identified by Behnia (2008). Listening,, interested, as well as shared interests and hobbies signalled to young people that the nature of the relationship they developed with some practitioners was akin to friendship. The majority of young people suggested only wanting to interact (through personal profiles, preferably) with practitioners that they had developed this 'like a friendship' relationship with.

I think just friends, really good friends. He listens a lot and I... most of my friends listen, but they're not interested in the same things I am; I'm quite different (Fred, young person interview).

Due to the 'like a friend' relationship that young people perceived they developed with some practitioners, the majority of young people did not consider friending a practitioner's personal profile as a concern,'under the radar' or as unsolicited.

I don't see a problem with it personally. I'd just treat it like any other friend request. If I like them I like them, if I don't I don't. Just to keep in contact. Just like normal friends. Like why would I add my best friend on Facebook? So he can see what I'm doing (Tommy, young person interview).

A further young person who identified a practitioner that he felt an affinity to did not excessively mind if the interaction was not allowed to take place through the practitioner's personal profile, as long as it could then take place through the practitioner's work profile. The young person would have been happy just to interact with the practitioner online. He stated that they had a lot in common, but that the practitioner also offered him support. For example, he suggested that his relationship with the practitioner was almost like counselling. For the young person this was, therefore, akin to a helping relationship, but he further suggested that this relationship was rooted in friendship.

I'd talk to him and just see how he's doing and stuff like I would with any of my friends to see if they're in youth club tonight or what they're doing just to keep in touch I suppose, yeah (Fred, young person interview).

The relationship that the majority of young people described reflected a one-sided helping relationship that was episodic in nature (when the young person needed it) rather than a free-flowing mutual friendship. It was geared towards providing young people with advice and support by people they feel an affinity to, and that they feel are credible, at times they needed or wanted it. The majority of young people indicated that these relationships improved their self concept. The relationships young people developed with some practitioners validated their experiences and interests and made them feel understood and accepted. This was predominantly because they perceived the development of a friendship type relationship with specific practitioners based on the credibility based approach to trust as part of relationship development.

He listens a lot and I... most of my friends listen but they're not interested in the same things I am; I am quite different. I like street art, I like the underground culture, tattooing ... and Ewan has been...he said that he'd been into graffiti when he was younger so I feel like I can relate to him..... can talk to him...I like to get out more, I like to travel and Ewan's done a lot of that... so it's just something he can talk about and I can listen to for when I do it in the future just to see if it's worth listening to (Fred, young person interview).

### **7.2.1. How young people thought the practitioners perceived them**

Young people wanted the practitioners that they felt they developed a relationship with to provide them with advice and support online when they needed it. As practitioners advised and supported young people within youth clubs, young people felt that this would be the same reason why practitioners would have wanted to interact with them through their personal profiles.

I think maybe they're trying to look out for you because Facebook, a lot of things happen on Facebook. Maybe they want to keep an eye on how you're doing because youth workers are your friends really. They're not teachers. What you're doing if you're doing anything that you're not

meant to be doing and maybe if you're not... if you are doing that maybe to direct you not to do it (Fred, young person interview).

Young people therefore perceived that practitioners wanted to offer them advice and support when it was needed by the young person. This expectation was modelled on the nature of the relationships that young people developed with these practitioners within their youth work settings.

### **7.2.2. Reasons for connecting with practitioners' personal profiles**

The majority of young people articulated similar characteristics and incentives for wanting to friend a practitioner's personal profile, than the characteristics that they identified in practitioners that they felt they had developed a relationship akin to a friendship with. These incentives revolved around three key aspects:

- Support
- Advice
- Availability

Young people wanted to interact through SNS with those practitioners that had been able to support and advise them within club settings, and that were available to offer support and advice when needed. Young people overwhelmingly wanted to interact with these practitioners through their personal profiles in order to access the above three aspects outside of club times and spaces. These were the practitioners they felt they had developed a relationship with based on the credibility based approach to trust.

'Cos we can talk to them. You can get support' (Joyce, young person interview).

Some young people viewed individual practitioners as similar to how they viewed their friends, and therefore couldn't comprehend why policy and guidance might have prohibited interacting with them through personal profiles.

Personally I don't really think there is anything wrong with it, but because of the whole law and stuff and yeah... I understand. It doesn't bother me, but if it was... if I hadn't the law and I had that, it wouldn't bother me, because I mean like we're friends, sort of thing. So why can't I add my friend on Facebook? (Cathy, young person interview).

As shared in chapter six, findings suggested that the overwhelming majority of young people wanted to connect with practitioners' personal profiles. However, some had a notion that this was not allowed.

'I don't think youth workers were allowed' (Aiden, young person interview).

For the majority of young people the law, guidance and what was supposed to happen was not the decider in determining whether they wanted to friend practitioners or not.

Because she's a youth worker. And, no, I'm only saying that because I don't like her {laugh}.

Liesl: How would it have been different if it was a worker you liked?

I wouldn't, I wouldn't see a problem. Because she's my friend sort of thing (Tommy, young person interview).

This example strengthened the assertion that, for young people, individual relationships rather than relationships with all youth work practitioners that interacted with them was key. This young person initially suggested that it was wrong because it was against the rules, but then it turned out that he was really against it because he did not like the practitioner in question and did not feel as if he developed an individual relationship with them.

A very small minority of young people identified that interacting with practitioners through their personal profiles would impact on and change the

nature of the relationship from a working relationship to a more personal relationship.

It probably would become less like a working relationship and more like a friendship really. It's depending on how much you interacted with that person online. Because if you chat at night, 'best friend, ra-ra-ra', then it would just, it would completely change it. Wouldn't it? Just a level of friendship (John, young person interview).

He acknowledged that the relationship with a youth worker was complex in nature and when I asked him if he considered the practitioners to be his friends, he responded:

Those two. Like I said, like when we're here, yeah. Like when we see them, it will be like, 'How are you?' Friends, yeah, but not like friends-friends, more like, what do you call it, colleagues. Not colleagues, just go to the person and, 'How are you. Why don't we catch up, I've got five minutes. How you're doing?' (John, young person interview).

However, a youth work student on placement interacted with a young person on Facebook and this had repercussions. Young people who attended this setting had a greater understanding of some of the issues and concerns of interacting with practitioners through their personal profiles than other young people. For example, that interacting through personal profiles was not allowed and the consequences when it was.

A small number of young people realised that practitioners had responsibilities that extended further than individual relationships. They realised that, for them, their individual relationship might be key, but the practitioner had a role to fulfil that was directed by guidance and policy.

'You trust them to do their job. So it works both ways really' (John, young person interview).

**Table 7.1: Young people's views on their relationships with practitioners**



Young People	All Practitioners as Friend	Specific Practitioners as Friend		All Practitioner as Professional	Some Practitioners as a Professional
		Episodic friend	Free flowing friend		
9	0	8		1	8

For young volunteers a more uneven distribution was found in terms of how they viewed practitioners. This is demonstrated in the table below. More young volunteers viewed some or all practitioners as professionals rather than 'as friends'. This could explain why most young volunteers in chapter 6 wanted to connect with practitioners - not because they viewed them 'as friends' but because they viewed themselves similar to the practitioners - as practitioners and therefore as colleagues.

**Table 7.2: Young volunteers' perceptions of relationships with practitioners**

Young People Volunteers	All Practitioners as Friend	Specific Practitioners as Friend		All Practitioner as Professional	Some Practitioners as a Professional
5	1	1		2	1

In summary, the majority agreed that they only wanted to connect through personal profiles with practitioners with whom they perceived they had developed an individual relationship akin to a friendship with. Through analysis it became clear that some young people experienced this friendship as a one-sided helping relationship or episodic friendship. Only three of the fourteen

young people viewed all the practitioners that worked with them as professionals and therefore did not view the relationships that they developed with them as similar to a friendship, but rather viewed them as colleagues.

### ***7.2.3. Reasons why young people didn't want to interact with practitioners***

The majority of young people did not identify any reason or sanction for not connecting with practitioners through practitioners' personal profiles.

However, some young people identified that practitioners would be able to see what young people shared on their own profiles. Some young people were concerned that the content of their postings would have made practitioners view them negatively. The findings also suggested that young people were concerned about what the other co-constructors of their profiles could post about them and how this could have impacted on the perception of friended practitioners..

### **7.2.4. Young volunteers and the development of relationships with young people and practitioners**

Developing relationships proved more complicated and blurred for young volunteers because of their dual status (as young person and as volunteer), and the differences between existing and new relationships with young people. Where these two roles took place in different clubs, at different times, and with younger age range young people, this simplified these multiple roles for young volunteers.

### **7.2.5. Young volunteers who volunteered and participated as a young person in different clubs**

One of the young volunteers took a similar approach to practitioners who did not want to interact with young people through personal profiles. She was also the only young volunteer who suggested that a work profile would be a more appropriate way for practitioners to interact with young people.

I think a work profile would be a difference. Because as long as the account from the youth worker wasn't adding like all of the young children because that's when bad things start happening. So you have to be careful (Kayleigh, young person interview).

I asked her what she meant by bad things and she responded:

'Like on Facebook there's been accusations of teachers liking children and adding them and starting to chat to them wrongly' (Kayleigh, young person interview).

This young volunteer agreed with other young people that relationships between young people and practitioners were not all similar and therefore practitioners should not add all young people.

### **7.2.6. Adding young people that were not known to young volunteers before they volunteered**

As mentioned in chapter six, two young volunteer friended young people they volunteered with that were not known to them before volunteering. One of these was one of two young people who volunteered in the same setting. The only identifiable difference between these two young people was their own experiences with practitioners before they became volunteers. The volunteer who friended young people had experience of a youth worker friending him

through the practitioner's personal profile when he was a young person. This practitioner offered the young person advice and support and provided a listening ear (or rather eye) when he wanted to 'talk' privately online. What he provided this young person was the exact relationship characteristics that young people identified as important for them in developing relationships with practitioners. The young volunteer made clear that this was a relationship that helped and supported him significantly during his earlier adolescence. He suggested that he wanted to offer the same experiences to the young people that he worked with. He initially stated that he viewed all the young people he friended through his personal profile as friends, but then altered his position.

Not as a youth worker, no. I mean, as a youth worker my job is, well just to sort of like keep them company. So I suppose in some ways yeah, I find it is because of the youth work, but most of the time it is because we're friends and we can talk to each other about everything (Michael, young volunteer interview).

The young volunteer suggested that the young people that he worked with were his friends. However, he then suggested that he did not see all of them as his friends, but only the ones that were closer to his own age. The others he accepted as what he termed 'work friends'. The young people he had not developed any type of relationship with in the setting, he did not friend at all.

I explain to them why not. And I say, I can't be your friend on Facebook. I'll put my job on the line. You can talk to me in youth club or you can talk to me on the street, but Facebook is sort of like a main sort of- how can I explain it {pause}. Because there's so many things that go on Facebook, I just say, 'look, there's some things I don't want you to read' (Michael, young volunteer interview).

Like other young people speaking about their relationships with practitioners, he distinguished between his relationships with individual young people. This young volunteer viewed his relationships with the young people that he volunteered with as variable and dependent on what he perceived the nature of the relationship to be. He used this perceived nature of the relationship, to rationalise and define the types of interactions that he engaged in with young

people. Even though young volunteers viewed themselves as practitioners, his perceptions and actions were more in line with young people than with practitioners. No one has ever discussed interacting with young people through social network sites with him and he was also following the online example of the practitioner that he interacted with.

This young volunteer shared that he assisted a young person with a problem she had, but when asked about how he logged this conversation, he said that he did not, because she asked him not to. This was a situation that potentially could have had far-reaching consequences as logging conversations and concerns was part of the youth work role and this happened because of the propensity to respond as a friend-like figure before considering responding as a volunteer. The concern exists that this young person might not know what an appropriate volunteer reaction online should be. This is because his knowledge is based on his own experiences as a young person who friended a practitioner.

#### **7.2.7. How the friends of young volunteers perceived these volunteers**

Young volunteers volunteering in clubs that their own friends attended, were not viewed as practitioners, but only as friends.

'She is not really a youth worker to me' (Sara, young person interview).

Young volunteers therefore had multiple relationships and perceived roles within settings - as friend to their existing friends but as young volunteer to the other young people. When young volunteers were approached through their personal profiles by young people, they addressed the young person before they considered accessing the advice and support of another practitioner.

If I saw it on Facebook then it's got nothing to do with youth club. If it is at youth club then it is youth club but then outside I will deal with it myself (Ally, young volunteer interview).

Young volunteers tended to act in their own capacity when they interacted with and supported young people through social network sites rather than following the guidance or protocols that they would have been expected to use if a similar situation presented itself in a club setting. This causes concern as analysis shows they viewed themselves as practitioners within the club setting but do not follow this through with the same young people outside the club setting. They also did not make use of policies and guidance that existed off-line, for example logging conversations and concerns, or asked for advice and support from practitioners. This created vulnerabilities not only for them but also for the young people that they connected with and who might have discussed issues with practitioners instead if their friends weren't young volunteers. Credibility based approach to trust might have been evident but other factors, for example institutional trust were potentially lacking.

### ***7.3. The nature of the relationships that practitioners thought they developed with young people***

The majority of practitioners viewed their relationships with young people as professional working relationships. This majority included all Connexions background practitioners and all youth work managers. Analysis suggested that the nature of the relationships developed as perceived by practitioners impacted on the type of SNS profile that practitioners considered using to connect with young people.

Practitioners who viewed their relationships as professional relationships wanted to engage with young people through work profiles. These practitioners wanted to provide young people with information concerning club times and schedules.

This is similar to the types of information that practitioners provided, via work phone and e-mail. They perceived that their relationships with young people were underpinned by institutional trust. The least popular space to connect with young people was group pages for the reasons identified in chapter six. Practitioners who already had experience of connecting with young people through personal profiles were more likely to view their relationships with young people as a more personal, helping relationship, rather than 'just' a work relationship. This reflects the credibility based approach to trust development as it reflects the characteristics that some young people want in a practitioner relationship- someone to listen, taken an interest in them, etc.

### **7.3.1. Relationships perceived as 'more than a work relationship' by practitioners**

All practitioners who interacted with young people through their personal profiles shared being able to share information with young people instantaneously. They were also able to offer advice and support to young people when needed rather than only once or twice a week within a youth club setting and time.

Practitioners who connected with young people via their personal profiles perceived their practitioner role as 'more than a job'. They also perceived additional incentives for engaging with young people through their personal profiles. The incentives provided practitioners with information and insight that they would not otherwise have had access to.

No info and that's where, that's why Facebook was so important. That's where you became aware of the inside life. When I was a volunteer, you know, when we got into the club we'd know if two people weren't talking or people were fighting or someone was going out with somebody else. We knew where to watch or if a new relationship has started up, you

knew what sort of conversations to have to make sure they were ok, make sure you understood what was going on. Whereas now, you going in with conversations but you are not sure, you don't have that inside knowledge you know. And it also helped me plan what kind of sessions I was kind of doing (Youth work background practitioner 4).

Incentives for practitioners to friend young people through their personal profiles included:

- Practitioners knew what was going on in young people's lives, and could tailor sessions and conversations around it.
- Practitioners could easily and effectively share information with young people.
- Practitioners could provide advice to young people when the young people needed it.
- Practitioners who had experience of interacting with young people through their personal profiles felt that it enhanced their practice, but also their relationships with young people.
- Practitioners felt young people trusted them more if they opened up their lives to the young people through the use of a personal profile.

...and I just say they trust you, they don't trust the group. And that's where it becomes difficult because you know, there are centres they can go to, and some do. But those that are vulnerable within a, you're sort of...rural areas and stuff, they tell you they're not so comfortable with everybody else knowing. And so you would do better to add them as friends on your personal profile (Youth work background practitioner 4).

The first three points could also have been achieved through work profiles. Points two and three could also be achieved through a group page, but point three, at the time of interview, could only be achieved if it was a concern or issue that a young person did not mind being addressed in public. At the time of interview, private communication on groups and pages was not possible, and



therefore all communication that took place was public and viewable by the group's whole networked public audience..

Points four and five above were the main reasons given why these practitioners added young people to their personal profiles - they experienced their role as more encapsulating, as opposed to a responsibility to engage with young people for a few hours a week only. They felt that young people trusted them as individuals and therefore wanted to be accessible to them and further develop the individualised 'more than a work' relationship with young people. They wanted to have more opportunities to support and advise young people when concerns and issues arose. However, they also wanted access to more information concerning what went on in young people's everyday lives.

In a few instances mention was made of additional reasons why practitioners might have wanted to connect with young people through personal profiles. An example was shared of a further practitioner using fear as an incentive for young people to interact with him through his personal profile. In this example, young people connected to this practitioner's personal profile not because they saw him 'as a friend' but rather because of the 'sanction' of this practitioner being known for altering photographs taken within youth work settings of non-friended young people and commenting in a sarcastic 'funny' way on these photographs.

Yeah, and sharing photographs and adapting photographs and making really inappropriate comments. And we did have to deal with it. Very sort of disciplinary procedures (Youth work background manager 2).

All the friended young people were able to view these photographs and they made the other young people aware of this practice. This encouraged young people to friend this practitioner to avoid photographs of them being altered and made fun of. This example indicates that not all examples of 'more than' a work relationship were in order to advise and support young people but at times the

reasoning behind it appeared more sinister. Young people would therefore add practitioners in cases like this attempting to make a rational choice- is the sanction of not adding them greater than the risk of adding them?

Even though there were differences in the ways that practitioners considered interacting with young people on social network sites, practitioners shared one perspective - the importance of being consistent with the approach chosen to treat all young people that accessed universal services the same.

The majority of practitioners made it clear that if they were allowed to friend young people - through personal or work profiles - they would have had friended all the young people they worked with to avoid creating the impression that they had different types of relationships with different young people.

If I had added someone on Facebook, a young person and then their friends... I'm pretty sure that their friends will be a bit pissed that I had added them and not added them, favouritism, isn't it? Singling people out... (Youth work background practitioner 3).

Therefore, practitioners attempted to view all relationships with young people as similar. This is in direct contrast to how young people perceived relationships with practitioners.

In contrast, analysis suggested that consistency in practitioners' approaches was not achieved due to the size of the geographical area covered by the LA, the different backgrounds of the various practitioners, the increase in partnership work and commissioning, the reliance on volunteers and finally the slow dissemination of policy and guidance. All these factors combined to create a situation where inconsistency in approach happened across but also within locality areas.

Not all practitioners agreed that if they were allowed to friend young people, that they wanted to or would. This revealed an inconsistency in potential future but also current practice. For example, in the locality where one practitioner used a work profile, all his colleagues wanted to do the same. In the locality where practitioners connected with young people through their personal profiles, only the practitioners who lived and worked in this area did; the others did not. These inconsistencies stemmed from how different practitioners viewed their relationships with young people. Practitioners that perceived their relationships as work or professional relationships did not consider interacting through personal profiles. Practitioners who considered their role to be 'more than just a work' relationship were already connected to young people through their personal profiles.

Two paid practitioners from a youth work background, as well as an adult volunteer and a young volunteer, who interacted with young people through their personal profiles, were instructed by their shared line manager to sever this connection. They displayed confusion about how interacting with young people through a personal profile was any different from interacting with them in a youth club.

The thing is I always think, you know, we have CRB checks, so you know, we're safe to be in a room with them, so I think we can do just the same in the room as you can really on you know, a website, don't you think? (Youth work background practitioner 4).

Some of these practitioners were able to identify differences between interacting with young people in a club and interacting with them 'under the radar'.

Yeah, but then you get all sorts of side stories that all of our friends are on our profile... everyone else on our friends list could also interact with the young people, do you know what I mean? (Youth work background practitioner 5).

The above quote illustrated that not only the practitioner that friended a young person were able to interact with young people through their personal profiles, but also everyone else that the practitioner friended. This was not realised or acknowledged by all the practitioners that wanted to or did connect with young people through their personal profiles. They therefore felt as if they were not trusted by the organisation to do what they thought they already did during youth club sessions. These practitioners felt they had let young people down and broken trust through severing the connection.

I mean you feel guilty. You feel as if they feel as if you've cut them off. Although you're a youth worker trying to get, you know, sort of let them know that you're open and listening, you've kind of cut them off. And it's the pipeline that they use regularly. But you've cut them off, and that's their channel. They don't understand why their easiest channel to get contact with you, you've sort of capped it and said no (Youth work background practitioner 4).

The practitioners who had to 'unfriend' young people suggested they had to avoid impacting negatively on their relationship with these young people and on the young person themselves.

I had to send them a message saying 'thank you very much, but I'm your youth worker.... I've got to remove you' You know you have to put it in a very nice way and I've tried to say also what I've got to say, 'I'm really sorry, you know, unfortunately, I'm not allowed' (Youth work background practitioner 4).

A youth work background practitioner who friended young people through his personal profile worked for a partner organisation as well. Within his organisation, this was not considered unsolicited interaction but was allowed within the organisation's guidance and policy. This brought with it potential inconsistency in approach between practitioners from different organisations that practiced with the same young people on the same project or even on different projects. This type of situation caused concern for a number of practitioners as it is also clearly against the majority of the practitioners' perspective of being consistent in whatever practice they were following.

...and also when you're working.... your tendering in or commissioning in outside agencies to work with your young people.... what's the policy then? (Connexions background practitioner 4).

The partner practitioner friended all young people, as well as his colleagues. According to him, this was not a policy or guidance concern, as he also friended his line manager and child protection officer. A concern verbalised by some practitioners was that situations like this could cause confusion, but also perceptions by young people that the practitioners who were not connecting with them through personal profiles didn't want to friend them, rather than not being allowed. This could then have impacted on young people's self-concept, but also how they perceived that practitioners viewed them, and also how they perceived the practitioner.

... because then say they came in here for some sexual health advice or a drop-in and they saw another member of staff then they try to add them and then that member of staff does not accept their request and yeah, it could cause, why is that person adding them and why is that person not... so it needs to be consistent (Youth work background practitioner 7).

The below encapsulates the reasons or deterrents identified for why connection through personal profiles with young people was and could be problematic:

- Young people would be able to view everything about the practitioners' private lives that was on their personal profiles.
- Practitioners would need to be available all the time and practitioners made clear that this would make it difficult to maintain a work/life balance.
- Practitioners' other friends would have access to interact with the young people and young people's friends who did not access youth work provision would be able to interact with the practitioner's personal profile through the friended young person's profile.
- It was perceived as against the rules by some of the practitioners.

For the above reasons the majority of practitioners considered that alternative methods to connect with young people might be more appropriate for the professional relationships they perceived they developed with young people.

### **7.3.2. Relationships perceived as work or professional relationships by practitioners**

Connexions background practitioners considered that there was a difference in the relationships that developed between young people and the practitioners from the two different professional backgrounds. This difference in relationship was illustrated, by, for example the fact that most practitioners from a youth work background received multiple friend requests from young people. However, the majority of former Connexions practitioners have never been sent a friend request by young people. According to these practitioners, youth work background practitioners and Connexions background practitioners were viewed differently by young people for a variety of reasons

..I think Connexions and youth workers have always had slightly different boundaries anyway. ... I think Connexions boundaries have always been a bit tighter, I think they've been a little bit more formal, they've been in an advisory role rather than a befriending role and I think that's maybe where some of the differences are, so I would never give somebody my personal phone number or my personal Facebook and I think youth work is a bit different than Connexions, they see them more in their own communities and then they...you know out in the street and doing outreach things so I think it's a bit more blurry (Connexions background practitioner 2).

This quote demonstrates how the relic of the varied practitioners' interactions with young people in their previous roles - Connexions in an advisory role and youth work in a befriending role - impacted on how young people perceived practitioners. It also highlights the nature of the relationship that practitioners

portrayed to young people but also to other practitioners from different backgrounds.

All Connexions background practitioners shared that because of their previous roles young people viewed them as part of a professional relationship rather than viewing them as 'like a friend'. A further example of this was a practitioner that shared that, in her experience, the relationship with young people was a one-sided, but also a rather episodic, relationship. She suggested that the source of the young people's trust in her was her job role. The relationship was episodic in that it was time limited and function limited. She shared that, in her experience, if you were unable to provide the advice and support that young people wanted, then you were redundant to them.

That was fine and I used to see a lot in their twenties and that was nice. Because they do mix with the younger ones as well. So it's all interrelated. But once I told them I'm no longer working there, I'm not over there, they seem to lose their trust {laughs} (Connexions background practitioner 3).

This suggested that, in this Connexions background practitioner's case, the young people perceived the relationship as a work or professional relationship only. When she took a work position in a different area, young people seemed to lose their trust in her to advise and support them. The trust they felt towards her related to the role that she played within their lives within a specific work function and geographical space. Her credibility was therefore limited to her role rather than to her personally. Additionally, not one young person shared that they have developed a friendship like relationship with a Connexions background practitioner and no Connexions background practitioner viewed their relationships with young people as 'more than a work relationship'.

Six of the practitioners who shared that their relationships with young people were purely professional work relationships suggested they wanted a work

profile to connect with young people. One of these six already had a work profile and two of the other five work in the same area as him.

### **Work profiles were perceived to reflect the nature of the work relationship**

Work profiles were appealing to these practitioners for numerous reasons:

- They appeared professional as it had youth worker in the profile name, , for example, 'Kate Reynolds Youth Worker'.
- Young people couldn't view anything about the practitioner's life.
- The practitioner could have used it to interact with young people in the manner that young people used it to interact with each other - it would therefore have been useful for sharing information with young people at short notice.
- It would have enabled practitioners to share photographs and other media to a bigger (scalable), but selected, audience, and allowed for interaction in a space that allowed young people to share items as well.
- Practitioners were able to view everything about the young person's life; the aspects young people wanted to share with practitioners but also those aspects that they might not have wanted all practitioners to view or to know about; because the young people would still be interacting through their personal profiles.

The practitioner that interacted with young people through a work profile suggested that being able to see everything posted about the young people he 'friended', but also their friends he did not 'friend', was disconcerting to him. Especially because the majority of friended young people were now over the age



of nineteen, and he was concerned about the nature of some of the material displayed on his newsfeed.

A work profile is do-able. But the issue that I have with it still, is even though it's your work profile, you still get their personal stuff (Youth work background practitioner 6).

His manager initially suggested that all practitioners should be allowed to create work profiles. However, the interview provided her with the space and time needed to reflect on the practicalities and the nature of work profiles. She expressed concern about whether all practitioners were trustworthy enough to be allowed to connect with young people through work profiles. Therefore she adapted her view and suggested that only practitioners that met the following criteria would be allowed to create a work profile:

- Practitioners she trusted
- Trained practitioners (up to professional qualification)
- Experienced practitioners

Trusted practitioners implied practitioners that she had known for a long time, with a positive practice track record. She suggested that only practitioners that were professionally qualified should be allowed a work profile. At the time of interview, what was considered professionally qualified could have been contentious. Connexions personal advisers completed their own training, but at the time my fieldwork took place did not have the JNC youth work professional qualification. The expectation in this particular council was that all practitioners in these new roles would eventually hold the JNC professional qualification. This manager's response could be construed as a positive bias towards practitioners from a youth work background (this is also her own background). This is due to the relationship she fostered with youth workers as part of the previous

structure, where Connexions and the youth service was run separately but in partnership with each other and other organisations.

This manager's approach was informed by the manager's propensity to trust but further trustworthy characteristics were identified. These were identified as credibility based approaches from her perspective but also links to how she perceived and interpreted institutional trust. Analysis indicated a very basic understanding of the differences and similarities between how personal profiles and work profiles could be used was evident in a number of interviews with a variety of practitioners. Only one practitioner made mention of the guidance and support put in place by the council to assist localities in deciding how to connect with young people through SNS.

### **7.3.3. The nature of the relationship adult volunteers were developing with young people**

For adult volunteers, depending on their background, and their reasons for volunteering (e.g. give something back to their community or aiming to develop a career), where they lived and worked, who managed them, etc. the relationship could be interpreted and therefore developed in a variety of different ways.

Some adult volunteers viewed their relationships with young people as work relationships and perceived their volunteering as a means to develop skills to work in the field on completion of their studies. Others perceived their relationships with young people to be 'more than' a work relationship and as part of the vested interest that they have with the geographical space within which they live and volunteer and the young people within it.

Two of the three adult volunteers were in favour of connecting with young people through personal profiles as they felt this was more indicative of a relationship based on trust.

'Personal profiles increases trust. It removes the boundaries and creates a way for them to talk to you at any point in time' (Adult volunteer 1).

According to this volunteer, adding young people to her personal profile put all the different facets of her life together, and made the young people 'like little friends' (Adult volunteer 1). This adult volunteer's views were more in line with how young people viewed practitioners and as 'more than' a work relationship.

Adult volunteers felt that creating a work profile would decrease the trust that young people had in them. They suggested that young people would feel that they were sharing everything about themselves with the volunteer, but that the volunteer, in turn, wasn't being open with them.

'Yeah, but alright we not allowed to see, but it's alright for you to see all of our Facebook's but we not allowed to see yours' (Adult volunteer 3).

Two of the adult volunteers suggested that using a personal profile to interact with young people could have increased the trust that young people had in them as a volunteer. This was because of the shared geographical experience, but also because young people would then have felt that the volunteer trusted and 'liked' them enough to have wanted to support them outside the youth club environment. However, findings also suggested that, depending on the young person and the nature of the relationship developed, this could also have been experienced as decreasing trust, due to the possibility of young people feeling monitored and surveyed by the volunteer. This is demonstrated in the following

direct quote in answer to the question: 'How do you think interacting with young people through personal profiles would impact on trust?'

I think it would increase trust. I don't know, it can either go one way or the other. Like it would increase trust because the young people would feel they were getting an insight as to what there are currently, all these strict boundaries and stuff yet they've been allowed on to this. And talking about the different faces and the different roles you play, they are allowed to see another one of those so they can trust you more. But I think some young people might feel they are being watched- 'are they always reading my profile'? But if the young person had a choice to have a youth worker on there or not they have made the choice to have them, then surely they are happy with it. I think as long as young people are not forced to have them on and the youth workers won't go around patrolling the streets and speak about it to other people, it would be alright (Adult volunteer 3).

The majority of adult volunteers therefore viewed their relationships as 'more than' work relationships and analysis attributed this to volunteering and living in the same geographical space and having a history and multiple relationships within this space.

#### ***7.4. The impact of the dissemination of policy and guidance on practitioners***

Some practitioners were aware of law and potential guidance, but what this was and where it could be found remained unclear for twenty of the twenty-one practitioners.

... because I know there's a lot of policies in the county council and you're not always, although they're there, they're not always written in the simplest form and the main points do not always come across, and sometimes they're hard to find (Youth work background practitioner 7).

Only one practitioner (a youth work background manager) had a clear comprehension of the guidance the county provided, and insisted that any online interaction in her jurisdiction was negotiated and agreed by the guidance.

The majority of practitioners wanted more clarity and guidance about what they were allowed to do, and how they were allowed to do it. The overwhelming majority of practitioners indicated that by the time guidance became available (even though they did not know what it was and it was not shared with them) practitioners were already connected to young people in a variety of different ways, for example, through personal profiles, work profiles and some were aware of group pages.

But I think the council didn't realise how big it was going to get and how much of an influence it was gonna have on young people's lives. So actually the guidance took a while to come out as it always does cos obviously it's got to follow it through so I think by the time the guidance came out some areas had already got Facebook pages set up and all that sort of thing and its going kind of how do you then deal with it now (Connexions background practitioner 1).

The majority of practitioners suggested that the guidance, expectations and laws have never been discussed with them and they have never viewed them either. Analysis indicated that most practitioners' decision to interact with young people or not, was not influenced by the clarity or not of local policy but was rather based on their perception of the type of relationship they developed. Therefore, where they perceived they developed a professional relationship they chose a work profile or no interaction. Where practitioners felt their relationship was 'more than' just a work relationship they considered a personal profile.

To be honest, I don't think... for me, it is quite black and white- I don't want to be friends with young people on my Facebook, so I'm not. No one's told me I can't, and I guess if I really wanted to, I don't know (Connexions background practitioner 4).

Still, the majority of practitioners that were not interacting with young people through SNS followed what they called a 'wait and see' approach. They were

holding back and waiting to see what other areas were doing and also how the council would respond to practice that developed.

#### **7.4.1. Acknowledged benefit of institutional trust on relationships between practitioners and young people**

The majority of practitioners shared that the perceived guidance, as interpreted by them, based on their training concerning other boundaries, provided a 'get out clause' when young people wanted to connect to personal profiles. Without breaking or damaging the trust and relationship that has developed, the majority of practitioners suggested to young people that policy restrained practitioners' personal profile connections..

And I've always just said, 'Oh, but I'm not allowed to do that, because you know I'm not allowed to uhm go past my role.' And that was fine. They just go like, 'oh yeah' (Connexions background practitioner 3).

#### **7.4.2. The impact of institutional trust on relationships fostered between adult volunteers and practitioners**

Findings suggested that paid practitioners both appreciated and feared the relationships that adult volunteers developed with young people. According to the majority of employed practitioners, relying on community volunteers unveiled a blurred area with regard to policy and practice that they were unsure about. The perceived uncertainty and elusiveness of policy and guidance, as the messengers of institutional trust, led to a void of information concerning what adult volunteers were involved in. Varied approaches to adult volunteers and their personal profile connections with young people were evident across the different localities. However, within individual localities the positions maintained were mostly consistent.

Some adult volunteers felt that information was not shared with them about what they were and were not allowed to do. The adult volunteer, who was relieved from her volunteering role for friending young people, felt that she was not informed about the expectations that were held.

'Volunteers especially don't get told any of this till it's too late' (Adult volunteer 1).

A great number of practitioners, especially those with line manager responsibilities for adult volunteers, were uncertain about whether expectations could be held for adult volunteers, and whether these would have been realistic given volunteers' potential wider roles and interest within their communities.

'Yeah, it's very difficult. And, and can you? The debate I've had with myself is, can I tell them who they can talk to?' (Youth work background manager 2).

Young volunteers were no different from adult volunteers in this regard - where a relationship developed before they started volunteering in a setting, they did not see this as a volunteer and young person relationship, but rather identified with the initial or first relationship. This created varied practice by volunteers as they navigated the various relationships they held and this added to the uncertainty concerning expectations that could be held.

Most young volunteers knew that they should not develop friendships and other non-working relationships with young people that they worked with, and that they did not know or were friends with before, and this included friending them on Facebook.

...because it's only a work based relationship. What you have to make up when you're working because it isn't right to have a different type of relationship with a child who's in your care because they might get the wrong idea and like that's when like bad things happen (Kayleigh, young volunteer interview).

This knowledge was gained through youth work training (both formal and informal) but also through the representation of:

- The nature and role of the young person/volunteer relationship - especially given that most young volunteers were working in settings with young people younger than them to avoid a non-working relationship from developing
- The relationships that young volunteers had with the practitioners that worked with them, themselves.
- The examples of relationships that they had with practitioners before they became volunteers, as young people tended to emulate the example that was set for them.

### ***7.5. In summary***

Young people identified that they developed individual relationships with certain practitioners. The characteristics that made them want to develop a relationship with a practitioner were listening, helping and supporting, as well as being a friend. For this reason young people did not want to connect with all practitioners through personal profiles but only with the practitioners that they felt adhered to these characteristics within their individual relationship. This finding highlighted that young people did not develop similar relationships with all practitioners.

However, the majority of practitioners aimed to develop similar relationships with all young people and aimed for consistency and similarity in how they treated young people with a focus on professional, working relationships. However, this differed for the practitioners who connected with young people through their personal profiles. They felt that their relationships were more than



'just' a work or professional relationship. The nature of relationships between practitioners that lived and worked in the same areas created blurred, grey areas that others were unsure about how to react to.

'Under the radar' and unsanctioned interaction directly implied the breach of policy and guidance as a formulator of trust between the organisation and the practitioner. However, in times of change, and also when engaging with a newer communication technology, what was considered to be against the local policy and guidance was less clear for practitioners. Only one of the practitioners had an understanding of the existence of relevant policy and guidance.

The nature of the relationship that practitioners and young people thought they were engaged in also played a huge role in whether perceived guidance was adhered to or not. The majority of young people saw practitioners as a type of friend, whereas the majority of practitioners saw young people as part of a work relationship. Young people wanted to place trust in individual practitioners based on the nature of their relationships, but practitioners wanted to treat all young people the same. The position of adult volunteers was the most contested and unclear. Due to the reliance on volunteers and their pre-existing positions within their communities, paid practitioners did not trust that adult volunteers did not friend young people to their personal profiles, and they would rather not know if they did as they were not sure what they could do about it.

This thesis now turns to sharing the findings on the final inter-linked theme concerning boundaries within these relationships and roles.

## **Chapter 8: Findings: considering boundaries within relationships during unsanctioned connections**

'You can't start policing everybody and when you do, when do you draw a line from your work, you know?' (youth work background practitioner 2).

### ***8.1. Introduction***

The main focus area of this chapter is how boundaries were perceived when considering connection on SNS through personal profiles of practitioners. How young people and practitioners managed their boundaries on SNS and how they were, and could be, impacted on by these connections on social network sites is explored from practitioners' but also young people's perspectives.

The ways that young people and practitioners self-disclose on their personal profiles are explored under the two main methods identified in chapter five - self-enhancement and self-verification. Young people and practitioners used a range of ways to manage their self-disclosure and this impacted on their perceptions concerning connecting through personal profiles with each other or

not. Boundary crossings and boundary violations are explored as these identified a further dimension to the subjective nature of 'under the radar' interaction both in terms of practice, but also perceptions concerning clarity and availability of guidance. The chapter ends with an exploration of additional concerns that boundary crossings and boundary violations created.

## ***8.2. Boundaries in relationships perceived as professional relationships by practitioners***

Boundaries in youth work relationships featured heavily in the interviews with practitioners. All practitioners were aware of maintaining personal and professional boundaries within youth work relationships. However, this was differently expressed and dependent on the nature of the relationship that they perceived they developed with young people.

Practitioners that perceived the development of professional relationships with young people expressed that boundaries between their personal and work lives were important to maintain. All practitioners, except for those who interacted with young people through personal profiles already, were clear about not friending young people to personal profiles. The main reasons given for this were two-fold:

- The potential for blurring or crossing the boundaries between being a professional in young people's lives and becoming something more, for example 'like a friend'. The majority of practitioners were aware that maintaining boundaries in their work with young people was important.

This message was shared to them through training and also reiterated as part of the culture within their settings. For example, as shown in chapter six, no paid practitioner interacted with young people through their personal mobile phones but rather through work phones. A number of practitioners suggested that no-one told them that they could not connect with young people through their personal profiles, but they inferred this based on previous boundary training and practice. For example, not giving young people personal mobile phone numbers, not meeting with young people outside agreed spaces and only meeting for work purposes (County training document, 2008).

The desire of practitioners to keep their personal lives separate and removed from their work so that they could be themselves within their personal spaces. All these practitioners wanted their personal lives and information separated from young people. They felt that if young people were privy to information that was not relevant to the professional relationship, that it would change the nature of the relationship from a professional relationship to a personal relationship.

Oh blimey! All the basic stuff about crossing the boundaries and obviously not keeping professional relationships, becoming friendly. It can blur..., it can be detrimental in all sorts of ways, wouldn't it? I would say if they are involved in my life... they don't want to know what I'm doing in my personal life either. And I don't want them to know all my personal information. And I'd fear that our relationship would change, wouldn't it? (Connexions background practitioner 3).

The majority of practitioners were concerned with maintaining their personal and professional live boundaries rather than considering potential boundaries that might apply to the young people. For these practitioners their focus was on their own self-disclosure rather than the potential self-disclosure of the young people.

The majority of practitioners wanted to self-verify on their personal profiles. They wanted to be themselves and share their lives with the audiences that they chose to connect with. They did not want to be concerned about who these audiences might include and what the potential professional implications might be.

'I swear on Facebook, you know? I wanna be able to carry on swearing on Facebook {laughs}' (Youth work background practitioner 8).

Practitioners who did not connect with young people through personal profiles suggested that if they created a work profile they could still be connected to the young people but share with young people only what they want to share with them.

### **8.2.1. Work profiles as options**

The majority of practitioners who did not connect with young people but who wanted to, would rather have created work profiles. Work profiles enabled the separation of personal and professional lives, and therefore the maintenance of their personal and professional boundaries.

So say I've got Kate Grace Facebook profile. I would probably create a separate Kate Grace youth worker profile and I would add people on that profile and do it in work time and do it , you know for the purposes of the work that we're doing together. But I wouldn't want to do something that kind of bleeds into my personal life (Connexions background practitioner 1).

Some practitioners shared examples of other practitioners creating separate profiles for connecting with young people. In these cases the profile name provided no indication that it was a separate work profile and not a personal profile. Therefore these profiles came across as personal profiles to the young people.

I could just say some of the youth workers, create a Facebook, make as if is their own personal one then add young people. And never actually use it, they don't put any of their own personal stuff on but use it to monitor what young people are doing (Youth work background practitioner 2).

Work profiles, therefore, were used to minimise practitioner self-disclosure but to maintain accessibility to the self-disclosure of the young person. This was not always done in a transparent way in order to enable practitioners to gain access to disclosed information that they perceived they might not have gained access to otherwise.

### **8.2.2. Alternative professional relationship**

A minority shared the practice of utilizing their personal profiles, to search for and browse through young people's mostly public profiles for useful information. This practice was not only for planning sessions or to provide a guide into a difficult conversation, as shared by practitioners who added young people to personal profiles. This was done to share information concerning specific young people when contacted by, for example, the police. The extent to which police thought that practitioners would search online was not known, however, practitioners shared information they found with the police on request. Practitioners suggested that this practice that I named 'client searching' was

common, not only by youth work practitioners and social workers but also teachers. This was possible due to the self-disclosing nature of young people online combined with how young people viewed privacy on SNS.

Occasionally, if a situation has arisen between young people, we'll perhaps find them and log onto Facebook and just have a little look and see if we can access any of the Facebook sites, because they tend to share a lot on their Facebook sites. And I know that's also something that social care does (Connexions background practitioner 1).

Client searching was also used to find out what was going on in young people's lives. For example, if they have not been attending a setting for a few sessions, or if practitioners had concerns about a young person and they wanted to find out more information. Unlike friending young people this was done without the young person agreeing to the relationship or even being aware of it. In light of the focus on voluntary engagement this would signal a clear boundary violation.

...to try to get to the bottom of their peer issues or fights at school. And some of the kids haven't shut their profiles. So you can go and snoop, check up on kids on Facebook, cause a lot of them haven't got good security settings (Youth work background manager 1).

### ***8.3. Relationships where young people viewed practitioners as just 'doing their job'***

Where young people, including young volunteers, did not view a relationship with a practitioner as 'like a friendship' they did not want to connect with the practitioner's personal profile. The majority of young people did not define these relationships other than suggesting that these practitioners were just doing their jobs. The inference can be made to suggest that young people did not develop

friendship-like relationships with practitioners that they felt did not listen to them and that they did not have any shared interests with.

They could not see any benefit in friending them on SNS and could not see why these practitioners would want to connect with them either. Some young people suggested that practitioners who wanted to connect with them in these cases might want to monitor their lives and find out information about them. Young people felt that friending them would result in adapting how and what they shared online. This would therefore have had severe impact on young people's tendency to self-verify in their online disclosure.

### **8.3.1. Young volunteers viewing their roles as professional relationships only**

A young volunteer considered carefully who she friended as she considered herself a role model and did not want to adapt what she contributed online.

She also considered her offline behaviour and the role of her networked publics in her portrayal on SNS. She did not want to change her offline behaviour she rather wanted to curtail the audience that could view it. She was therefore active in managing her audience rather than her content.

I can't have any of the children on there. In case I end up having random pictures ... If someone puts random pictures of me on there and it looks bad and the children see it and it won't look good for me. And it will show them that it's good to do... like go out and have a few drinks and look a bit rough when it isn't. You have to try and look like you're doing good. So just in case someone puts something bad on my Facebook about me (Kayleigh, young volunteer interview).



#### ***8.4. Boundaries when relationships were viewed as 'more than a work relationship' by practitioners***

The four practitioners that were connected to young people through their personal profiles felt strongly that their personal and professional lives were not separate but connected and inter-linked. They considered themselves part of young people's lives all the time. This was due to the multiple roles and relationships that these practitioners were involved in with the young people as they all lived and worked in the same areas.

Yeah, and I could be friends with somebody whose friends with somebody who... you know? So you have to be so careful.... for example, it could be somewhere down the line there's a parent of somebody at school who I'm working with or somebody's child who I have to refer for child protection or whatever. And they're going, you know, "she's drunk on her Facebook" {laughs}. Yeah. And I think it's hard enough to live where you work to keep those boundaries, let alone do youth work. They might lose faith in me as a professional and someone who can advocate for them and, you know? I guess they might lose a bit of respect {laughs} (Connexions background practitioner 4).

Analysis highlighted some practitioners' insights that it was not only about living and working in the same area but also having history within the geographical space. The history within a specific geographical space created the overlapping aspects, that created multiple relationships, that made boundaries problematic rather than only the sharing of geographical work and living space.

Uhm, but I think it's all about those ground rules again, it comes down to boundaries. So yeah, I don't mind, I think you, you hear about different

things, but I didn't grow up in this area, so I haven't got that history of...  
(Connexions background practitioner 1).

Practitioners who friended young people continued to self-verify on their personal profiles, as they felt they had nothing to hide from the young people. Being open and sharing with the young people was perceived as necessary as it portrayed the youth worker as a role model in all aspects of their lives.

However, in three of the four instances where practitioners had young people on their personal profiles, they were told to remove the young people. This was because some information shared was considered inappropriate by some of their networked publics, as it involved young people they worked with. In these cases, self-verification was not considered appropriate as it was felt it had a detrimental impact on some of the young people in the setting.

#### **8.4.1. Practitioners gaining information from adult volunteers who considered their volunteering to create 'more than work relationships'**

In some geographical areas practitioners were aware that adult volunteers (on analysis those that predominantly lived, worked and had history in the same geographical space) added young people to personal profiles. These volunteers viewed their relationships with young people as more than a work relationship. Some practitioners tapped into the insight and information that these volunteers were privy to and used it to tailor sessions to this 'unshared' information and needs.. According to practitioners this saved time and enabled them to support young people without the need to wait till young people finally felt ready to share information, which might also not happen.

Practitioners who had young people on their personal or work profiles gained additional information themselves. They were not reliant on volunteers for insight into aspects of young people's lives that young people might not share at youth club or might take too long to share (from the practitioners' perspectives).

#### ***8.5. Practitioners perceived as 'like a friend' by young people***

As shared in chapter seven, most young people developed a personal relationship that they considered 'like a friendship' and episodic, rather than a professional relationship with some practitioners.

All the young people that viewed practitioners as like a friend could not comprehend why they could not connect with their personal profiles. They did not feel like they had to separate or hide parts of their lives from their 'like a friend' practitioners as they did not hide aspects of their lives from their other friends.

Analysis of the data revealed that for all non-volunteer young people, personal and professional boundaries did not exist. This was because they perceived their interactions with practitioners as personal - their relationships with practitioners encapsulated their personal lives, it was not confined or limited to something outside or separate from their personal life experiences. Therefore, where young people saw practitioners as 'like a friend' they were willing for these specific practitioners to have access to all the information they posted about themselves that others had access to. Therefore not only information shared at youth club but also socially intimate information that they share with their connections on SNS.

A minority did not want to friend any practitioners due to not viewing them as 'like a friend'. One of the reasons given for this was that if they friended practitioners then they had to be more careful concerning what they shared on their personal profile. They also had to consider what others posted about them - both on their own but also the other person's profile. Due to the networked public nature of social network site spaces, if someone was tagged in a post or photograph it created a link to that person and all that person's friends could view it as well.

That's why that's why I like not having to hide anything. Because if someone puts up a picture of me looking like a big dick, I can just leave it out there, because the only people who can see it are the people who don't care about seeing it. And then there's people who might post stuff on my wall, but like there's some guy that might see it. And then they'd

have to post it in code and you're trying to work it, but it's not... it's pointless to use if it is not easy (John, young person interview).

Where young people viewed individual practitioners as 'like a friend', if the option of friending presented, all these young people would have added the practitioner. In these cases where young people saw practitioners 'like all their other friends', concern about the practitioner's position and role became irrelevant. The episodic nature of the friendship described by young people allowed for practitioners to comment and offer support and advice through the young people's profiles. However, it seemed very much geared towards meeting the young people's needs and therefore practitioners would have had to be careful not to overstep the young people's expectations of being an episodic friend rather than a practitioner.

A small number of young people felt that this might put the practitioner in a difficult position, as practitioners have a duty to share particular information with other practitioners. This was mostly in the few instances where young people were involved with potentially illegal, controversial or unconstructive activities.

And like the whole police thing is like, it's just... I don't know, it makes you think. It's not about Facebook being Facebook. It's oh, I can't do that. Or someone tags a picture of you drunk, half naked. And then it's like shit! Take that off, because thingy might see it. And then that's underage drinking, report it to the police (John, young person interview).

However, the majority of young people viewed this differently. They suggested that the practitioner could have offered support whenever it was needed, even outside of work hours. They considered it beneficial that a practitioner would be

able to respond to risky or inappropriate behaviour and material. They did not want practitioners to do this on their wall or in response to a status update (where everyone could see it) but more discreetly in a private message. They also wanted practitioners to be selective in what they commented on. This was because otherwise they would have started to feel they should not have added the practitioner, as it might have become embarrassing and others might have started to ask who the constant commenter was.

A few young people suggested that they might be more careful concerning what they posted if they friended a practitioner even if they viewed them as a friend.

I suppose it is a good thing in a way because then you've got like sense of controlment really and you know, be more sensible if you know that someone is there (Andy young person interview).

This young person stated that his offline as well as online behaviour in general would have potentially improved if he friended a practitioner, as other profile holders were also able to post and tag aspects about him.

I always set statuses and stuff and photos from parties that I really would not want them to see just for the fact that, like, it's the kind of photos and stuff that I wouldn't want a job to see if I had like my boss on Facebook (Aiden, young person interview).

Another young volunteer had a practitioner from a club that he attended, but also young people that he volunteered with, on his profile. As discussed in chapter seven he did not add all the young people that he volunteered with but only some. Some of these he considered to be friends and others that he added he considered to be work relationships. However, the young people he added as part of a work relationship, had access to all the information that others he friended had access to. He did not make use of different privacy settings for his

different audiences or content boundary management on his profile. As discussed in chapter six, social network sites are unique in that they provide more than one space to interact on a profile. This young volunteer suggested that he was managing his boundaries by excluding some young people, therefore he was audience managing to an extent. However, when discussing adding young people to the same profile, as personal or work friends, he was not referring to what was visible on his profile anymore. He was rather commenting on how he interacted with them through the private message function that could be used synchronously or asynchronously.

In the majority of cases young volunteers had very little youth work training - either only one day or just started the entry level youth work course. Due to their age and role they also had very little experience. This led to them making assumptions concerning what's considered appropriate within a youth work relationship and what not.

Liesl: How were you able to log that conversation? Did you share it with Susan?

Interviewee: Uh, I wasn't no.

Liesl: No. Why didn't you?

Interviewee: She didn't want me to let anyone else know. So I was just like, 'that's fine. It's just between me and you' (young person volunteer 2).

As discussed in chapter five, boundaries should be maintained in order to safeguard young people and practitioners from potential allegations and harm. Practitioners and young volunteers who interacted with young people through their personal profiles did not consider that their interactions with young people might be detrimental or possibly lead to the creation of subtle harm for the young people, or even for themselves.

Some of the potential risks of subtle harm created by connecting with young people through personal profiles were:

- Practitioners connecting with young people for unclear or uncertain reasons.
- Receiving advice and support that might not have been appropriate and by someone who might not have been experienced or knowledgeable enough.
- Information that young people disclosed was not being passed on.
- Becoming reliant on a practitioner always being there.
- Being negatively impacted on by events and experiences in the practitioners' life.

In all of these instances the interaction at first could have appeared to be helpful. Only in some instances did the practitioner realise that these above points could be considered a concern.

It depends on the context. I think every case is its own case really. You can't just go, oh it's completely bad or it's completely good, because like Thingy and Sara are two very good examples. Thingy could have added him, 'ooh, I fancy him', or 'I think he's really nice.' Or she could've just been, 'ha ha, there's a laugh.' So that mates who don't work together anymore and then that's inappropriate and that's when you're breaking the law, well moral law at least, but then in that way it's fine. But they're both considered bad (John, young person interview).



## ***8.6. Dealing with the variation in boundaries due to how relationships were perceived by participants***

A number of practitioners knew practitioners and volunteers that added young people to their personal profiles. According to them there was no real standardised guidance available, and therefore they unfriended these practitioners' profiles in order not to be associated with the practice.

A concern identified by all practitioners, was the constant accessibility afforded. Practitioners raised this as a concern for three reasons:

- The time implication that personal profile connections would have for practitioners.

The risk of practitioners missing something important or significant that a young person might have shared or asked as a direct request for support. I just think it's too much, it's just gonna open too much of a can of worms. How could you, as it is, we don't have time to do the job. If you were on their Facebook accounts... And what if you were on there and you missed something? And like I just said, if you were in there for the purpose to monitor it and that was ok with everybody, and then you missed something major. Because you don't have time to look at it all the time. Because they put stuff on, reams and reams and reams. And what happens then? Would you be liable? I mean you could employ somebody fulltime to do that and they'd never be able to keep up with it, would they? So I just... you can't be there. You wouldn't be able to do your job. You'd be too stressed if you're there twenty-four hours a day in this sort of job (Connexions background practitioner 3).

- The variant level of responsibility if they viewed 'something' that could be considered significant.

Yeah {sighs} I suppose there would be the initial benefit for the young person that they're sitting somewhere at midnight and they feel really low and they Facebook their youth worker and the youth worker responds. But what happens years later when you've got so many and you can't respond to them? So that everything that's potentially good for them can also have the opposite effect. Because that person will then need to basically be on call 24-7 to deal with that vulnerable young person , because when you ignore, that's worse than anything. You know, especially for kids who encounter double rejection over and over again. 'Oh. she's my friend on Facebook! She cares that much!' And then they send a message, 'I'm really fed up. I feel suicidal.' And then you send them this big text of, 'do this, do this.' And then three weeks later they feel like that again and you've banned them (Youth work background practitioner 8).

#### **8.6.1. Impact on practitioners' other relationships**

Some practitioners who had previous experience of connecting with young people suggested that connecting with them through personal profiles turned into a constant process in order for them to be able to provide twenty four hours a day support. As a result of this, these practitioners seized adding young people to their personal profiles. A practitioner who added young people as part of a previous role demonstrated how she had to alter how she connected with others on her personal profile due to having young people that she used to work with as friends on her profile.

Yes, And now I'm always click... it never shows I'm online. So I go on there and I don't chat with anybody really, because every time I go on there, an old student say, 'Hi Ellie, how are you? I can't find a job. What should I do?' And it's like aaahh! {exasperated} (Youth work background practitioner 8).

The potential longevity of the unsanctioned connection therefore created additional time and relationship concerns and impacted on practitioners. The only way to sever a social network site relationship is to delete a person as a connection. Some practitioners removed young people from their personal profiles, but only after being told to do it and they explained to the young people why and apologised to them. Other practitioners shared that they found themselves with young people on their personal profiles long after completion of professional practice with the particular young people. Practitioners who had to remove young people, and also those that had young people from previous roles on their profiles, suggested that removing a young person from a practitioner's personal profile could be experienced as rejection of the relationship that the young person thought they shared with the practitioner.

Due to the perceived personal nature of the relationships with those practitioners that young people viewed 'as a friend', the end of the youth work relationship did not mean the end of the relationship. A number of practitioners raised this as a concern and for the purpose of sharing these findings and in the discussion I refer to the practice of being connected to young people after the professional youth work relationship has officially ended, from practitioners' perspectives, as 'after-care service'.

### **8.6.2. After-care service**

Some practitioners shared how after-care service developed and impacted on them. This happened within youth work relationships but also where practitioners worked as teachers in alternative education settings (i.e. Pupil

Referral Units (PRU's)). One practitioner made clear that this impacted on her decision not to add further young people to her personal profile.

I have been teaching for so long that my old students are now up to 28, 29 years old. And many, many of them- I've taught hundreds of students and lots of them over the years have requested me on Facebook. And obviously, so long as they're over 18, I've accepted quite a few of them, But I'm now, I'm now an aftercare service from all those years of teaching. Because if a young person- well, an adult; ex young person in my profession, Facebook's me, 'I'm really depressed, my man just walked out,' I can't ignore that. So now I don't accept any more, but the 30 or 40 I got on there I can't delete. But it was a learning curve (Youth work background practitioner 8).

Analysis indicated that if the nature of the work relationship established was a helping relationship that extended further than 'just a work relationship', then the relationship remained similar in character even into the young person's adulthood.

And I already have very difficult... it's very difficult to close cases when you've been seeing people for four years, because they can't understand why, because to them you're this person, this big person in their life. It's very difficult for them to stop seeing you. So if you're always on Facebook, they're gonna keep relying on you. And it would also make your work unmanageable, because you would never be able to close a case, would you? (Connexions background practitioner 3).

The boundary crossing therefore remains indefinitely and with it the sense of responsibility that the practitioner feels towards these former clients.

### **8.6.3. Friending young people after the completion of the professional relationship**

It seemed that different information was circulating concerning at what stage or age practitioners were allowed to friend young people to the practitioners' personal profiles.

...because people have said to me 'if you don't work with young people, if you haven't worked with them for two years then you can add them and things like that' (Youth work background practitioner 3).

Practitioners suggested there should be greater clarity about when they could friend to avoid practitioners crossing boundaries unintentionally.

I think there needs to be something written about people not working. You know about people leaving your service and then when they're 21 years of age, they add you. Something needs to be written about that (Youth work background practitioner 3).

#### **8.6.4. Fluidity of Job Roles**

A further concern involved SNS relationships when a practitioner left the Local Authority or where their role was transferred to another area. In none of the cases were practitioners sure if the connections remained.

Yes, and then they leave. And they still have access. They could be communicating with the young people and we won't necessarily know. So I think... yeah. And, I don't know, I think probably in my experience things like that are nice ideas and people set them up but they're never managed properly. They're kind of managed by the person who sets it up and then when they go, then it gets lost, you know? (Connexions background practitioner 4).

### 8.6.5. Reliance on Volunteers

Inconsistency in volunteer approaches was evident across and even within localities. In some areas volunteers were told they were not allowed to friend any young people. In other areas, if they had young people on their profiles, they had to keep these personal relationships separate from the youth club environment. In further areas the issue of volunteers and their relationships with young people was left unexplored and in others a mixture of approaches was followed for different volunteers.

This uncertainty and inconsistency was acknowledged by most paid practitioners when discussing the roles and relationships of adult volunteers. However, as highlighted in chapter seven, practitioners were unsure how to respond to these situations.

Because they're volunteers as well what makes us say that they can and can't do things? Especially if there's, if it's stuff that they've been doing for years and they're like 'Well I've got so and so on' you know. 'I've got my nephew on who's twelve so why can't I have him on?'. And because we are relying on parents to help out and get involved as well and then we're saying well you can't be friends with young people that you work with but then we're saying you can't have your son or daughter on Facebook. Yeah. Who am I to tell them that they can and can't do things like that? (Youth work background practitioner 3).

The paperwork that practitioners used to recruit and induct volunteers was supplied by the council and was standardised. The paperwork did not mention social network sites and therefore practitioners did not address it with the volunteers.

And thinking about it, I kind of did in my old role a lot of volunteer interviews and on that volunteer paperwork, I'd like follow it through and kind of by the end of the role you could, it all rolled off your tongue and you knew what you were saying about you can't accept presents. But there's nothing on that volunteer paperwork where you discuss social networking or computers. And thinking about that I should always have included that in my volunteer inductions, but I don't think I did which is something for me to reflect on and probably talk to my manager about, the youth development coordinator.... because she's now managing all the volunteers that I managed and kind of let her know (Youth work background practitioner 7).

However, in one of the areas some practitioners took it upon themselves to create new paperwork for volunteers. They did this based on how they interpreted their own training, especially on boundaries.

Well I do in my own clubs and that's why I ask if they have any young people on social network sites and to be honest there are certain regulations that I put in place that are negotiable, some are not (Youth work background practitioner 1).

One practitioner suggested that the messages should have been similar and shared clearly with all practitioners responsible for volunteer recruitment and induction across the county.

So for a development it needs to be all the way through, in all of the training and it needs to be the same messages and even from when you do that volunteer kind of interview stroke induction. And if they're going to be relying more on volunteers it's even more kind of important (Youth work background practitioner 7).

A further practitioner explained that in her setting there were only young volunteers. Unlike the young volunteers interviewed during this study, these were all young people who volunteered due to referral.

...and they might not have done any volunteering or anything, but that's the only way we can get them on board to start getting them in, is if they feel part of something (Youth work background practitioner 2).

In this situation it was suggested that it was difficult to enforce boundaries as these young people volunteered with their own age range. However, this and further practitioners suggested that with adult volunteers boundaries would be enforced.

And I would with the adult volunteers. I'd expect them to, well then, to adhere to our rules, you know then cos then you are opening up, you got a volunteer where you suddenly thinking yes okay for you to use Facebook and start adding young people, then again it's child protection, so that has to be a no but young volunteers I can't (Youth work background practitioner 2).

Analysis illustrated how blurred and complex boundary expectations for volunteers were, because of the different reasons for volunteering, age ranges, existing connections within communities, etc. This led to every area interpreting guidance, as they imagined it, differently. In some instances practitioners and volunteers practiced in more than one geographical area within the council and were therefore adhering to two different sets of interpretations on connecting with young people through personal profiles.

In most of the areas uncertainty was widespread concerning, especially, volunteers connecting with young people through personal profiles. Practitioners did not want to make decisions concerning interaction through social network



sites that might change again and that they felt uncomfortable with. They therefore decided to wait and see what guidance would be forthcoming, but also what other areas were doing in order to learn from their examples and experiences.

### ***8.7. In summary***

Maintaining personal and professional boundaries within a youth work relationship is one of the professional principles that practitioners have to adhere to. However, these were perceived to refer only to the practitioners' boundaries and did not incorporate or acknowledge the potential for young people's boundaries as part of this relationship. How boundaries were interpreted by participants were informed by the nature of the relationship that they perceived they developed, or had to adhere to within the practitioner-young person relationship.

Young people and practitioners can either use self-enhancement or self-verification in order to present themselves on social network sites. The majority of young people and practitioners tended to self-verify. Where practitioners added young people to their personal profiles they continued self-verification which increased the potential for perceptions of boundary crossings. The majority of young people and practitioners tended to manage their SNS boundaries by deciding who to friend and who not. Connecting with others created an extension of the relationship that transcends the natural ending of a practitioner- young person relationship. As such, consequences of this impacts in the professional and personal life of the practitioner, through, for example after-care service.

The thesis now moves on to discuss the analysis of the findings with the relevant literature across the three inter-linked themes to develop theory within one discussion chapter.

## ***Chapter 9: Discussion of findings and key themes***

### ***9.1. Introduction***

The aim of this study was to develop a theory concerning how and why practitioners and young people connected with each other in unsanctioned ways on SNS. The previous three chapters shared the analysed data that allowed the theory about unsanctioned connections in youth work practice to be developed. The aim of this chapter is to draw on the analysed data and the relevant literature to discuss this theory. This chapter highlights the inter-connected nature of the three key themes, and how the perceptions and approaches used were directly impacted on by the three key themes and how they identified particular types of relationships within particular contexts for connections to take place

Youth work was offered in a variety of settings and also in a variety of different types, for example, group work or detached work. Young people and practitioners mostly interacted in the youth work spaces during youth work times. Young people that received additional one to one support from practitioners also received phone calls and texts from work landlines or mobile phones, and e-mails from work e-mail addresses, all sharing information concerning meeting times, spaces and remits. As discussed in chapter one, social network sites have been embraced by young people as a means of interaction and socialisation. This supports what previous research (boyd, 2008; Ito et al, 2008) found in that young people spend a lot of time on social network sites and that they value it as a space within which to connect with others. However, this

study extends this notion to include that young people also wanted to use these spaces with certain practitioners not only to connect and interact but also for support and advice.

This research confirmed Davies and Cranston's (2008) finding that youth work practitioners realised the potential for youth work to explore and be part of young people's interactions on social network sites. However, this study indicated that due to the slow dissemination of policy and guidance to practitioners, how and why practitioners became involved with young people through SNS was varied and mostly involved personal profiles. This extended Davies and Cranston's (2008) finding concerning the 'under the radar' nature of the connections. This research challenged the notion of 'under the radar' connections because in many cases managers were aware of, authorised or benefitted from these connections. However, at the time of fieldwork in 2011-12 great uncertainty still existed concerning how and why practitioners and young people connected with each other on SNS.

During the time of research, youth work provision took place predominantly in pre-existing educational or community settings. A variety of youth work settings and spaces were used - the intensive one to one work also took place, for example, in locality offices. These spaces were often established in pre-existing public buildings, for example, social services buildings. Drawing on an urban semiotics perspective, therefore, these pre-existing educational and community settings would have had existing meanings attached to them by the young people who accessed them (Crawshaw, 2001; Barton and Barton, 2007).

## ***9.2. Spaces for connecting with others***

Findings suggested that young people felt less connected to the actual space of social network sites, and more focused on the interactions and connections that these spaces afforded them. This was confirmed by young people, suggesting that they moved social network sites when their friends moved sites. The majority of young people therefore did not move sites because of the changes made to the actual spaces; rather, they moved to maintain connections with their networked publics. For young people and practitioners these sites became a means to continue their offline lives online and therefore, unlike Hjorth's (2006) findings as discussed in Köhl and Götzenbrucker (2014), for young people their profile did not become a part of their 'self', but rather the connections that they fostered with others on these spaces became a part of their self-representation and not the spaces or the devices through which they accessed them. This study suggested that the part of their 'self' that was most important to young people was not the artefacts left behind, but the friends that journeyed with them. This supported the use of the term networked publics as suggested by boyd (2008; 2010) rather than Castells' (2010) space of place and Auge (1995) and Castells' (1996, 1997) non-places. This sense of being connected not to a space or a place, but rather to the possibilities and potential created within these spaces through the connections fostered emerged from the data of both categories of participants. For example, who young people and practitioners decided to make part of their networked publics and who not, and also how this was determined by the nature of the relationship as perceived by the two role players. The data also indicated the practice of wanting the benefits of being in the other participants networked public without necessarily wanting to connect with them personally.

Unlike Castells' and Auge's research where the focus was on the strangers that travellers came into contact with within non-places, the findings suggested the focus was more on connection and relationships with known networked public

or audience. On these sites, young people 'friended' people that they had different types of relationships with and for different reasons. This research confirmed boyd's (2008) findings that as well as adding close friends and some family members, young people tended to add 'friends of friends' or others within their school or college setting without knowing them directly. Adding others, be they friends or friends of friends, onto profiles removed the barriers of not being in the same place and at the same time. The research confirmed what Resnick (2001) and Quan, Haase & Wellman (2004) and others found that friending increased the potential social connections of profile holders, as they were able to reach more people simultaneously and access relevant information. This study extended the above studies by including relationships with practitioners and researched how and why they wanted to connect and interact with each other on SNS.

Young people wanted to connect with practitioners to receive advice and support from practitioners that they felt they have developed a 'like a friendship' type relationship with. This extended findings from Burke et al (2011) that indicated that young people access advice and support from those that they feel they can trust, and that they can ask for advice when they were making important decision. This clearly links with the remit of youth work as a profession that aims to assist young people in their transition from childhood dependence to adulthood independence through the offering of advice and support based on voluntary engagement and young people's needs and interests (NYA, 1999; Davies and Merton, 2009; Sapin, 2009) The findings suggested that , young people therefore transferred their expectations of youth workers that they held offline into the SNS spaces and expected a similar type of relationship with the practitioners that they wanted to friend.

Young people that connected with practitioners through personal profiles received this advice and support from practitioners, and the practitioners that

added young people to their personal profiles provided this advice and support when needed. This is reminiscent of the type of relationship that parents have with their children - where parents provide advice and support and receive their own advice and support from others (Jang and Dworkin, 2014). Therefore, the reciprocity is not necessarily from the person in whom one invests the advice and support, but another within the 'givers' networked public. Social support as identified by Burke et al(2011) is therefore increased for the young people but this study also highlighted that this not the case for practitioners.

Friending young people through their personal profile had an unexpected negative impact on access to the networked publics of practitioners. Some of them were more careful concerning what information they shared on their profiles, but evidence was also shared about the inability for a practitioner to indicate that she was online due to the young people that she added (who are now adults) still being on her profile. When her profile indicated that she was online, she was swamped with these adults asking for advice and support. This was therefore a continuation of the helping type relationship that they had developed with the practitioner as part of the practitioner/young person relationship that has since come to an end. This had a negative impact on the other connections and relationships on her personal profile. Her availability to young people impacted negatively on her availability to others within her networked publics. The time implication of adding young people to personal profiles or connection with young people through other unsanctioned or sanctioned means was perceived as a deterrent by the majority of practitioners.

Therefore, the findings challenged but also extended research by Oswald et al (2004) that suggested that one to one communication through SNS was more likely to facilitate and allow for self-disclosure and the offering and receiving of support, which strengthens the relationship. The above practitioner was

inundated with communication when online and therefore this impacted on her availability and willingness to offer support when on SNS. The study suggested that self-verifying self-disclosure was standard for young people and practitioners within their networked publics. It also extended Oswald et al's (2004) study by showcasing that young people wanted practitioners to offer advice and support through the one to one function rather than on their walls where they most likely made the self-disclosure. This allows for young people to receive responses of advice and support in private through the use of a public forum.

When the need or function for some connections became redundant, some young people removed them from their profiles. This supported the 'unfriending' possibilities suggested by boyd (2010) and Sibona and Walczak (2011). For a small number of young people a sense of functionality and purpose that overlapped the physical spaces that they inhabited was therefore prevalent. The majority of young people, however, challenged the studies above and suggested that they would leave these connections on their profiles even when their importance became redundant. This is predominantly because when unfriending someone on a social network site, it is an active step that is taken and even though the person being unfriended will not receive a notification, both people will disappear from each others' friend lists. In a networked public space both parties' friends and others will be able to see that the connection has been severed (Sibona and Walczak, 2011). Practitioners also suggested that unfriending young people was problematic as it could impact negatively on the young person's self-concept, but also on their own perception of themselves - as someone who was there to advise and support young people. This finding extended what Bushman and Holt-Lundstad (2009) found concerning external and internal barriers to unfriending others. It identified further external barriers to maintaining friendships with fellow practitioners where others were unsure



about their connections with young people through SNS, for example uncertainty about what is allowed and what not and therefore not wanting to know if others had connections with young people through SNS. Also, as suggested above, maintaining these connections impacted negatively on the practitioners' other connections.

### ***9.3. Connections depended on the perceived nature of the relationships developed***

These relatively new spaces and young people's connections within them presented situations where practitioners wanted to depart from the traditional and normal way of working with young people, and try new and innovative ways that potentially necessitated Heller's (1976) notion of civic courage. Civic courage and a feeling of exploration was prevalent for practitioners who connected with young people. New and innovative ways of working, however, could present as potential boundary crossings as suggested by Smith and Fitzpatrick (1995) and Jackson (2004). This study extends research about boundary crossings and violations to consider SNS connections within youth work practice. As Green and Hannon (2007) suggested technological advancements, new spaces and new ways of communicating and interacting with young people were developing faster than the laws, policies and guidance that aimed to manage their use with young people within practice environments. This delay is inevitable, however; the dissemination of this information to practitioners, including volunteers, should have been done timely and effectively to avoid unnecessary and unintended boundary crossings and violations.

The functionality of different social network site spaces seemed to mimic different youth work spaces within geographic settings. This is in line with developments within understanding of internet use in general, and that all spaces are not the same as suggested by Zhao (2006) and also the different means and methods of socialisation within SNS spaces as discussed by various authors, for example Ellison et al (2010) and Davies and Cranston (2008a, b). All the spaces afforded on SNS are not similar and were not similarly perceived and accessed by practitioners or young people. However, this study is the first to identify that the spaces within which young people wanted to connect with practitioners through SNS varied according to the type of interaction and connection they wanted with the practitioner, and their perception of the nature of the relationship that they developed with practitioners. This study identified that the greatest indicator of how and where young people wanted to connect with practitioners was the individually perceived developed relationship. For example, where young people perceived they have developed a 'like a friendship' relationship with a practitioner, they wanted to connect with that practitioner through the practitioner's personal profile, in order to have greater access to the practitioner at all times but also to allow for private, synchronous communications with the practitioner. When young people perceived that they did not develop a relationship with a practitioner they would have preferred interaction through a group page as this provided a practitioner with no additional access to a young person's live.

#### ***9.4. Relationships perceived as 'like a friendship' by young people as and 'more than a work relationship' by practitioners***

##### **9.4.1. 'Like a friendship' type relationship by young people**

Young people's relationships with adults outside of their family and family friends were perceived in some of the literature as highly controlled and segregated from the rest of society within formal educational settings. According to Stanley Cohen (1972, p.151), 'The young are consigned to a self-contained world with their own preoccupations, their entrance into adult status is frustrated, and they are rewarded for dependency'. This statement was made in relation to young people's extended schooling during which time young people are organised within age related groupings and come into contact with only a small number of adults that predominantly are in positions of power over them, for example, teachers, after-school activity and sports leaders. I would therefore suggest that due to the lack of exposure to further adults and the predominance of interacting with friends and peers, young people perceived their relationships with some youth work practitioners as 'like a friend', potentially because of lack of experience in other types of relationships.

Even though the literature suggested that young people relished SNS spaces as adult-free spaces (Sorbring and Lundin, 2012; Wiederhold, 2012), the majority of young people wanted to connect with certain practitioners, that they viewed 'like a friend' through these specific practitioners' personal profiles. Young people expressed that they wanted access to practitioners in these spaces whenever they wanted but also needed help and support. This suggested that young people did not view all youth work practitioners as typical adults, but rather felt that they developed different types of relationships with them. This study therefore challenged the notion that young people did not want to connect with adults but rather indicated that they wanted to connect with some adults online.

This way of viewing practitioners is similar to what boyd (2008) discovered in her study. She found that the majority of adults were concerned about the safety of

young people online. However, 'the vast majority of adult-teen interactions online are productive and healthy, opening channels of communication so that teens can enhance connections with adults they know and respect to get advice and support' (boyd, 2008, p.271). This finding therefore acknowledges the possibility of trusting relationships between adults and young people online in cases where adults were supportive towards young people. This study also identifies and highlights some of the previously unconsidered practicalities when research such as boyd (2008) suggested the possibility of connections between young people and practitioners on SNS.

Interaction through personal profiles enabled private conversations that transcended weekly club based interactions, both in terms of space but also frequency. This extended what Amichai-Hamburger et al (2013) found with regard to how social network sites could strengthen already existing relationships by providing additional space and time for them to develop. In an off-line universal youth work relationship shared time and space is limited. All of the young people saw only some of the practitioners that worked with them in youth work settings as 'like a friend'. Defining friendship in the literature is problematic and in this research young people tended to skirt around the word, rather using terms like 'like a friend', 'friend-like relationship', 'like my other friends'.

Using the term 'friend' both as a noun and a verb to describe those individuals that a young person wanted to make part of their networked publics or audiences and the process of achieving this, created debate concerning the meaning of the term friend. Previous and other social network sites do not use the term 'friend' but rather 'contacts', 'fans' or 'followers' (boyd and Ellison, 2007). Uncertainty existed whether young people still understood the real meaning of the term friend (Amichai-Hamburger et al, 2013). Findings suggested

that the term friendship by its very nature is problematic due to the different nuances and characteristics that it extolled. The act of friending someone on Facebook and the use of social network sites by youth work practitioners exacerbated this. It manifests itself as a concern due to the professionalisation of youth work. For a profession that professes to befriend young people but also maintains that practitioners could be friendly but never a young person's friend, the terminology attached to relationships within these online spaces was problematic.

The findings suggested that young people linked the defining characteristics of what they perceived their developed relationships to be, to friend-like characteristics, for example, listening, sharing of hobbies and interests, as well as offering advice and support. This focus on shared interests extended what Hardin (2002) found that shared interests increased the reliability of the trusted. Young people therefore used what Behina (2008) suggested to be credibility based approach to trust development but also allowed for this to develop to deeper trust through the social interactionist approach to trust, through including, how the relationship makes them feel about themselves and how they perceive the practitioner views them. The characteristics that were identified as part of the credibility based approach to trust link to the different types of friendship as defined by Aristotle and linked to youth work by Blacker (2010), i.e. friendship of utility, and friends of pleasure- due to sharing of interests and hobbies. Also, friends of virtue, due to the trust that the participants placed in each other as well as the goodwill, sharing and confiding that developed. Within relationships through personal profiles these three classifications of friendships were even more evident and prevalent due to the extension of time and space that it allowed these relationships outside of the confines of youth work spaces and time. Trust was needed from both participants in order to connect through

personal profile spaces, one person had to send the friend request and the other had to accept it (Sibona and Walczak, 2011).

Young people realised that they utilised and expressed the relationship as focussed on them- the main reason shared for why they wanted to friend practitioners was for advice and support when they needed and wanted it. The overwhelming majority of young people therefore realised that their relationships with practitioners was more akin to 'like a friendship' and therefore episodic in nature rather than a free-flowing friendship relationship where the friendship is valuable in its own right, rather than for what people can get out of it (Blacker, 2010). The findings suggested that young people provided practitioners with benefits of another type. For example, connection on SNS allowed for practitioners to not only have access to young people's personal information that they had access to due to the youth work relationship but also access to the socially intimate information that young people would not have shared with practitioners in youth club settings. This was available to view by those practitioners that young people developed a relationship with that made them connect with those practitioners.

Boundaries therefore existed between the information that young people were willing to share with most practitioners about their personal lives as part of a youth work relationship and information that they did not want to share as part of this relationship. Personal boundaries for young people were therefore similar to the 'professional' within the personal and professional boundaries of practitioners. The 'socially intimate' referred to information that they would rather not have shared with all practitioners, akin to the 'personal' in the personal and professional boundaries of practitioners. Where young people perceived practitioners to be 'like a friend' these boundaries became porous as young people did not differentiate between information that they wanted friends to have access to. This research therefore challenges the lack of awareness of boundaries for young people. This study further extends youth

work knowledge and theory by identifying two ways that young people view relationships with practitioners and identified a differentiation in information as perceived by young people- the personal and the socially intimate. Young people drew boundaries between personal and socially intimate information along the same lines as practitioners' professional and personal boundaries. This extends what we know about boundaries in youth work and should be included in any addressing of youth work boundaries.

Behnia (2004; 2008) suggested that as part of a relationship development process the trustor would collect information based on:

- How the trustor perceived themselves within the interaction - their self-concept.
- How they thought the trustee viewed them.
- Their perception of the trustee (linking back to, for example, the trustworthiness of the practitioner - warm, caring, competent, friendly, etc).

Within a friending process through personal profiles, both the sender of the friend request and the acceptor of the friend request were trustors. The findings suggested that young people trusted certain practitioners enough to want to provide them with more connection with themselves through which practitioners would have more access to information that young people might not share within youth work settings. Also, the practitioner had to trust that the young person would not use some of the information that practitioners disclosed about themselves on their personal profiles in a way that could be perceived as negative by others. These three aspects impacted significantly on the level of trust that could be developed within a relationship. Previous research (Amichai-Hamburger et al, 2013; Youthnet, 2012; boyd, 2008; Valkenburg and Peter, 2007)

suggested that young people recognised that some issues pertaining to self-verifying disclosure were easier to discuss online without the practitioner being able to see the young person making the disclosure. The findings extended that young people found that some issues were easier to disclose and share with a practitioner online by highlighting the importance of the individual relationship developed rather than disclosing to any known practitioner. Davies and Cranston's (2008a, b) research suggested that group pages should be the preferred method for practitioners to connect with young people through SNS. The findings in this thesis challenged this notion and suggested that young people would rather friend the personal profiles of practitioners as this provided them with an opportunity to have private discussions with chosen practitioners, rather than publically with any or all practitioners. The majority of practitioners within this research suggested that work profiles would be their preferred method to connect with young people. The spaces in which participants wanted to connect related directly to the type of relationship they perceived they developed with the other.

For young people the potential to disclose online therefore was based on individual relationships with a specific practitioner and privately rather than having access to any practitioner and in public. All online youth work and helping relationships that aim to advise and support young people (not just those through personal profiles), would need to be aware of the above three aspects in order to increase the likelihood of young people trusting specific practitioners and for them to gain what they might want or need from the online relationship.

Young people did not self-enhance on their profiles. This supported what other research studies, for example boyd (2008) and Bryce and Fraser, (2014) suggested concerning the way that young people used social network sites. Due



to the networked publics nature of SNS, not only the profile holders disclosed about their own lives but all their friends were co-constructors of this space and disclosed about the profile holders as well (boyd and Ellison, 2007; boyd, 2008; Ellison and boyd, 2013; Bryce and Fraser, 2014). Therefore if a young person was to lie or embellish on their profile they ran the risk of their friends sharing the situation or incident as it really was. The findings confirmed what Ledbetter et al (2011) suggested that social network sites encourage profile holders to share personal information - both through the ways the profiles are designed but also due to the co-constructing nature of the networked publics. Young people therefore tended to disclose most aspects of their lives on their personal profiles. Their personal profiles therefore included information that young people would readily share with practitioners within a youth work setting, but also further information about their social lives, thoughts and feelings that could be considered socially intimate and co-constructed with their friends. It also extended Ledbetter et al's (2011) research by suggesting that this is a reason why young people distinguish between relationships developed with practitioners. Practitioners that they trust and view as a friend are provided access to this socially intimate information rather than adapting what is posted. This findings extends boyd and Marwick's (2011) finding that young people have a clear idea of privacy but that they tend to consider that adults would move past posts that was not intended for them as a direct audience or participant.

Young people therefore did not content manage on their personal profiles but they aimed to manage their audiences as defined by Livingstone (2005) as part of their networked publics. If young people did not want someone to view more socially intimate details of their lives they did not add them to their SNS profiles. Therefore, the findings in this study suggested that young people would add friends, friends of friends as well as other young people in their networks for example their year group at school, even if they did not know them directly, as

part of social trust. boyd (2008) found the same practice within her research and this finding confirms what Hardin (2002) suggested that because of the shared interests the trusted could be perceived as reliable. Social trust developed when young people's friends added others within the broader network, for example teachers and when the relationship appeared useful others would add them as well. However, young people would be more selective and concerned when considering friending those that they wanted to impress and that they wanted respect from, for example youth work practitioners. This finding is in contrast to findings from practitioners that suggested that young people added anyone to their SNS profiles, and that the number of friends was more important to young people than anything else.

However, some young people suggested that if they were to friend a practitioner it would have impacted on what they shared, as they did not want to be cast in a negative light. Other young people suggested that if they viewed the practitioner as 'like a friend' they would continue to post what they have always done. Bernstein et al (2013) suggested that what was shared on social network sites was influenced by the audience that profile holders expected to reach with posts and updates. Young people's boundary management in the cases where they had involvement with practitioners consisted of a hybrid that included audience boundary management (only friending the practitioners they perceived they have developed a friendship of sorts with) but they would also consider content management as discussed by Wilson, Gosling and Graham (2012) if they had particular practitioners on their profiles. In some cases this was due to concern about illegal or risky adolescent behaviour, but in other instances it was because they did not want to embarrass themselves in front of the practitioners that they perceived they had developed a relationship with. Therefore the findings of this research suggested that young people, like others, do not use SNS only as a continuation of their offline lives online, but that their online connections also

impacted on their offline behaviour. This is a unique feature created by the networked public nature of social network sites. Due to the co-constructing nature of profiles, some young people suggested that if they had a practitioner that they had respect for on their profile, they would behave more appropriately offline as well so that others in their network were unable to share images and comments about them that they did not want the practitioner to view. This would then allow young people to continue to self-verify on their SNS.

#### **9.4.2. Practitioners who lived and worked in the same areas viewed relationships developed as 'more than a work relationship'**

Key insight gained from this study is the answer to the question why some practitioners connect with young people on SNS. This study challenged Davies and Cranston's (2008) notion that practitioners more likely to connect with young people 'under the radar' are those with less training and also less experience. In contrast, this study found that practitioners most likely to connect with young people unsanctioned are those that:

- live and work in the same geographical space but where they also have history within this space.
- had an example set to them by a practitioner when they were a young person

#### **History**

Findings highlighted the complexities and implications of working or volunteering and living in the same geographical area, as coming into contact with young people outside of the club space and time was inevitable. Consequently, there was a link between the geographical spaces in which practitioners and volunteers lived and worked, and their disposition to friend young people or not. Findings suggested that a further factor that strengthens this probability is not just living in the same area, but also having a history within this geographical space. This extends what Castells (2010) and May (2011) suggested that in order for space to become place, a person needs to feel connected to the space. History provides a further connection that contributes to meaning and value being attached to the space, and the same connection with the space will not be evident in those without this attached history.

History within a geographical space created multiple relationships. Practitioners therefore already potentially knew the young people or had a vested interest in them as members of their shared geographical space. In these cases multiple relationships that predated the youth work setting existed and confirms what Sercombe (2007) suggested concerning practitioners and volunteers living and working in the same place being common-place within youth work practice. However, Sercombe's (2007) research did not include SNS and how these multiple relationships should be dealt with in SNS.

Boundary Management became even more complicated for these practitioners who lived, worked and had history in the same geographical area. In cases like these, audience boundary management became challenging as the different parts of practitioners' lives intersected. This necessitated the need for hybrid boundary management where the practitioner had to focus on the audience - both their friends online but also friends of friends and the content, the potential impact of content on visible but also invisible audiences and also on the indirect

audiences. This is reminiscent of Lannin and Scott's (2013) article concerning SNS and psychology and they suggested that psychologists using SNS can learn a lot from psychologists who live and work in the same geographical spaces as they have to navigate these multiple relationships.

#### Examples set to young people

Findings suggested that a further variable was also involved - young volunteers learnt through the examples that were set for them. If they interacted with practitioners through their personal profiles when they were young people, they also connected with young people through personal profiles themselves when they became volunteers. This can be called a 'cycle of negative practice', as these two young volunteers and an adult volunteer that connected with practitioners through personal profiles when they were young people only, saw no problem in adding young people to their personal profiles. The term negative is used, not because the advice or support offered through this relationship was wrong or problematic but rather because the guidance that existed at the time of interviews prohibited personal profile connections with young people. However, the slow dissemination of this guidance impacted on the practices that developed. Rectifying and changing the resultant practice needs to be handled carefully in order to avoid negative impact on young people's as well as practitioners' self concept. This is because the findings as well as literature suggested that unfriending those friended made most users of SNS uncomfortable and had to content with both external and internal barriers as suggested by Bushman and Holt-Lundstad (2009) and as discussed earlier.

#### **9.4.3. Self-enhancement and self verifying practice**

All practitioners, like young people, preferred to self-verify on their personal profiles. Where practitioners felt they had developed a 'more than a work' relationship with young people they still self-verified as they felt that there was no separation between their personal and practitioner or volunteer lives as they over-lapped due to multiple roles and relationships. This finding extends Enli and Thumim's (2012) 'sharing practice' as part of self-verification because practitioners still wanted to be able to post what they wanted, but with the added incentive of being able to share about youth work as well. For example, practitioners suggested that they posted the normal things they always had but added postings and statuses that would have been of benefit to the young people that they worked with as well.

Some practitioners who friended young people to their personal profiles used no form of boundary management. This was the case with the practitioner that also worked in partnership with the Local Authority. As a faith based practitioner his perception was that he had nothing to hide about himself or his life. He also allowed young people who did not attend the faith based youth work setting to interact with him and other young people he friended on his personal profile. A more relaxed approach concerning the types of relationships being developed by faith-based practitioners was evident across the sector and this finding confirmed this assertion by Blacker (2010). However, this study also identified the differences in approach between faith based and other youth work provision. This offers a challenge to practitioners involved in both types of youth work and the services where these practitioners might work in both at the same time and where service provision overlaps. In one setting this is considered not a boundary concern at all and in the other this signifies a potential boundary violation.

Practitioners that did not live and work and had history in the same spaces, that friended young people to their personal profiles initially had to self-enhance offline in order for young people to want to friend them. This confirms the process of deliberate self-disclosure of psychotherapists as discussed by Zur et al (2009) to their clients, in order to share certain information with them that would enhance the relationship and create the potential of increased trust. Self enhancement in these cases took place offline in order for young people and other practitioners to develop initial trust in the particular personal profile holders. The profile holder therefore had to self-enhance their trustworthy characteristics in order to be perceived as trustworthy by young people but in some instances also by the practitioners around them.

#### **9.4.5. Boundary crossings and boundary violations**

Where volunteer and practitioners lived and worked in the same geographical space that they had history in, these boundaries were already permeable, as for them it was all personal. Volunteers and other practitioners suggested that volunteers created a grey or blurred area, and practitioners varied in their perspectives of where to draw the boundaries for volunteers. Across the different localities these boundaries were differently drawn and this increased the potential for more subtle but also real risk of harm to the friended young people, practitioners, but also the volunteers. Power imbalances were created because the practitioners that did not live and work in the same areas did not have access to additional information from young people.

In cases where volunteers should have shared information because of a young person being at risk of harm, they did not share. This could have been due to a

lack of understanding of their role and the responsibilities that came with it, as well as a lack of knowledge. This created a boundary crossing due to multiple relationships that very easily could have become boundary violations, even though a boundary violation were not the intent of the practitioner as suggested by Reamer (2001). This is also confirmed by Fasasi and Oluwu (2013, p. 139) in their assertion that in psychotherapeutic relationships between practitioners and clients, 'subtle boundary crossings are problematic because they tend to consistently lead to more adverse boundary transgressions'. However, both the professions from which position these authors write are professions that do not rely on volunteers. Youth work as a profession is unique in its aim to both professionalise but also to increase and strengthen its reliance on volunteers concurrently. Lessons could however be learned from other disciplines that also adhered to client/practitioner relationships. However, this study challenges to what extent the same position could be held when relying on volunteers with multiple relationships?

In some cases practitioners perceived to have benefited and gained access to socially intimate information about young people through the access that volunteers had to young people's personal profiles. In these instances paid practitioners did not themselves interact with young people through their personal profiles. However, the blurred and unclear notions concerning boundaries for volunteers enabled them to benefit from personal profile connections with young people by others. This was once again compounded by young people's tendency to self-verify and audience boundary manage rather than to use content boundary management. Young people's boundary management efforts were therefore circumvented by some of the very practitioners and volunteers that they felt they had developed an episodic or free-flowing relationship with. In these cases the invisible audiences as part of the networked publics included invisible audiences outside of the virtual networked publics that young people connected with but that extended outside



of the space of flows into a real world audience and therefore offline consequences.

Most of the experiences of using personal and also work profiles, with young people, initially presented as boundary crossings rather than boundary violations as defined by Smith and Fitzpatrick (1995). Findings suggested that practitioners were not sure about the potential benefits or drawbacks to young people of practising in this way when they decided to interact through personal profiles, as interacting through social network sites was so new. This updated and extended the position of Green and Hannon (2007) that guidance and policy was still trying to catch up with new technologies and that this delay created a space for practitioners and now also included volunteers, to explore new ways of practising whether it is due to civic courage, bounded solidarity or lack of understanding and knowledge and lots of enthusiasm.

In all personal examples shared of personal profile connections, the intent of the practitioners was in line with a spirit of civic courage, vested interest but also in good faith, in other words, without the deliberate intent of harming the young person. Whether interacting through personal profiles was a boundary crossing or a boundary violation was a permeable rather than a solid demarcation. As Reamer (2001) and also Fasasi and Oluwu (2013) suggested, boundary crossings, within a helping profession, however helpful or positive they might have appeared at first, have the potential to become problematic and a boundary violation. Therefore boundary crossings increased but also created a risk of subtle harm as explored by Pawlukewicz and Ondrus (2013). Some of the examples shared confirmed this position, but in a practice environment where volunteers were becoming more and more central to youth work delivery to what extent this risk of subtle harm should lead to clearly defined boundaries,

and to what extent this might be a risk that needed to be carefully managed, could be considered in a further study.

Some examples that involved other practitioners were shared by practitioners of potential boundary violation practice as defined by Justice and Garland (2010). I employ the term 'potential' as this was not based on their own direct experience, but rather constituted hear-say and the experiences of others. Some of these examples were linked to the professional principles of youth work (NYA, 1999), and not fostering sexual relationships with young people, and provided examples of boundary violations as defined by Justice and Garland (2010). 'Friending' personal profiles in some of these cases was not based on trust, but rather mistrust and fear of not connecting. The sanction of not 'friending' was bigger than the sanction of taking part on the social network site for some young people. This corresponded to exploitation of the vulnerabilities of young people, as it could be considered that the practitioners involved were using their power over young people and were therefore oppressive in their interaction with them (Sapin, 2009). As stated in chapter one, an aim of youth work was to minimise the boundaries between young people and practitioners by diminishing the role of power within the relationship - examples like these highlighted and amplified the existence of power within these relationships and the negative and oppressive use of this power. This oppressive use of power was experienced by some young people as terrifying, and they felt that they would be exploited if they did not partake. As discussed in chapters five and eight, client exploitation in psychology relationships is normally undertaken to the benefit of the practitioner (Barnett et al, 2007). In the cases in this study no direct examples of client exploitation were shared but where it was referred to it involved manipulation and an eventual sexual link.

The findings did not confirm that all boundary crossings turned into boundary violations, however, it highlighted the possibility of this happening. Boundary crossings took place as a result of:

- Firstly, multiple relationships which led to vested interests and considering practice as more than just a work or a volunteer role. Multiple relationships further complicated matters because relationships with some young people already existed which created a precedent for these practitioners to friend other young people in a bid not to be seen as having favourites and in an effort to be consistent.
- Boundary crossings for some young volunteers and practitioners took place out of goodwill, and at times as a result of the personal profile experiences that they had with practitioners when they were young people.
- Because of the slow dissemination of policy and guidance that led to practitioners inferring and deducing that they might be allowed to connect with young people.

Findings suggested that great care needed to be taken in analysing and weighing up the relationships developed and the connections created within the context, intent and also space within which they were made.

One practitioner identified a specific way in which she interacted through her personal profile with young people that she experienced as more vulnerable, and how this differed from her personal profile interaction with less vulnerable young people.

I would gauge, and it would depend on who it was. If it was someone I knew that was extremely vulnerable and it probably wasn't me talking clearly or support I would go up and say. But a lot of this, I would just watch the situation or if I'd known that the young person had a fight with someone, I'd know. So I'd be prepared within work to know what's happening (Youth work background practitioner 4).

This practitioner suggested that if a vulnerable young person was involved in something that might have made her concerned, and she saw this online, she would have offered advice and support. For the majority of young people, conversely, she would have used the everyday experiences of young people to inform her practice within youth club. The practitioner felt that she was able to identify whether a young person was vulnerable or not based on previous knowledge gained through experiences with young people in the areas that she lived and worked, and also individual experiences with the particular young person. This does, however, raise concern about the potential vulnerabilities of young people that practitioners did not know well, and therefore might have received less support and advice from practitioners even though it might have been needed. This stance on vulnerable young people also over-relied on perceptions formed by practitioners concerning young people and was lacking in concrete definitions and examples suggesting what constituted a vulnerable young person as identified by Livingstone and Haddon (2012) and appropriate strategies to support them.

A potential lack of appropriate information sharing concerning young people that would have been considered vulnerable was apparent in the findings, However, this could have been due to the universal service provision nature and voluntary engagement of the settings in which these relationships developed.

This voluntary engagement did not seem to only refer to young people but also to volunteers. A general sense of caution was evident as practitioners were

aware that they were reliant on volunteers to keep provision open and therefore they were unclear to what extent the professional principles and boundaries that they perceived might have existed applied to volunteers. Davies' (2013) article: 'Youth work in a changing policy landscape: the view from England' confirmed that during 2012 youth work provision became more reliant on volunteers to staff universal provision. This accounted for the changes experienced but it does not provide answers to the uncertainty that practitioners felt with regards to how to respond to volunteers and where boundaries should be drawn.

#### **9.4.6. What happens long-term if practitioners view their role as 'more' than a work relationship**

The findings supported what Boyd (2008) and Sibona and Walczak (2011) found that young people participants felt hesitant about deleting those they friended. Due to the 'open and share' spirit of social network sites and the multiple audiences, deleting those previously friended also made practitioners feel uncomfortable as they were concerned about the impact that unfriending might have on the young person. The study challenged Bushman and Holt-Lundstad's (2009) suggestion that people are likely to unfriend for external reasons, for example, social reasons, like church and family and physical proximity but also internal barriers, for example a sense of commitment. I argue that even though their article was not written concerning young people and practitioners, internal and external barriers are reasons why practitioners and young people might not have wanted to unfriend the other. The reasons here related to proximity, shared connections and history within the geographical space, a sense of relationship and with it a sense of commitment.

Due to the unwillingness to unfriend connections through the practitioner's personal profile did not come to an end when the physical relationship ended.

The relationship also did not change into a relationship between two contemporaries or friends. Rather the nature of the relationship remained intact - it remained based on receiving advice and support from someone who fulfilled this role during adolescence. This could account for why Bratt (2010) suggested that counsellors should create work profiles to add clients to. The creation of work profiles to share information with clients was also considered within Lannin and Scott's (2013) article concerning psychology practitioners. This creation of work profiles for information sharing only would avoid some of the negative impact on practitioners' personal profiles. However, these articles do not consider the impact of work profiles on the client or the practitioners where these profiles are not only used for information sharing but also for advice and support. If participants are unwilling to unfriend on personal profiles the same would be true for work profiles and the outcome would be the same as practitioners tended to consider work profiles similar to personal profiles but with their own personal lives hidden.

After-care service related to the notion that when young people were friended by a practitioner, that the natural ending or closure of the professional relationship became problematic and the relationship continued indefinitely. With practice in geographical space, the relationship either came to a natural ending when one to one support (intensive work) was no longer needed or in the case of a generic youth club when the young person chose to stop attending or when a young person reached the maximum age that the club catered for. This would then have been the end of the professional relationship and contact would have been seized. In instances where practitioners had multiple roles, interaction would have continued under the auspices of one of the practitioners' further roles but removed and separated from a youth work role or relationship.

Interacting with young people after they have left the service provision could be linked back to the professional principles of youth work and Justice and Garland's (2010) suggestion that a boundary violation was taking place if the issue was covered in the code of ethics of the profession. Where practitioners only added some young people and not others this could be considered 'preferential treatment' (NYA, 1999). However, this interaction with only some young people, was taking place after the 'duty of care' and the client/professional relationship ended. Therefore, should after-care service still be considered a boundary violation? How would this have impacted on the previous, but also future youth club members, but also practitioners? It does seem that for practitioners this constituted a personal and professional boundaries blurring and therefore as contained within the professional principles of youth work (NYA, 1999).

### ***9.5. Relationships perceived as work or professional relationships by practitioners and how young people perceive these relationships***

#### **9.5.1. Practitioners viewed the relationships as work relationships**

Intensive one to one work that Connexions practitioners engaged in took place in more formal settings, for example, libraries or school-based settings like offices or empty classrooms during and after school time. These are more formal than the majority of group work settings, for example, youth centres and village halls. Where school class rooms were used for group work, this predominantly took place during break times or after school hours. As Connexions practitioners tended to work more formally, in an advisory role in more formal settings and youth work practitioners engaged more informally in predominantly more informal spaces this can account for the difference in the frequency and volume of friending requests, but also the nature of the relationships that young people

perceived they developed with Connexions background practitioners. This extends Barton and Barton's (2007) findings that considered young people's attitudes and relationships with youth work in more formal settings, for example schools, towards which some young people might have negative feelings. Connexions background practitioners maintained their more formal way of working with young people within the new roles which impacted on how they and young people viewed their relationships with each other.

Practitioners who viewed their relationships with young people as work or professional relationships only would have preferred to have the option of interacting with young people through work profiles, and in some cases group pages in order to share information and photographs with young people. This confirms what Davies and Cranston (2008) found with regard to reasons why practitioners wanted to connect with young people. Practitioners wanted to use social network sites not to personally connect with young people, but to provide them with information concerning club times and aims of sessions but also to share photographs, taken as part of youth work provision. However, this study extended Davies and Cranston's findings through identifying the main reason shared for why practitioners wanted to connect through separate work profiles. This was because they wanted to maintain the boundaries between their personal and professional lives but still have access to young people's socially intimate information. The majority suggested that the use of social network sites was not discussed with them, but that they perceived personal profile connections with young people as against the professional principles of maintaining personal and professional boundaries as set out by the NYA (1999). Practitioners also tended to self-verify on their personal profiles as a form of self disclosure as identified by Zur et al (2009), and because their networked publics acted as co-constructors of their personal profiles and could post about them, they wanted to ensure that young people did not have access to this. This



confirms the notion of a networked publics and the unique co-construction feature as identified by boyd (2008; 2010).

As identified in chapter five self-disclosure by practitioners could either be deliberate or accidental. Social network sites and its networked publics have created new challenges for practitioners with regards to self-disclosure. As explored in chapters three and seven, networked publics enabled communication, that offline was fluid, to become solid online. In other words, unlike the spoken word that flows away unrecorded once uttered, the written word on these sites become solid and uncontainable. Communication hence became searchable, replicable, scalable and persistent as defined by boyd (2008; 2010) and also share-able (Papacharissi and Gibson, 2013). For these reasons studies within, for example, counselling, nursing and other health professions advise practitioners to be extremely careful in their disclosure online. Witt (2009) and Bratt (2010) advised practitioners to create a separate work profile if they wanted to connect with their clients on SNS. However, this study challenges the lack of thought that was given to how this should be set up, managed but also how and when the online relationship should end. Due to practitioner's propensity to self-verify on their personal profiles the five affordances of networked publics as identified by boyd (2008; 2010) would be magnified for practitioners if they were to connect with young people through their personal profiles. However, work profiles also have these affordances linked to them and it provides a space for practitioners to hide behind whilst still having access to all young people's personal as well as socially intimate information.

### **9.5.2. Treat all young people consistently the same**

The creation and use of work profiles was considered by many practitioners as an appropriate approach to engage with young people on SNS, and to extend the social trust invoked by the term 'youth worker'. Social trust operates from the

expectation that others that belong to the same social group can be trusted (Scherchan et al, 2013). However, the findings challenged this assertion and found that young people did not experience social trust in all practitioners but rather developed individual relationships with those that they felt they developed a friend like relationship with, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Practitioners on the other hand felt that it was necessary to be consistent in their approach and therefore they would either add all young people to their work profiles or none. The majority of managers across the different areas thought that work profiles would circumvent their main concern regarding interacting through personal profiles. As discussed in chapter eight, their main concern was not the potential of increased risk to young people, or the intent of individual practitioners, but rather maintaining practitioners' own personal and professional boundaries.

Initially it seemed that social trust was invoked in the consideration of which practitioners were allowed to create work profiles and which not. However, this propensity to social trust towards all practitioners was then tempered by considering trustworthy characteristics in practitioners. The findings concerning who was considered to be trustworthy with a work profile and who not, supported Davies and Cranston (2008a) findings that practitioners with more training and more experience were less likely to connect with young people unsolicited, but less trained practitioners with less training were more likely to interact. However this study challenged this assertion by Davies and Cranston's (2008a) findings by including volunteers for whom training and experience were not the deciding factors but rather history in the geographical spaces where they volunteer and work as well as multiple relationships. This study also challenged their finding with regard to paid practitioners, for them the main consideration was similar to that of volunteers. None of the Connexions background practitioners had unsanctioned connections with young people regardless of their level of training and experience. This finding therefore also does not hold

for them, rather it is the nature of their role that determines their unwillingness to connect unsanctioned.

### **9.5.3. Practitioners and boundary management within perceived professional relationships**

Work profiles were therefore a way for practitioners to manage their potential audiences by creating a work profile specifically to interact with young people and in this way separating practitioners' personal and professional audiences. This confirms what Wilson, Gosling and Graham (2012) asserted that not everyone who self-verifies wanted to share everything with everyone. By separating the audience into an audience for a personal profile and therefore personal life, and an audience for a work profile, practitioners did not have to actively adhere to content boundary management as discussed by Lampinen et al (2009) as each profile had a different audience and the content reflected this. The content of the work profile from practitioners' perspectives would be geared towards providing information and the sharing of resources and photographs suitable and relevant for the young people audience. This was in line with Bratt's (2010) suggestion to counsellors to create a separate work profile for work purposes. However, Bratt's (2010) article did not consider the potential implications of work profiles on clients in terms of self concept or considered the implications of these work profiles on the professional relationships between client and practitioner and for what further reasons practitioners might want to use these profiles, for example, information gathering.

#### **9.5.4. Personal and socially intimate boundaries of young people not acknowledged within these professional relationship responses to SNS**

As young people engaged with practitioners in their own personal capacity as part of their everyday lives and experiences, what developed was more akin to socially intimate and personal boundaries. The findings identified a concern with the use of work profiles because the practitioner still had access to the young person's socially intimate and personal information. Bratt (2010) did not acknowledge this concern within his article and this provides a gap within the existing literature which my research begins to fill. Even though work profiles provided a means for practitioners to separate their personal lives from their clients, it does not achieve the same function for the client. The findings therefore confirmed a similar narrow focus of personal and professional boundaries that motivated Bratt (2010) and others to uncritically suggest work profiles as a solution. This narrow focus by practitioner participants in the research exposed the narrow focus implied by the NYA (1999) professional principles as it focussed on the boundaries of the practitioner but not the boundaries of the young person. However, a more critical perspective also needs to be taken in that the practitioner could become embroiled in the young person's personal life which can then impact on the practitioner's personal life.

Practitioners only had access to young people's socially intimate information by friending them. The viewing of young people's socially intimate information was possible because of the tendency of young people to self-verify on their personal profiles and for their networked publics to do the same as co-constructors of their profiles. The practitioner that had a work profile acknowledged this as a concern he had with his work profile. He was concerned about what his responsibility would be in instances where he might see

information and activities that might not be in the best interest of the young people. A further concern that this created was similar for practitioners who friended young people through personal profiles - the after-care service position in which he found himself due to a great majority of the people he connected with now having left the service.

Some practitioners shared that they used client searching to access young people's socially intimate information. They were therefore wilfully violating the young people's personal and socially intimate boundaries by searching for socially intimate information that young people were not willing to share freely as part of the practitioner and young person relationship. This extended Lannin and Scott's (2013) position with regard to psychologists who searched for clients through Google and on social network sites to include youth work practitioners. Lannin and Scott (2013) suggested that this could constitute a boundary violation if the client's permission was not sought and that this constitutes the creation of additional roles and therefore introduced multiple roles within the relationship. This also extended what DiLillo and Gale (2011) found in this regard - 98 per cent of Psychology Doctoral students searched for the profiles of at least one of the clients that they engaged with over a period of year. This was done even though these students were clear that this was an unacceptable way to gather information concerning a client. This study challenged the view of psychology students - youth work practitioners did not consider that client searching was an overstepping of boundaries or that permission was needed. They insisted that this was not a boundary concern as young people maintained the public nature of their profiles. Practitioners engaging in client searching also did not perceive overstepping personal and professional boundaries as they did not disclose anything about themselves, even though they overstepped the personal and socially intimate boundaries of the young people.

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This type of practice could be partially ascribed to the private-public dichotomy created through Castells' space of flows and networked publics (boyd, 2008; 2010). These practitioners considered that if young people did not manage their security/privacy settings then the young people would also not mind if practitioners searched their profiles. However, according to boyd (2008) young people do not view privacy and security as similar. Young people feel that they have agreed their audience and that further adults should not be viewing their profile even if their privacy settings are at the default 'open' and 'share'. This does not mean that young people felt comfortable with others searching and viewing their profiles, but rather they expect adults to 'move on' if they came across their profiles (boyd, 2008).

Young people self-verified on their personal profiles and they were more likely to manage their audience rather than manage their content. From an ethical perspective this raised significant questions. Did the fact that young people tended not to use privacy settings mean that their information is public and people in authority positions with power over them could and therefore should access and use this information?

The reasons why some practitioners found the practice of client searching helpful was similar to the practice of creating fake personal profiles. These profiles were used exclusively to monitor young people's interactions and behaviours. It was described as 'spying' and 'snooping' on young people by practitioners themselves. With regards to trust development this practice is the opposite of what Conley et al (2011) suggested trust is based on; the trustor's

belief that the trustee is being honest and open about their intentions in a relationship. This connection could therefore not be considered open or honest. This links to subtle risk of harm introduced in chapter five, where what initially could be perceived as an incentive by the practitioner and perceived as trusting by the young person who did not know that it was a fake profile, turned out to be a rational choice as discussed by Behnia (2008). The motivation might have had the best interests of young people in mind, but was executed in an exploitative and devious manner. Client searching and the use of fake profiles could be considered client exploitation as young people were not made aware of these practices and this was done for the practitioner's benefit in order to find out information that benefitted practitioners in their practices. Therefore these practices were based on deceit and confirmed what Barnett et al (2007) found in their study concerning client exploitation in psychology.

Some practitioners who viewed their relationships with young people as professional relationships shared that their perceptions of potential institutional trust, removed personal decision making that could have led to damaging young people's developing relationships and trust in practitioners. This is because young people might have viewed practitioners not wanting to friend them as reluctance to engage outside the realm of the structured hours, and the offline youth work spaces. However, findings indicated that most practitioners felt unsure concerning what the institutional stance was. This 'get out clause' ensured that the development of initial and deeper trust by young people in practitioners did not stagnate but could be enhanced, due to practitioners sharing what they were not allowed to, rather than they didn't want to friend young people to their personal profiles.

Practitioners, including all but one of the four managers interviewed, had not considered the different measures needed to manage a work profile effectively,

and had not considered work profiles as a potential manifestation of 'under the radar' or unsanctioned interaction. Unsanctioned, not in terms of without line manager agreement, but because it took place outside of the guidance that existed. Various fundamentals were not considered that would have been considered prior to practice in geographical spaces, through, for example, the completion of risk assessments. These included for example:

- Would they have worked alone, or would they have 'friended' other practitioners onto these profiles as well?
- What times would they have been able to or allowed to access it?
- From where would they have been able to access it?
- How would they have monitored and recorded both synchronous and asynchronous communication?
- What would they have been expected to do if they viewed information that they were worried about?
- What about the potential interaction with others (friends of the young people they 'friended') who did not friend them?

These were all issues that, if not considered and addressed, meant that a work profile would have the same functionality and implications for a practitioner as a personal profile, for example, the time implications, what if they missed something, etc. but with the practitioner's personal live stripped away. These aspects as well as others were all covered within the County guidance provided and formed part of the risk assessment that was part of the guidance and the sixteen point checklist (Organisational guidance, 2011).

The reasons for this unsanctioned use and consideration of work profiles were:



- Lack of understanding of the technology and the fast changing nature of its functions.
- Lack of clarity and consistency in the sharing of guidance, not only by practitioners, but also their managers. Therefore, these work profiles were set up without adhering to the guidance that included access to a champion to advise and assist and included a thorough risk assessment to minimise potential hazards and decrease the overall risk (Organisational guidance, 2011).

This inefficient sharing of guidance and policy, but also the lack of knowledge and understanding of the functions and nature of the technology, combined with the affirmation by managers, needs to be taken into account when considering whether creating and maintaining a work profile should be considered a boundary crossing or boundary violation. The two points above provided the context within which these connections took place and these should be considered when exploring the potential for all boundary crossings or boundary violations.

#### **9.5.5. Work profiles as perceived by young people**

Some young people suggested that work profiles meant that practitioners were able to gain access to young people without revealing anything about themselves. This made some young people uncomfortable and made them question the nature of the relationship, and whether they could trust the practitioner who made use of a work profile or not. This extended Bryce and Fraser's (2014) finding that young people trust profiles less that only had a few photographs on, as they perceived that this might mean that it was a fake profile

created with ulterior motives, for example, for 'snooping' or information gathering. This study therefore included not only 'fake' personal profiles but also work profiles as perceived by young people.

Where a practitioner created a work profile with an indication in the profile name that it was for work purposes only, they were aiming to be open and honest about their intention to separate various audiences and their professional and personal lives. The intention in these cases was therefore transparent. The creation of fake or decoy profiles to which they accepted friend requests, or even proffered friend requests to young people, was disconcerting. The intention of this online presence was therefore not open and honest but based on deceit and hence could not be considered to constitute a trusting professional relationship. This opportunity to gain access to socially intimate information of young people could be perceived as an incentive that was greater than the fear of sanction with regard to the potential that they might not have been allowed to connect with young people through these profiles. [LINK to trust literature](#)

#### **9.5.6. Boundary crossings and boundary violations**

In line with Pawlukewicz and Ondrus (2013), and drawing learning from Fasasi and Olowu, (2013) and Reamer (2001), I would suggest that this deceit could have created a reasonable cause to suspect a potential risk for subtle harm. I suggest that we draw learning from the statute (Great Britain. The Children Act 1989) where it considers if a child is at risk of significant harm or not. I suggest that in a similar approach to the Children Act 1989, the focus should be on a 'reasonable cause to suspect' in order to identify the likelihood of potential risk of subtle harm. The guidance that was available at the time aimed to minimise the potential risk of subtle harm through the champions, checklists and risk

assessments, however, due to lack of dissemination at the time this did not happen.

The intention in the above cases was to deceive, and this impacted on the principle of voluntary engagement of the young person. According to Reamer (2001) the subtle risk of harm can be very subtle to begin with and therefore boundary crossings should always be viewed sceptically. Practitioners did not have concerns with these practices based on their belief that young people were only interested in numbers of friends online, therefore, it would not bother the young person, and, also because they perceived that their personal and professional boundaries were not compromised.

### ***9.6.Lack of control in both types of relationship perspectives***

In none of the instances where personal or work profiles, group or work pages existed did any of the practitioners know if practitioners that no longer worked for the council were still connected to young people. As suggested by Crimmens et al (2004), if former practitioners were known to the young people for a long time, this would potentially have increased the practitioners' trustworthiness for young people. This was a major cause for concern and one that I pointed out to staff to consider and discuss with their managers.

As part of maintaining control and their own boundaries, practitioners who viewed the relationship they developed with young people as a work or professional relationship purposefully searched fellow practitioners' friend lists

as part of the functions of networked publics and saw that they friended young people. Practitioners tended not to engage on these practitioners' profiles as doing this would have meant them also (in) directly interacting with the young people due to the networked publics nature. This strengthened and confirmed the view that these spaces were considered networked publics (boyd 2008; 2010). These practitioners tended to unfriend practitioners who were friending young people. However, young people would still have been on the profile, but due to practitioners' uncertainty concerning the guidance they felt too uncomfortable and unclear to do anything about the friending of young people by fellow practitioners. Therefore practitioners devised methods attempting to maintain their own boundaries as perceived by themselves.

During a time of change and when policy and guidance sharing was perceived to be lacking this was a method of audience boundary management as identified in Behnia's (2004; 2008) literature review. The practitioners who knew that a boundary crossing took place removed themselves from this particular audience to avoid becoming part of the crossing, and therefore also avoided the responsibility that came with being aware of boundary crossings. This resulted in 'lone working' of the practitioners that were connecting with young people through their personal profiles. This therefore created situations where two guidance areas were breached - those on unsanctioned connections in SNS but also on 'lone working'. The lone working policy of an organisation needs to be adhered to as it clarifies who could work alone with young people and in what circumstances and what safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that this is done as safely as possible.

### ***9.7. In summary***

Due to the lack of dissemination of guidance by the time of fieldwork, whether connections could be considered as unsanctioned or not is open for debate. However, what this discussion revealed is that practitioners and young people held different perspectives on the relationships that they have developed with each other and this had far-reaching implications, not only for social network site interactions, but also for other areas of practice. The discussion of the findings highlighted three key considerations - how participants viewed their relationships with each other, how these relationships impacted on what type of connections they wanted to establish and how this impacted on the boundaries that practitioners and young people perceived.

The discussion of the findings highlighted the new theory that developed due to the study. Not all spaces on SNS were viewed similarly and where young people and practitioners wanted to connect depended on the type of relationship they felt they have developed. This relationship was not dependent on level of training and experience as suggested by Davies and Cranston (2008) but rather reliant on other factors. These were; living and working in the same geographical space but also crucially having a history in the space. Multiple relationships within the geographical space that permeate the youth work role as well as examples set by others that they consider to be role models. This developed a cycle of negative practice during a time when guidance was perceived to be lacking and due to civic courage of practitioners. Negative does not imply that the interactions were negative but rather refers to the perceived unsanctioned nature. This study identified that boundaries did not only exist for practitioners but also for young people within practitioner-client relationships. These boundaries were drawn according to personal and socially intimate lines. Personal information refers to the information that young people were willing to share with practitioners and socially intimate refers to information that they only wanted to share with those they feel they have developed a 'friend-like' relationship with. The thesis ends with a summary and discusses the implications

but also some of the limitations and identifies recommendations to take forward.

## **Chapter 10: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### ***10.1. Introduction***

This study set out to explore the 'under the radar' or unsanctioned interaction and connection between youth work practitioners and young people on social network sites. It has identified the importance of these spaces to young people and practitioners and the meanings that they attached to these spaces. This study identified the importance of and the different approaches to trust development within a practitioner and young person relationship. How and why trust is established and maintained, and the relevance of trust development as part of relationships when considering unsanctioned interactions was explored. The study sought to explore the impact of these connections on the maintenance of personal and professional boundaries for practitioners, but also identified boundaries for young people as this is a neglected and unexplored area of practice and research.

Literature that considered these three areas was mostly drawn from other helping professions and also business management studies. As this is the first study exclusively exploring unsanctioned connections between practitioners and young people on social network sites, the study sought to address a number of questions:

- What was the significance of social network site spaces as places for young people to interact in?
- What were young people and practitioners' perspectives concerning the use of these spaces for unsanctioned youth work practice? (Why would they do it or why not?)
- How practitioners and young people wanted to connect and interact and why was this unsanctioned?
- What was the impact of unsanctioned connections and interaction on the formation and development of trust between young person and practitioner but also between practitioner and the organisation that they worked for and with?
- How did these connections impact on the boundaries that were significant for practitioners but also those boundaries that were important to young people?

This chapter presents a summary of the findings across the inter-linked themes. It goes on to highlight the contribution to knowledge this study has achieved as well as indicate what I would have done differently, as part of reflection on the research process. the potential policy and practice implications of the study, dissemination of findings up till final submission. T Recommendations for policy, practice and further study ends this chapter as well as this thesis.

## ***10.2. Summary of findings***



The main findings are chapter specific and were summarised within the respective findings chapters and synthesised in the overall discussion chapter - the significance of space and place within unsanctioned SNS connections between practitioners and young people, the significance of trust development within a youth work relationship and with specific reference to unsanctioned SNS connections, and the impact of these connections on the management of boundaries for practitioners but also young people. This section summarises the findings to answer the study's overarching research question. The overall research question that the study aimed to address is:

Why are unsanctioned social network site connections between young people and youth work practitioners taking place, with specific reference to the space within which it takes place, trust between the different participants and also how the participants view and also management their boundaries?

New spaces to interact in and new ways to engage with young people were highlighted by policy, but also by practitioners, as an aim of youth work. Social network site templates included personal profiles, work profiles, groups or pages. These types of profiles facilitated different spaces for engagement. For example, the wall of the profile holder, the newsfeed as well as the private message function. The majority of practitioners would have preferred to friend all the young people that they worked with to separately created work profiles. However, they were concerned about the implications on their time. They did not view their relationships with young people as personal relationships, but as work relationships that were separate from their personal lives. Trust development for these practitioners was based on rational choice and therefore they mostly adhered to the relationship based approach and they made a decision based on incentive or sanction.

At the time of interviews, policy and guidance existed concerning social network site interaction; however, it was not fully disseminated. This led to situations where practitioners drew on their understanding of their roles and also boundaries to make decisions about with whom and how to interact on social network sites with young people. In these instances the incentives were perceived to outweigh the risks. Practitioners were able to share information quickly and easily to many young people at the same time but also had access to young people's socially intimate information.

Work profiles and adding young people to fake profiles was perceived by practitioners as a means to keep their own personal and professional boundaries separate. However, the way they went about it and outside of the guidance and due to line manager ignorance, these interactions could easily be perceived as client exploitation and therefore could constitute clear boundary violations rather than boundary crossings.

Where practitioners lived and worked in the same geographical space, and had history within the space, the situation presented differently. Practitioners in this situation were more likely to perceive their relationships with young people as 'more than a work relationship' as initial trust have already developed. They wanted to be more available to young people outside of club times and settings. They were also more likely to want to provide advice and support to individual young people in the private spaces of SNS rather than just public information sharing. Where this interaction was perceived to place a burden on young people, practitioners were asked to remove young people from their personal profiles. When practitioners and adult volunteers friended young people a 'cycle of negative practice' developed through the example set.

However, where volunteers were involved or suspected, two approaches were taken - paid practitioners either embraced the multiple relationships that volunteers had with young people and used it to their advantage, or they withdrew from the topic with volunteers as they were unsure about what the official position was, but they also realised that they needed the volunteers to maintain universal provision for young people.

Young people preferred to interact with only certain practitioners through the personal profiles of these practitioners. They only wanted to interact with those practitioners that they perceived they have developed a friendship with. These were also the practitioners that they were willing to share not only their personal information, but also their socially intimate information with. For young people this was therefore also a way to audience boundary manage. On closer inspection, this friendship resembled an episodic friendship rather than a free-flowing friendship in that young people wanted advice and support from practitioners whenever they needed it. They were in the main not interested in reciprocating this advice and support to practitioners. Young people adhered to the credibility based approach to trust in order to develop initial trust with practitioners and social interactionist approach to trust to develop this further into deeper trust with practitioners. Young people were more interested in interacting with practitioners in the private spaces of SNS rather than on a wall or a newsfeed. For this reason groups and pages were least attractive to young people for interaction with practitioners.

### ***10.3 Contribution to knowledge***

This was the first study to exclusively explore how and why unsanctioned connections between practitioners and young people took place. Very limited information concerning this topic area existed prior to this study. The categories and key themes that were identified through the research process are original and provide new insight into youth work practice and its links to relationships and space.

This study extended knowledge in the field of youth work as it provided new insight concerning the nature of relationships developed between practitioners and young people. It identified that young people do not view all practitioners the same but rather have certain criteria to determine who they develop a relationship with and who not. The study found that young people view some practitioners as 'like a friend' and that they want to connect on SNS with only those practitioners. They want to have access to these practitioners outside of youth work. This study also indicated that not only practitioners have boundaries that they have to adhere to. Young people also have boundaries and analysis suggested that these can be grouped according to personal and socially intimate boundaries. Personal information is the information that young people would share with most practitioners within a youth work setting. However, socially intimate information they only want to share with those practitioners that they perceive they have developed a 'like a friendship' type relationship with. As young people self-verify on SNS, their socially intimate information is available in these spaces and therefore young people only want to connect with these practitioners and not all of them.

The majority of practitioners wanted to provide equal access to all young people to avoid being accused of singling young people out. This study therefore indicates a miss-match in how relationships are perceived by the role players; for

most practitioners it was considered a professional relationship. For most young people it is either a personal relationship or a socially intimate relationship, but not a professional relationship as the relationship concerns their personal lives.

Davies and Cranston's (2008) study suggested that 'under the radar' connections were impacted on by level of experience and education of practitioners. The more training and experience a practitioner had the less likely this was to take place. However, this study challenged this perception and found instead that three other connected themes played a role. The relationships that practitioners and young people perceived they had developed with each other were a key consideration. Practitioners' perception and experience of relationships were impacted on by the geographical spaces that they occupied both in terms of work and life and whether they had history within that space or not.

Due to the professional relationship nature of practice the key responsibility for boundaries lies with practitioners. Careful analysis revealed that living and working in the same geographical space where the practitioner also had a history was the key indicator of whether a practitioner would connect unsanctioned with young people or not. This created situations where practitioners had multiple relationships, not only with people their own age but also with the families and wider networks. Young people are potentially part of all three these groups. The networked publics nature of social network sites complicated this further due to having access to the audiences of those one friended. Therefore it is not lack of training and experience that made some practitioners connect with young people - rather it was that they were working and living in geographical spaces where they also had a history that led to multiple relationships. This is a key finding of this study that was not previously considered.

This also led to a negative cycle of practice as young people view youth workers as role models. If a practitioner connected with a young person and offered advice and support this study found that the young person are then also more likely to do the same when they become a practitioner

#### ***10.4. In hindsight what would I do differently?***

As a process of learning I have gained much more than specialist subject knowledge concerning the area of my thesis study. I have gained insight about the research process itself and how I have approached it but also developed as a researcher, academic but also human services professional as a result.

In an ideal world I would have had more time to undertake the individual interviews in, especially the young people interviews. However, as a researcher I also have to weigh up my need and want for more information with the reality that young people did not want to be interviewed by me for too long as these were taking place within their leisure time. The maximum forty-five minutes that the young people interviews took was already considered too long by some young people who then chose not to engage with me.

Initially I set out to interview twenty young people participants overall. The final young people count came to fourteen only. This was influenced greatly by the policy directives and subsequent changes in the service organisation and delivery of universal open-access youth club provision. I have gained significant insight and new perspectives from the young people interviewed. However, a few young people identified how their thinking had changed from a younger age and I think it would have been beneficial to have been able to explore the topic area and

practitioner/young person relationships with young people under the age of sixteen. Ideally I would have liked to interview equal numbers of young people and practitioner participants; however, this proved too difficult within the time frame available.

Some practitioner interviews took places in coffee shops. Initially I was pleased about this as moving outside of the office or work environment allowed practitioners to relax more, but also indicated their willingness to open up and share their perspectives and experiences with me. Across the board I would suggest that in the interviews that took place away from work settings I gained the richest and most descriptive, but also analytical and reflexive insights and experiences from practitioners. All these interviews also tended to last longer than interviews that took place within workspaces.

However, the underlying noise within these informal settings made transcribing more difficult and in places the audio files had to be relistened to numerous times, and even then some words remained unclear. Luckily, due to me making notes during the interviews and also recording a reflection after each interview, I was able to identify the essence of the response but sadly not one hundred per cent accurate wording. As I did not undertake discourse analysis, this did not impact on the analysis; however, it did make the analysis process more labour and time intensive. This leaves me with the question of whether I aim to avoid interviews in informal spaces in future to avoid the additional time and labour requirements after the interview. Instead I will gain a clearer interview in terms of sound but perhaps an interview constrained by the space within which it took place, but also constrained by the demands of the job on time and the selfless nature of the youth work practitioner.

Drawing on a constructivist grounded theory approach required of me to transcribe interviews as soon as I could in order to inform further direction. This enabled me to identify that my enthusiasm, for the topic area but also my nervousness and eagerness to keep the participant comfortable and engaged, made me jump in too quickly at times, resulting in talking over the participant. I also did not probe as much as I could have and in hindsight I had a few interviews where I wrote to myself 'should have probed more'; 'lost opportunity to explore further', etc.

Due to the quick changing nature of technology I wanted to minimise the time between the completion of the fieldwork, the analysis and the write up. However, this was not possible and was actually an unrealistic expectation on my part as I did not fully comprehend the length of time needed to analyse, reflect and write up the study. For future research studies I would aim to identify more realistic timeframes in order to avoid self-imposed deadlines and then having to adjust my time frame accordingly.

An aspect I really needed to explore more was the role and perceptions of adult volunteers within the community. I was only able to interview adult volunteers who were either studying or hoping to study in a related field, so they valued the volunteer experience as an opportunity for relevant or related work experience. Sadly, therefore I only had others' interpretations of practices, experiences and opinions of community adult volunteers. I was unable to access any of them directly due to their other commitments during the day and at night. Where practitioners identified volunteers they thought would be valuable to interview because of their experiences with young people on social network sites, I got the impression that the volunteers wanted to avoid me, but I do not want to speculate about possible reasons for this.



As the research was about a sensitive topic area, I did not limit participants to only those that interacted 'under the radar', but I set out to gather thoughts and feelings about the practice to broaden the scope of participation. It would have been very insightful to only interview people who had experience of 'under the radar' interaction, but the definition, as currently stood, would have excluded some valuable contributions, for example, about the use of work profiles and the implications of this. It would also have excluded participants who did not have direct experience of this practice, but rather experiences of other practitioners to share. I found that one paid practitioner that interacted with young people 'under the radar' through his personal profile did not want to speak to me when he found out what the research was about. There was therefore a definite concern for some about implications of taking part in the research study.

On reflection more 'thick description' would have been beneficial as well. As this is an interpretative inquiry, this would have added more to the research findings. Due to time constraints in some of the interviews I feel more probing, prompts and reflection time- both for myself and the participants would have been valuable. I feel by perhaps undertaking less interviews but rather focussing on people who had experiences of only unsanctioned connections I would have had thicker descriptions. However, this would have hindered the research by not revealing the use of work profiles in an unsanctioned but perceived to be sanctioned manner. Therefore, as a first study focussing on unsanctioned connections I would argue that regardless of this limitation it was the best way forward in order to provide a foundation for future research on the topic area.

Being more targeted would have enabled me to perhaps arrange two interviews with each participant or arranging the interviews when participants were able to

speak freely for a longer period of time. However, all the interviews with practitioners were around one hour in length with two interviews spanning over two hours. I would suggest that this would have been most beneficial with young people interviews. Therefore this needs careful consideration. Interestingly, the three longest interviews were with practitioners who have either had direct experiences themselves or had experiences within their area.

### ***10.5. Policy and practice implications***

A major consideration that caused varied practice was not a lack of policy and guidance but rather ineffectiveness in disseminating the guidance that was available. The LA has to ensure that policy in future is effectively disseminated to all practitioners that it impacts on right down to the community volunteers. Policy writers needed to ensure that policy and guidance was clear and available for all to access. Policy should not only be available on the internal website but also in a printable format. During the time of research, policy was on the internal internet server that could only be accessed by practitioners who had access to it; directly excluding most sessional practitioners and all volunteers. However, the document was also full of links that you could only access on the internal server. Therefore even if line managers tried to print it out to share with sessional practitioners and volunteers they would not be able to access the whole policy in one accessible document.

Therefore, those that do not have this access should be prioritised in order to ensure that the policies and guidance was received by them but also understood. Question and answer sessions in the different Localities, for example, that could be attended by all would therefore be a valuable addition to the dissemination of policy process.

From an operational, but also relational perspective, the council should also have been quicker to respond to new technologies and significant changes in practice environments as it is easier to ensure that unsanctioned practice never happened than it is to rectify cycles of perpetual unintended negative practice. New technologies are constantly evolving and therefore policy and its implementation should also be constantly updated and shared with all relevant parties.

A further policy implication should be to ensure that all managers had a clear and accurate knowledge and understanding of social network sites and other future potential spaces for connection. A number of practitioners had limited or no understanding of the technology and the fast pace that it developed at and that it constantly evolved. Managers tended to be trusting of some practitioners that caused them to transfer the responsibility or civic courage to these practitioners to practice with young people in these spaces. 'Under the radar' interaction should therefore refer not only to practice that fell outside of the guidance and without line manager consent, but should also have included practice where the manager consented but based on their lack of knowledge and understanding, it could therefore not be considered informed consent. Using social network sites for work purposes is very different than using it for personal purposes, and, as such, no assumptions should be made about work usage based on experience with personal usage.

A further policy implication is to highlight not only practitioners' boundaries but also young people's boundaries to practitioners. With the increased use of social network sites, creating greater awareness of young people's personal and socially intimate boundaries is needed. This is in order to respect young people but also to avoid boundary violations and client exploitation.

Policy in relation to work profiles also needed to be carefully disseminated. This study found that work profiles were misunderstood and as a result were also considered unsanctioned. Where councils allowed the use of work profiles, careful consideration needed to be given to the networked publics nature of the young people's profiles and their roles as co-constructors. Work profiles also did not consider young people's socially intimate boundaries and their co-constructors' as part of this. Line managers' naivety to do with technology and lack of engagement with guidance could have been to blame for this.

However this research also identified a far-reaching policy implication. A decision needed to be made concerning the LAs relationship with volunteers that lived, worked and had history in the same geographical spaces. To what extent could expectations be held with regards to who volunteers could interact with on social network sites through their personal profiles? Multiple relationships were a reality for most practitioners and volunteers that lived and worked in the same

areas due to their history within these spaces and a sustainable approach needed to be developed to avoid the risk of subtle harm and client exploitation.

### **10.6. Dissemination of Findings**

Dissemination of the research themes and findings started in 2012. During the summer of 2012 I co-presented at two international events. The first symposium was hosted by the University of Sheffield, Centre for Study of Childhood and Youth and focussed on the importance of online spaces for young people within an educational context (Appendix G). At Manchester Metropolitan University dissemination took place at an international seminar on *Space, Place and Social Justice*, the title of the co-authored presentation and paper was: 'The value of informal spaces in reflecting the diverse social and cultural worlds of children and young people' (Appendix H).

During 2014 I presented at a further two international conferences. These two conferences were directly linked to this study and the key findings in relation to unsanctioned connections between youth work practitioners and young people online. The first international conference was hosted by the University of Sheffield, Centre for Study of Childhood and Youth Studies, and my presentation was titled : 'Everyday Life and Children's Agency: Young people engaging with youth work practitioners and volunteers on social network sites' (Appendix I). My second opportunity for dissemination in 2014 was the second international conference hosted by the Centre for Culture and Cultural Studies (CCYS) in

Macedonia\_ and was entitled: 'Young people, youth work practitioners and 'under the radar' interaction on social network sites' and focussed on the varied ways of boundary management encountered during this study (Appendix J).

During 2015 I have been accepted to present my final research study at two conferences. Both of these are focussed directly on working with young people and therefore does not only constitute academic dissemination but also dissemination to a practitioner audience. One of these is at a youth work college with an audience of youth workers and youth work researchers. The conference is *yresearch: the conference* at the YMCA George Williams College in London and my presentation title is: 'The impact on boundary management of unsanctioned connections between youth work practitioners and young people through online social network sites' (Appendix K).

The second audience is an international conference organised by the *Journal of Youth Studies*, and my paper is entitled 'Contemporary Youth Contemporary Risks: Unexpected online opportunities and risks: unsanctioned connections between young people and youth work practitioners on social network sites' (Appendix L).

In the autumn of 2015 I am leading a seminar on my research for practitioners and academics as part of the English initiative 'Making Research Count' at Kings College London and the University of Bedfordshire.

As part of being granted access to a LA I have been asked to write a report to disseminate the findings of my research. This is the next step in this doctoral process and will be combined with a dissemination meeting with my gate keeper.

In this meeting I will discuss the policy and practice implications with him and suggest areas that need to be considered in policy, training and practice.

### ***10.7. Recommendations***

The major recommendation from this study is the need for clear dissemination of policy and guidance relating to connections through social network sites. Before this can be done however, policy and guidance needs to carefully consider the findings of this study. How and why practitioners and young people connect through SNS is determined through the nature of the relationships that they developed. This study found that this is not impacted on by training, experience or the existence of policy and guidance but rather by where practitioners live, work and have a history within a particular geographical space. Vested interest therefore existed in these cases. For young people relationships are divided between personal and socially intimate and this impacts on how and where they want to connect with practitioners.

The LA needs to take stock of its position and role. IYSS reliance on people who live, work and have history in the same spaces and therefore have these multiple relationships provide the reasons why they get involved in youth work in the first place. Therefore can the LA expect them to adhere to the same personal and professional boundaries as practitioners who do not have these multiple relationships due to shared spaces?

A clear strategy needs to be developed that also takes account of volunteers' roles and responsibilities. This is recommended to be shared across and between localities as some volunteers work across localities and are aware of differential treatment and responses to connections. This will limit volunteer confusion and

anxiety as they are not always sure what is expected of them with regards to pre-existing connections with young people.

Melvin (2013) as well as Davies and Cranston (2008) found that different councils had different practices with regard to social network site interaction as part of youth work provision. A comparative study identifying the different approaches taken by different councils and other role-players within an integrated but also multi-agency sector would be beneficial in order to learn through example and consequences.

At the time of fieldwork the posts that merged the youth worker role and that of Connexions Personal Advisers were very new and this reflected the opinions and views held by practitioners concerning the boundaries of the other professional background. It would be beneficial to study these merged identities now to ascertain whether a new identity emerged or whether they still adhere to their previous work histories, identities and values.

I suggest a further study focussing exclusively on the role of young and adult volunteers where multiple relationships exist. This would be a more targeted small scale study using interpretative inquiry to determine the nature as well as benefits of relationships through personal profiles from the different participants' perspectives. The study would focus on the impact of volunteerism on the professionalism of youth work with specific focus on social network site networked publics.



After-care service are possible and available due to the networked publics of social network sites. The nature and implications of these relationships for both young people into adulthood and for practitioners are worth exploring as an impact of new media on practice.

The participation of young people on online gaming consoles, for example, X-Box, is an issue that came up in three interviews. Online gaming consoles provides spaces for connection between young people and practitioners that resembles some of the features of SNS but that adds further dimensions and implications. Interestingly the interviews in which this was mentioned were all conducted with males; one young person and two practitioner participants. X-box and other gaming consoles are under-explored with regards to developing professional youth work relationships with young people and as such is an area that warrants further research. Interest was expressed by the male practitioners to explore this further themselves as an area to extend their practice with young men.

## **Appendices**

## What's in it for me?

You will be a part of a study that will help to inform how youth workers and young people work together! This is an exciting opportunity to help create new knowledge and will help in making service provision better for young people.

### What will Liesl do with all this information?

After I have done all my interviews I have to write up my research into a study and then I will hopefully get my doctorate degree. The information will be very useful to the youth work field and will help to raise awareness and quality in the provision that you receive. I'm hoping to write some articles about it and maybe some chapters in books.

Thank you for considering talking to me- I can't wait to hear what you've got to say! If you are interested in what I found out I will e-mail you a copy of the final piece.

### How to contact Liesl:

If you have any questions about taking part in the study, please do contact me: e-mail me at: [liesl.conradie@beds.ac.uk](mailto:liesl.conradie@beds.ac.uk)

or write to me at:

University of Bedfordshire

Park Square

Luton, Beds

LU1 3JU

Or, if you prefer to speak to someone independent about the research, you can contact Professor Ravi Kohli. Prof. Kohli is the research supervisor for this study. His e-mail address is: [Ravi.Kohli@beds.ac.uk](mailto:Ravi.Kohli@beds.ac.uk)

## Appendix A

**Young people, youth workers  
and social network sites.**

**Information about the study for  
young people**



**I'm really interested in what  
you've got to say!**

### **What is this about?**

I am interested in knowing more about how and why young people and youth workers use social network sites to interact with each other.

### **What do you want me to do?**

I would like to have a face to face conversation (interview) with you. This will take about 45 minutes of your time.

### **Will people know who I am and what I said?**

I will tape record our conversation so that I can really listen to you without having to worry about taking notes at the same time. When we are done I will type our conversation up and will remove your name from the typed script.

This way no-one will know who you are or what you are saying to me. Our conversation will be confidential. I might want to use some of what you say directly in my piece that I have to write but I will not say that you said it or where you are from, you will therefore be anonymous. I am hoping to speak to at least 20 young people and all the information from this will be put together and used to see what young people think.

### **What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study or not. Participation is absolutely voluntary, and will not impact on your access to youth club provision at all.

Even after agreeing to take part you are free to change your mind at any time and to withdraw from the study without having to give any reason. Just let me know directly or ask your youth worker to contact me.

Your views and experiences in this area are very important to me and I would be very grateful if you decide to help me.

### **What next?**

If you do want to take part in the study please fill in the consent form and give it back to me.

I will then be in contact with you within 2 weeks to arrange a time that I will come back to your youth club for our conversation.

## What's in it for me?

No incentives or rewards will be offered for taking part in this study. I am very grateful that you are considering taking part in this study and I hope that the findings at the end will be of value to you, your practice, the young people you work with and your organisation.

## What will Liesl do with all this information?

After I have done all of my interviews I will have to write up my research into a study and then I will hopefully get my doctorate degree. The information will be very useful to the youth work field and I'm hoping to write some articles about it and maybe some chapters in a book.

Thank you for considering talking to me- I can't wait to hear what you've got to say! I will e-mail you a copy of my findings if you are interested in reading the final piece.

## Contact for further information

If you require more information before making a decision please do not hesitate to contact me. You can e-mail me at:

[liesl.conradie@beds.ac.uk](mailto:liesl.conradie@beds.ac.uk)

or write to me at:

University of Bedfordshire, Park Square, Luton, LU1 3JU, Bedfordshire.

Or, if you prefer to speak to someone independent about the research, you can contact Professor Ravi Kohli. Prof. Kohli is the research supervisor for this study. His e-mail address is: [Ravi.Kohli@beds.ac.uk](mailto:Ravi.Kohli@beds.ac.uk)

## Appendix B

**Young people, youth  
workers and social  
network sites.**

**Information about the  
study for youth workers**



**I'm really interested in what  
you've got to say!**

## **What is this about?**

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study that forms part of a Professional Doctorate in Leadership in Children's and Young People's Services at the University of Bedfordshire. This leaflet is to give you a bit more information about my research before you decide to take part or not. Do not hesitate to contact me if something is not clear or if you want/need more information. I would be very grateful if you decide to take part in this study as this will add to what we know about current youth work practice and theory. Thank you for reading this.

## **The title of the project is:**

Virtual 'Working' Relationships between youth workers and young people through social network site profiles.

## **What is the aim of the research?**

The aim of the research is to find out more about how and why young people and youth workers interact with each other through personal social network sites. The impact of this on the professional working relationship is a key part of the research area. I am interested in finding out if young people and youth workers have different ideas for why they add each other but also how they perceive the nature of the relationship. By talking to me you will add to what we know about youth work practice and how our field is developing through the use of technology and the new social environments that this creates.

## **What would I be asked to do if I took part?**

I would like to have a face to face interview (conversation) with you. I am interested in finding out about interaction between youth workers and young people on Facebook or any other social network site. You do not have to have young people as 'friends' on-line to have an interview with me; I would still love to have a conversation with you! This will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour of your time.

## **What happens to the data collected?**

The data will be analysed after all the interviews are conducted and a report written on the findings. Further articles and publications will also hopefully follow.

Please rest assured that your contributions will be anonymised, and your name will only be used in order to link you to your reference number and these will be locked up in separate places. I might want to use something that you said as a direct quotation but nothing will be included that might enable people to identify you.

Everything you say will be treated in strictest confidence except where there is evidence or suspicion of significant harm or risk to young people or involvement in illegal activity. In cases like these I will have to pass on the information in a sensitive manner to the relevant person after discussing it with you.

## **What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study or not. Participation is absolutely voluntary. If you want to take part please fill in the consent form and give it back to me.

I will then get back to you within 2 weeks to arrange a time and place for our interview. Even after agreeing to take part you are free to change your mind at any time and to withdraw from the study without having to give any reason and without any negative impact on you.

Your views and experiences in this area are very important to me and I would be very grateful if you decide to help me.



**Consent Form for Young People**

**Individual Reference Number:**

**Participant Statement**

Please read the statements below and if you agree to them all, sign on the dotted line and return this consent form to your youth worker.

- *The research study has been explained to me.*
- *I understand what my participation will involve.*
- *I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I can change my mind and decide to withdraw at any point, without this having any negative impact on me.*
- *I understand that all information I give will stay confidential (no one else will find out what I said) unless I say anything that suggests there are any concerns about my safety or the safety of other people.*
- *I have received answers to all the questions I asked.*
- *I am aware that I can contact Liesl Conradie if I want more information or if I want to find out about the results of the research.*

***Please sign below if you agree to be interviewed for this study.***

Participant's signature: ..... Date: .....

**Consent Form for Youth workers**

**Individual Reference Number:**

**Participant Statement**

Please read the statements below and if you agree to them all, sign on the dotted line and give it back to me.

- *I confirm that I have read and understood all information provided for this research study.*
- *I have been informed about the purpose of the research and I understand what my participation will involve.*
- *I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I change my mind and decide to withdraw at any point, without prejudice.*
- *I understand that all information that I give will stay confidential unless I mention anything that suggests that there are disclosures of harm, cause to suspect significant harm or evidence of illegal activities that involves my practice or the practice of others and that impacts on young people.*
- *I have received answers to all my queries and questions relating to this research study.*
- *I am aware that I can contact the researcher, Liesl Conradie if I want more information or if I want to find out the results of the study.*

Workers signature: ..... Date: .....



## ***Appendix E***

### **Young people, Youth Work services and social network sites (SNS)**

Reference Number:

Date:

Time:

#### **About you:**

1. Please would you tell me your gender

Male       Female

2. Please would you tell me your age

14-15     16-17     18-19     20-25

3. Please indicate which of the following best describes your ethnic background

African

Caribbean

Any other black background

Bangladeshi

Indian

Pakistani

Any other Asian background

White British

- White Irish
- Any other white background
- White and black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed background
- Chinese
- Other (please specify)

4. Do you have contact with a young person's worker?

- Yes
- No

5. What type of engagement do you have with the worker?

- One-to- one, specialised work
- Generic youth club
- Detached youth work
- After school clubs
- Lunch time clubs

6. Aims of the project that you access

--

### **About your own social network site use**

1.) Do you have any social network site profiles?

2.a.) If yes, on what sites?

b.) And If yes: How big a part does SNS play in your keeping in touch with people?

3.) If no, why not?

### **Your social network site use**

4.) How do you tend to stay in touch with the young people's workers that you know when you don't see them?

5.a) If SNS mentioned: Are you friends with any workers on SNS? (If you have more than 1 site- on which one?)

5.b.) If SNS not mentioned at all: Do you use SNS at all to interact with young people's workers or they to interact with you?

6.) What are your thoughts about staying in with young people's workers through social network sites? (Prompt: Do you think there is a difference in them using their normal/personal profiles or if they use a work profile or a group page?)

7.) Have you had any experience of using SNS to communicate with a young people's worker or workers through a personal profile? (might be your own or things you have heard from others). Explain this please, extend, nature of the interaction, feelings concerning this, etc.

8.) Have you ever sent a friend request to a young person's worker? Why did/do you want to be friends with them on-line?

9.) Have you had requests from young people's workers to add you as a friend?  
What are your thoughts about this?

10.) How do you respond when this happens?

Accept

Ignore

Depends on who it is

Explain

Please tell me why/ share examples please.

11.) Why do you think they might want to keep in touch with you through a SNS?

12.) How do you think keeping in touch with a young people's worker through a social network site would impact on your relationship with that worker?

12a.) Do you think SNS would benefit/ enhance your relationships with your worker(s)? Please explain how.

12b.) What do you think/feel might be the challenges or drawbacks of using SNS to keep in touch with youth workers on their personal profiles?

13.) How might your contact with the young people's worker on SNS impact on others?

14.) How do you think SNS impacts on trust? (prompt: parents, others?)

15.) Have you ever discussed any of the above with young people's workers, your friends or your family, or they with you? Please explain.

**To end the interview:**

That covers everything I wanted to ask. Is there anything that I should have asked you that I did not think about asking you?

or is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your time and contribution your opinions and input has been most helpful. I really appreciate it. Is it ok if I contact you again if I think of something else or if I want to clarify anything with you?

## ***Appendix F***

### **Young people, Youth Work services and social network sites**

Reference Number:

Date:

Time:

#### **About you and your role:**

1. Please would you tell me your gender

Male       Female

2. Please would you tell me your age

16-19     20-25     26-30     31-34     35-44     45-54     55-64  
 65+

3. Please indicate which of the following best describes your ethnic background

African

Caribbean

Any other black background

Bangladeshi

Indian

- Pakistani
- Any other Asian background
- White British
- White Irish
- Any other white background
- White and black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed background
- Chinese
- Other (please specify)

4. Are you a permanent or temporary member of staff?

- Permanent member of staff
- temporary contract
- Other (please specify)

5. Are you a full-time or part-time member of staff?

- Full-time
- part-time
- sessional staff

6. If you are a part-time or sessional worker, how many hours do you work a week?

7. What is your current job title?

8. From what date (roughly) did you hold this title?

9. What is the previous job title that you held within your organisation (if you had a previous title)?

10. Do you have a relevant professional qualification?

YES

NO

busy completing it

11. Which one? Please specify.

12. What year did you receive the above professional qualification?

13. If you do not have a professional qualification please tell me what your highest relevant qualification is.

14. Please tell me what settings you work in:

Youth clubs

Schools

Youth Centre

Children's Centre

Community Centre

Other (please specify)



### **About your own social network site use**

1.) Do you have any social network site profiles? Personal profiles or work profiles?

2.a.) If yes, on what sites?

b.) And If yes: How big a part does SNS play in your keeping in touch with people?

3.) If no, why not?

### **Your social network site use as part of your job**

4.) How do you tend to stay in touch with the young people that you work with when you don't see them? (what methods do you use?)

5.a) If SNS mentioned:.. Do you use a 'youth club group', work or personal profile to keep in touch with young people? How do you use SNS with young people?

Youth club group

Information

Work profile

Personal profile

Other

How do you use these? Can you give an example?

5.b.) If SNS not mentioned at all: Do you use SNS as part of your job, if so in what ways?

Youth club group page

Work profile

Personal profile

Other

Can you give me an example?

6.) What are your thoughts about youth workers interacting with young people on social network sites? (Through personal profiles? work profiles or groups?)

7.) Have you had any experience of using SNS to communicate with YP through a personal profile? (might be your own or things you have heard from others). Explain this please, extend, nature of the interaction, feelings concerning this, etc.

8.) Have you had requests from young people to add you as a friend on your personal profile? How often? What are your thoughts about this?

9.) How do you respond in these instances? (accept, ignore, explain)

Accept

Ignore

Accept and explain

Ignore and explain

Other

Tell me why please, (what might play a role?)

10.) How do you think SNS is impacting on your relationship with young people?

11.) Have you ever send a 'friend request' to a young person or a young person that you used to work with? Tell me more about this please? – personal profile or a work profile?

12.) Why do you think young people want to add you (and other youth workers) on Facebook?

13.) Why do you want to add young people as friends? Or why do you think others might want to add young people as friends now, or in the past or the future.

14.) What do you think might be the potential positives or benefits of using SNS to communicate with young people through a personal profile?

For young people?

For you (practitioner?)

15.) What do you think might be the challenges or drawbacks of using SNS to keep in touch with YP on a personal profile?

For the young people?

For you/ practitioner

16.) What do you think the impact of your SNS relationship with a young person might be on other people?

Parent

Practitioners

Other friends on Facebook of the young person

Other friends on Facebook of you

Other

Please give me some examples.

17. How do you think SNS impacts on trust?

18.) Have you ever discussed any of the above with young people, your co-workers or your manager, or they with you? Please explain.

**To end the interview:**

That covers everything I wanted to ask. Is there anything that I should have asked you that I did not think about asking you?

or Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your time and contribution your opinions and input has been most helpful. I really appreciate it. Is it ok if I contact you again if I think of something else or if I want to clarify anything with you?

## ***Appendix G***

### **Celebrating Childhood Diversity – International Conference: Centre of Childhood & Youth.**

*Symposium: Informal spaces which reflect diverse social and cultural worlds of children and young people*

Kate D’Arcy & Liesl Conradie

Many aspects of children and young people’s worlds are highly regulated and managed spaces. Within the UK mainstream education is a tightly monitored institution where notions of individuality and achievement are central. Educational targets and league tables drive teachers to improve pupil performance and exam qualifications.

‘Out of school’ time is also increasingly monitored. Timetable of extra curricula activities can take place every day. Play experts have expressed concerns that children’s free time has become associated with learning, rather than enjoyment. A shift towards more structured forms of play alongside other family and school obligations may have led to ‘over-scheduling’ of children and young people’s lives. Although some children benefit academically from such activities, over-scheduling children’s time has also been linked to stress and depression, amongst other mental health issues (Gleave, 2009). Consequently a great deal is known about these formal and informal spaces because they are monitored and researched substantial data provides information regarding their benefits and limitations.

Yet there remain other spaces which are largely unrelated spaces, spaces which reflect the diversity of children and young people’s social and cultural worlds - spaces of which little is known.....

The contributors seek to share and debate research on two of these informal spaces which children and young people occupy, they would also invite other delegates with relevant papers to join this workshop/ debate session. The aims are

- 1) To consider different spaces that reflect diverse and social worlds
- 2) Discuss what we know and is special about these spaces
- 3) Consider the 'problematism' of these spaces
- 4) Debate to what extent it is important to have different social and educational areas which can reflect and celebrate young people's diverse social and cultural worlds
- 5) If they are considered important , then how can we better recognise celebrate these spaces

D'Arcy:

***Elective Home Education in contemporary times: educational spaces and worldviews ( D'Arcy).***

Elective Home Education described the situation where parents or carers take on the responsibility for educating their child at home rather than sending them to mainstream school. This research was an inductive qualitative study. As a largely unregulated educational space Elective Home Education is often criticised and considered strange and deviant. Data collection comprised interviews with Traveller families to raise awareness and document their *experiences and perceptions of Elective Home Education.*

*Conradie:*

Young people today grow up with the internet and the 'third places' or additional 'space' that it provides for interaction. Young people perceive and experience online areas, for example social network sites like Facebook, not as separate from their off-line lives but as a continual; taking their off-line lives, online. In youth service provision this causes a cautious juxtaposition; youth work professes to start where young people are at- both in terms of need but also in terms of space. With regards to informal education provision there is an effort to separate these 2 lives. The creation of regulated groups and organisational pages online is advocated rather than the fluent , 24/7 reality of these spaces. In line with the Coalition government's 'Big Society' and the greater reliance on community members to contribute to universal service provision is this approach sustainable?

## ***Appendix H***

### **The value of informal spaces in reflecting the diverse social and cultural worlds of children and young people**

***Kate D’Arcy and Liesl Conradie.***

#### **Introduction**

Many aspects of children and young people’s worlds are highly regulated and managed spaces. Within the UK, mainstream education is a tightly monitored institution where notions of individuality and achievement are central. Educational targets and league tables drive teachers to improve pupil performance and exam qualifications.

‘Out of school’ time is also increasingly monitored. Timetabled extra-curricular activities can be scheduled on every day of the week. Play experts have expressed concerns that children’s ‘free’ time has become over-associated with learning, rather than enjoyment. Thus a shift towards more structured forms of play alongside other family and school obligations may have led to ‘over-scheduling’ of children and young people’s lives (Mills and Gleave, 2009). Nevertheless, the benefit of such monitoring is that consequently, a great deal is known about these formal and informal spaces. Substantial data provides information regarding both their benefits and limitations.

Yet there remain other spaces which are largely unrelated, spaces which reflect the diversity of children and young people’s social and cultural worlds. These are informed by the social and cultural construction not only of childhood and education but also ‘time’ and ‘space’ itself (Castells, 2006). This paper draws upon Castells’ ideas of place and non-place to consider the value of two

particular informal spaces a) social network sites and b) Elective Home Education in reflecting the diverse social and cultural worlds of children and young people.

The article begins with some contextual background into the research of the two aforementioned spaces and considers how they represent space, place and non-place. The authors then provide some information about what is known about EHE and social networking sites. Thereafter, we raise some particular methodological challenges of researching these unregulated informal spaces. We also consider the 'problematism' of these spaces and debate some issues for social justice which have arisen from our research. In our conclusion we recommend that more research is necessary in order to celebrate, rather than problematise spaces which facilitate diversity and reflect the social and cultural worlds of children and young people.

### ***Facebook; an on-Line Social network***

Young people today grow up with the internet and the 'third places' or additional 'space' that it provides for interaction. Young people perceive and experience online areas, for example, social network sites like Facebook, not as separate from their off-line lives but as a continual; taking their off-line lives, online (Livingstone and Brake, 2010; Boyd, 2008; Byron, 2008). This research incorporated young people from the age of 13 up to 19.

In 2008 youth work as a profession became part of the newly created Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) alongside Connexions and other services in different local authorities in England and Wales (DfES, 2005; DfES, 2006). Funding cuts and bigger priority to specialised services were a consequence of this and other changes, for example, Coalition government formation in May 2010 (HM Treasury, 2010) . In youth support service provision this causes a cautious juxtaposition; youth work professes to start where young people are at- both in terms of need but also in terms of space (Davies, 2005). The reality however is



that on-line interactions between youth support workers and young people are taking place mostly 'under the radar'. This means outside of organisational policies and guidelines and also without the knowledge of the line manager (Davies and Cranston, 2008). For the purpose of this research this 'under the radar' interaction on social network sites is the focus.

In line with the Coalition government's 'Big Society' and the greater reliance on community members to contribute to universal service provision is this 'under the radar' interaction sustainable? The research took a qualitative methodology and interviews were conducted with young people, paid workers and volunteers to ascertain their views and experiences of unregulated or 'under the radar' social network site interaction within a youth work context. 20 young people in the stipulated age range were interviewed and 20 IYSS staff. The staff interviews were categorised in order to interview members of staff from a youth service background, Connexions background but also importantly volunteer staff. The 'under the radar' nature of this interaction did create challenges in accessing respondents to be interviewed.

### ***Elective Home Education***

Elective Home Education describes the situation where parents or carers take on the responsibility for educating their child at home rather than sending them to mainstream school. As a largely unregulated educational space, Elective Home Education (EHE) is often criticised and considered strange and deviant because it conflicts with dominant ideologies concerning Western childhoods where schooling is seen as an essential ingredient of children's socialisation and development ( Monk, 2004; Wyness, 2012). Both EHE and Travellers are sensitive research matters for different reasons. Research into EHE is difficult as it takes place in people's private homes and involves studying families' ways of life (Webb, 2010). There is often suspicion of researchers, who are not home-educators themselves, showing an interest in studying this area.

In this paper the term Traveller is used throughout. The term 'Traveller' is a commonly accepted one that covers a range of identifiable groups including Roma, English Gypsies, Irish/Scottish/Welsh Travellers, Circus people, Showmen and New Age Travellers. Defining a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller is a matter of self-ascription and does not exclude those who live in houses. Ethnic identity is not lost when members of these groups settle, instead it continues and adapts to new circumstances; many Travellers today live in a mixture of trailers, mobile homes and permanent housing (D'Arcy, 2011).

Studying Traveller communities is also difficult as Travellers are geographically and socially marginalised communities who are discriminated against on a personal, social and institutional level in society. This marginalisation has a direct impact on their social power and agency, an issue my research has addressed by enabling Traveller communities' voices to be heard on educational matters. Data collection comprised interviews with 11 Traveller families to raise awareness and document their experiences and worldviews. This research took place in one particular LA and concerned Travellers' use of EHE. Traveller families from different Traveller groups, different geographical locations and social class were interviewed twice; the main professionals responsible for EHE in the particular LA under study were also interviewed.

### ***Space, Place and even 'Non- Places'***

Both the areas of focus for this article relates to the notion of space and place. From a sociological perspective space becomes something more through our interaction with people within the space but also through emotional connections with the space itself. These emotional connections can be constructed through our daily routine, relevant historical events or a place where we feel that we belong (May, 2011). Therefore space becomes place through how we; individually and collectively; perceive it, experience it and interact with it. Thus, space becomes place if it is inhabited by people who attach a special meaning or

function to it. It is interesting to note that through our research in these 'places' we have found that these 'places' only hold value and meaning to those that engage with them and are perceived as 'strange', 'weird' and deviant by many who don't.

Castells (1996, 1997) takes this notion of 'space of place' further and identified 'non-places'. Non-places are spaces that people can interact in but they do not have any defining features that distinguish them from other similar spaces. For example the physical spaces of an airport or shopping mall or the on-line social networks are the same from wherever you are in the world. Castells suggests that within the network society new kinds of places come to exist. With regards to the network society Castells identified the 'space of flows'. This allows for people to transcend their physical space and to connect, communicate and interact, through a network that allows for the creation of these 'non-places'.

These places do not have specific characteristics and can therefore be located almost anywhere (Franke and Ham, 2006). Social network sites are indeed a relatively new space which has emerged from developments in communication and technology (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). It is an informal social space that can be accessed from anywhere in the world with computer networks and the format and structure of the space appears the same regardless of where you access it. The way in which SNS and EHE characterize non-places is now discussed.

### **Social network sites as non-place**

Due to the way that young people use social network sites, such as, Facebook they can be considered as 'non-places'. Facebook is an alternative space but also what Castells referred to as a space of flows. Interaction in on-line 'non-places' are facilitated by and made possible by the 'space of flows'. Indeed, Castells' (1996) 'space of places' and 'space of flows' provides a useful conceptual framework to look at young people's on-line interaction with peers, 'friends of

friends', family and also in some cases strangers. SNS allow young people to transcend their ever-more restricted 'space of places' and to continue their interaction through the 'space of flows'.

Gill (2008) states that children and young people use SNS because of the demise of the opportunities afforded them to socialise and interact in the more traditional 'space of places' due to an increasingly risk adverse society. This is partly due to moral panic (Cohen, 1972) relating to an increased perceived fear of crime against children and young people by strangers in physical spaces. A further reason is the demise of public spaces due to demand for housing. Increasingly public spaces for specifically young people to congregate and socialise are positioned on the sidelines of community life. This is as a result of funding cuts but also community pressure relating to noise levels, lighting implications and perceived anti social behaviour (Williams, 2011).

The internet and its networks allow young people to take their interaction and communication forward, flowing through this virtual network. It allows a 'space' or 'non-place' through technology for users to transcend from traditional; 'real-world' place (i.e. school or socialising on the recreation ground) to a virtually created 'non-place'. SNS interactions between youth support workers and young people are not often part of official youth work. These interactions do not take place as part of a specific workplace remit or guidance, thus its position as a non-place raises ethical questions about the relationships of young people and youth support workers (paid and unpaid) within these spaces.

Yet social network sites are a part of the diverse and social worlds of young people today. Facebook is legitimately accessible to young people over the age of 13. However, controversially increasing numbers of young people under this age access non-places of this type; in a great many cases with the full knowledge and support of their parents (Loughton, 2012).

Youth work as a profession is open to new approaches to work with young people and social network sites provide such an opportunity as young people are engaged in these spaces. SNS also provide the opportunity for innovation in practice. Innovation in relation to youth work services involves, for example, identifying new settings and 'pushes back the boundaries of professional knowledge and practice' (Merton, 2009).

'Online social networking provides a range of new opportunities to complement existing youth work practices (e.g. adding an online element such as publishing creative works online, or holding an area-wide discussion) and to build new models of work with young people' (Davies and Cranston, 2008a:18).

Thus, within a youth work context, the use of SNS does raise some concerns; simultaneously their value is also recognised and explored.

### **Elective Home Education as a non-place**

Elective Home Education (EHE) on the other hand is an educational non-place, because it does not have specific educational characteristics and can take place anywhere. Yet home-education is not a new phenomenon. Home-education is not a new phenomenon and throughout recorded history parents have taught their own children (Petrie, 2001). Home education has been particularly popular with rich families, including royal families, radical families and geographically isolated families. For example, in Australia, due to the vast size of the nation and dispersal of families, many have had no choice but to home-educate.

For families in England, EHE *is* a matter of choice. Elective Home Education was the term used by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2007) to describe the situation where parents decide to educate their children at home rather than in school. To date there has been little data or research on the numbers of children who are educated in this way in England. EHE can be

described as a non-place as educational guidelines are very vague. Home-education does not need to cover a certain curriculum or amount of hours per week. Those delivering home-education need no specific teaching or professional qualifications.

Current DCSF (2007) guidance states that if parents decide to home-educate, the responsibility for a child's education rests with the parents of that child. The guidance specifies that although parents are fully responsible for costs and teaching provision, it is ultimately the LA's duty to ensure that the education they provide is 'suitable' and 'efficient'. This duty means that LAs 'must make arrangements to establish the identities, so far as it is possible to do so, of children in their area who are not receiving a suitable education' (Education and Inspection Act, 2006). Yet LAs do not currently have any statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of EHE on a routine basis nor do they have the power to enter the homes or see children for the purpose of monitoring EHE provision (DCSF, 2007). The words 'efficient' and 'suitable' represent key terms regarding EHE and it is the interpretation and context of these words and how they are acted upon that provides the foundation for policy in England. The words themselves are not defined in the Education Act; however the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2007) do provide a rather vague definition from case law for an 'efficient education' as 'achieving that which it sets out to achieve' (p. 4).

Thus EHE is an educational 'non-place' which has no specific contours, yet it is on the increase and consequently does reflect the diversity of children and young people's social and cultural worlds. Although my research focussed upon Traveller's use of EHE, there are generally increasing numbers of families who are home-educating. Indeed, Meighan (1995) referred to EHE as a 'quiet revolution'. Yet when children are removed from school to be home-educated, it simultaneously reduces the social and cultural diversity nature of mainstream education. Indeed, many question the 'extent to which the home can offer the

kinds of social contact found within the school' (Wyners, 2012:170). Critics of EHE suggests that EHE supports the increasing move of individualised routes, both in education and in people's social lives, rather than enabling a united society (Lubienski, 2000). Consequently the position of EHE raises important questions about childhood and social inclusion.

### **Unregulated Spaces : what we know about these spaces**

#### *Elective Home Education*

To date there has been little data or research on the numbers of children who are home-educated in England. EHE is a relatively young field of research in England, compared to the US where there has been more interest and consequently more government funding into home-education. Although there is a significant amount of research on EHE that derives from the US, the home-education situation in England is very different and cannot usefully be compared. In the US home-educators reasons for home-educating are often related to religious beliefs and values and home-education is a considerable growing movement. Indeed home-education in most countries is managed differently as legislation and requirements differ. In several European countries (Germany, The Netherlands) home-education is almost illegal, whereas England upholds a very liberal attitude towards EHE (Badman, 2009). Nevertheless, because it is liberal there is also limited guidance and support regarding home-education practice.

Parents in England are not required to notify their LA when they home-educate, consequently recorded numbers of home-educated children are only estimations. Most figures are based upon those parents who voluntarily do register with their LA as home-educating and those with children who were previously attending mainstream education. This is because schools are required to notify the LA regarding the reasons why certain children are removed from school roll. In his review of EHE, Badman (2009) estimated that there were around 80,000 home-educated children in England.

EHE is an unregulated space and subsequently there has been growing concern from children's services regarding the current ability of the EHE system to adequately support and monitor the education, safety and welfare of home educated children (Morgan, 2009). These concerns combined with the death of a home-educated child in 2008, led to a review of EHE guidance that began early in 2009. Graham Badman was asked by the then Secretary of State (Ed Balls, MP) to assess whether the current system of supporting and monitoring home education enabled all children to receive a good education and stay safe and well (DCSF, 2009). Badman was asked to concentrate upon two main issues: firstly, the barriers to LAs in effectively carrying out their safeguarding responsibilities and secondly, whether LAs were providing the right support for home-educating families. The DCSF (2009) stated that their rationale for the review was based upon their commitment to ensure that systems for keeping children safe and ensuring they receive a suitable education were as robust as possible. The accountability of government bodies was therefore an influencing factor in initiating and conducting this review.

Yet, such concerns have been contested by particular groups who advocate home-education as well as other researchers. McIntyre-Batty (2007) suggests that ill preparation and a lack of training about the philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings of home-education inform many LA demands for legislative changes. EHE is too often compared to school-based equivalents and Webb (2010) suggests that this is not relevant as EHE involves a whole different way of life, not just educational provision. Furthermore, McIntyre-Batty (2007) confirms that procedures based on established school practices and educational policies do not shift smoothly to EHE and may therefore be inapplicable or irrelevant to home-education environments.

In the case of Travellers, their use of EHE has also problematised. Increasing concerns by Traveller Education Services (TES) regarding the persistently high numbers of Traveller families electing for EHE has driven this problematisation.



Yet there is limited research on Traveller communities' use of EHE to counter-act such concerns. To date the author only has located 2 specific studies on this topic in England, and only one study actually interviewed Traveller families themselves. Consequently Travellers' use of EHE is often based on stereotypical assumptions which assume that all Travellers are highly-mobile and this is why they take up EHE. In fact many Traveller families in England today are no longer nomadic, a consequence of the instrument of law, rather than communities' own choices (Landers, 2012). In many ways laws such as the Public Order Act 1986 which gave people the power to remove people who trespassed on land and other more recent Acts which removes LA duties to provide any suitable accommodation for Traveller communities have not only changes Travellers lifestyles they have also demonised and criminalised such lifestyles ( Landers, 2012).

In 2004, the Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit commissioned an in-house study into the situation regarding EHE policy, provision and practice for Traveller children in response to aforementioned TES disquiet. Ivatts' (2006) methodology encompassed the design of two detailed questionnaires to collect data and details of current practice and 23 LAs which were known for providing good models of practice regarding Traveller children were selected. Ivatts' found that mobility was not a reason for uptake of home-education, instead issues of bullying and discrimination in school, the relevance and suitability of the school curriculum drive uptake of this educational alternative.

Other research also indicates that high uptake of EHE is not a matter for Traveller children alone, many families take up EHE as a direct result of perceived or experienced inadequacies in state provision, especially with regard to SEN, bullying and other inadequacies that can exacerbate vulnerability and the risk of poor educational or psychological outcomes (Rothermel, 2002; Hopwood et al, 2007). Thus there are issues of educational inclusion and social justice at stake.

Consequently the position of EHE and social network sites as unregulated, non-places means that they are often problematised. Professionals may assume these spaces are full of dangers. Yet, this problematisation is in part a result of the fact that they are located in relatively new fields of research. This article will now explore the concerns regarding social network sites and then go on to discuss some of the methodological challenges in researching unregulated, non-places.

### **Social network sites**

To date there has been little data or research available on this 'under the radar' interaction within a youth work context. The research that identified the 'under the radar' interaction between youth workers and young people was commissioned by the National Youth Agency (NYA) and was published in 2008. This study e-mailed out a questionnaire to youth work staff and they had 100 responses. As this was before the formation of the Integrated Youth Support Services only 1 respondent was from Connexions. Their research found that 34% of youth workers use social network sites within a work context. Crucially for my research however they found that most engagement with young people on SNS, is taking place 'under the radar' (Davies and Cranston, 2008a,b).

Concerns by those in positions of authority with regards to the motives of interaction within this unregulated non-places is a reality. As with EHE these are concerns about professional accountability. Workers and young people are deemed 'at risk' by working 'under the radar' as it is contrary to government guidance. The Guidance for Safer Working Practices (2009) states that workers should be cautious in their communication with young people, including communication via the Internet as this can lead to disciplinary or even criminal investigations if they fall outside agreed guidance and policy (HM Government, 2009).

An example of this could be in terms of personal and professional boundaries and permeability. In the National Youth Agency (NYA) research 81% of respondents said that web filters are used in their work settings (Davies and Cranston, 2008a). These web filters makes it impossible for them to access SNS at work. If these web-filters are used at work it remains unclear where it leaves the worker who goes elsewhere to interact with young people through SNS. We must also consider the situation of the volunteers who are not office-based

As this interaction is taking place 'under the radar' and unregulated the worker can currently come into contact with photographs and/or written content that can put them at risk of suspicion of an inappropriate relationship or, for example, paedophilia. If a worker is a 'friend' online and these photographs come through their 'news feed' how does one distinguish the personal and professional boundaries if the worker is sitting at home with a glass of wine on SNS, or accessing it through their mobile phone anytime or anywhere? This is discussed under the broader context of the Internet in the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2010) guidance:

'11.96 There is some evidence that people found in possession of indecent photographs/ pseudo photographs of children are likely to be involved directly in child abuse. Thus, when somebody is discovered to have placed or accessed such material on the internet the police should normally consider the likelihood that the individual is involved in the active abuse of children. In particular, the individual's access to children should be established, within the family, employment contexts and in other settings (for example, work with children as a volunteer or in other positions of trust)' (HM Government, 2010).

Moreover, when young people add a youth support worker as 'friend' online can one make the assumption that they share the same perspective as the worker of what it means to 'friend' in a SNS space?

‘..the act of friending or following includes a mutual understanding of what is frontstage or public, and what is backstage or private, and, more importantly, that the space utilized to act as these stages shifts depending on user perceptions and the differing ties between the users themselves’ (Pearson et al, 2009:1).

It remains uncertain to what extent this is true. Where youth workers are interacting with young people 'under the radar' they may or may not share the same perspective as young people about what is entailed by adding a worker as friend.

For the purpose of SNS the term ‘friend’ and also the idea of ‘friending’ as part of a professional relationship with clearly defined ethical boundaries and protocols is problematic. As argued by Pearson et al (2009) the use and the meaning of the term friend online has reached a point where it needs to be discussed and analysed. Different types of relationships are defined by the same term but the nature of the relationships, the dynamics and the critical engagement is extremely diverse. It remains uncertain whether ‘friending’ that is based on a ‘professional relationship’ and not entirely on social engagement still warrant the term ‘friend’. Blacker (2010) confirms that the term friendship is bound by a narrow definition and thinking within our society and language. Consequently it is important to recognise that youth support workers with limited and more significant online experience, who may be active users of online social networks may simply not be trained ‘to identify appropriate youth work responses to online social networking, or to use SNS in a youth work context’ (Davies and Cranston, 2008b:31).

This reality is a key challenge to under the radar interaction on SNS as ‘Appropriate youth work responses’ where the work is taking place ‘under the radar’ are difficult to ascertain or measure and by its very nature can’t be appropriate. Thus the fact that Facebook is unregulated and ‘under the radar’ in

terms of youth work practice and policy, does raise issues of equality and power and particular methodological challenges.

### **Methodological challenges of unregulated, non-places**

Methodology can be described as the research design frame as it constitutes the way that the research is structured and completed (Thomas, 2009). Decisions about methodology and methods derive from specific ontological and epistemological assumptions. Both studies discussed within this article were qualitative, which derives from 'quality' (Grix, 2004). Qualitative research is characterised by the use of methods which attempt to capture rich, subjective data to understand the particular research focus.

Both studies used face-to-face interviewing to capture this data. The interview is an interchange of views between two, or more people (Kvale, 1996). Interviews enable knowledge to be constructed between participants as interpretations of particular situations are discussed from individual viewpoints.

This section will now discuss two of the difficulties in undertaking qualitative research in 'sensitive' or under the radar areas. Research into EHE and SNS is sensitive as it involved intrusion into private, personal spheres and a fear of scrutiny and an initial challenge was gathering a research sample. Some participants were reluctant as they questioned the motives of the researcher and the consequences of partaking. For example in youth work settings there was a sense that youth workers felt that they were taking part in this 'under the radar' interaction, and this might cause trouble. In EHE, some families were concerned that this research may in some way feed into LA monitoring of their home-school provision. Consequently information given to participants in order to gain informed consent had to be detailed and consider a number of ethical issues.

Power relations between the researcher and researched had to be carefully considered, as both research projects involved in many senses 'marginal groups', who are already in many ways disadvantaged in wider society and researchers were mindful that they did not want to add to this.

In gathering participants, Conradie started with purposive sampling in order to ensure that respondents from different geographical locations within the council would be accessible. Conradie identified localities to sample young people in and different localities to sample youth support staff and volunteers in. This was done in order to avoid possible distress that may be caused by the sensitive nature and process of the research. Within the different localities snowball sampling took place as young people and workers saw that the researcher is not judgemental and not value laden. For Conradie's study it was important to include volunteers. Conradie found that information and policies does not always filter down to volunteers and a divide has been created between practice for paid staff and practice for volunteers. This has become more pronounced since the election of the Coalition government in 2010 and the resultant funding cuts and focus on the Big Society.

D'Arcy used purposive sampling as she wanted to include families from different Traveller groups, geographical locations and socio-economic backgrounds. Detailed information letters were prepared and in D'Arcy's research these were read out and explained to families themselves in order to ensure that they were giving informed consent and could raise any queries directly with the researcher before agreeing to take part.

A further challenge in undertaking sensitive research is the time it takes. Gaining access to participants was often facilitated by gatekeepers with who meetings needed to be coordinated to meet research participants. Moreover interviewing itself is a timely process which can reveal sensitive matters, in both cases

researchers only included data which was directly pertinent to their study and anonymised the identity of participants and the areas in which the research was undertaken.

Finally a challenge and opportunity that both researchers had to manage was a result of their professions. D'Arcy was a professional working within the field of Traveller education at the time of completing her research. Conradie used to be youth worker and as such they both knew the issues and challenges facing the workers within the respective fields of practice. As a result some worker interviews took longer as they afforded worker respondents the time to share their realities within their fields when the respondents wanted to. This links to a humanistic approach of doing research as it allows the respondents to include areas to explore and unpack which are not included in the interview schedule. Both researchers valued and respected workers when they engaged in this and therefore allowed this expansion not as something that needs to be tolerated but as an opportunity to acknowledge respondents' lived reality and as a means to gain 'wholeness in human inquiry' (Reason and Rowan, 1981:205).

It is clear that both research studies afforded challenges in undertaking 'sensitive' research in a qualitative manner. Challenges with sampling, trust, time and community of practice empathy and understanding as part of a humanistic approach was evident. However, these challenges also added to the richness and depth of the data gathered and also brought to the fore particular issues of social justice.

### **Issues of Social Justice**

This section will consider the 'problematism' of these spaces under study and debate some issues for social justice which have arisen from our research.

#### *Elective Home Education*

There is a considerable gap in the literature on EHE, particularly concerning Travellers. There is also a notable gap in regards to research which consults with Travellers themselves about their experiences of education, especially EHE. My research set out to listen to Travellers voices and document these to improve understandings about education. In doing so a number of social justice and equality issues emerged. In reviewing the literature on EHE I found a tension. There were studies which were founded upon stereotypical assumptions of Traveller communities which reflected a discourse that suggested that 'Travellers don't do school', where issues of mobility and cultural choices were assumed to be the reasons for uptake of EHE. There were also more informed studies, undertaken by experts in the field of Traveller education (Ivatts, 2006 ;Bhopal and Myers, 2009) which highlighted issues of exclusion and social justice. Indeed EHE was a reflection of this as where schools to not focus on including their Traveller pupils, families simply 'vote with their feet' (Wilkin et al, 2010), and leave school provision.

My research brought the literature on EHE and school together and found that bullying and discrimination towards Travellers' in wider society perpetuates their exclusion from mainstream education. My research found that many Traveller families were compelled to withdraw their children from school as a result of the concerns about the safety and wellbeing of their child in mainstream school, particularly at secondary school level. Thus the problematisation of EHE as being an educational space where safety and wellbeing of children is questionable, indeed my research found that it is issues in mainstream education regarding the welfare of vulnerable groups of children that is more urgent.

#### *'Under the radar' SNS interaction*

Even though there might be some real concerns with regards to under the radar interaction my research found that this 'under the radar' interaction is becoming more common place but also accepted as an unavoidable part of youth work



provision today. With the Coalition government's focus on the Big Society service providers and users has had to look towards themselves for support, both in terms of funding and also manpower. This has led to an increase in both the numbers of volunteers in universal service provision but also the relative power of these volunteers. Service provision is now more reliant on volunteers who are first and foremost members of their geographical communities in which they already take an active interest. These volunteers are importantly members of their communities with their involvement in youth clubs an extension of this. My research found that enforcing boundaries relating to interaction with young people outside of club times is bordering on the impossible and in fact can lead to people not wanting to volunteer anymore.

Community member involvement does not stop at volunteers, workers who live and work in the same geographical areas are also experiencing the same issues but they are employed and therefore it is 'easier' to deal with their 'under the radar' interaction if this comes to light. With regards to social justice and equality a consequence of this is the difference with regards to access to 'information' that this creates between paid workers and volunteers. The result is a power imbalance stacked in the favour of volunteers.

### **The value of informal spaces in reflecting the diverse social and cultural worlds of children and young people**

The value of informal and unregulated spaces is that it allows those who do not 'fit' into other more formalised structures to feel a sense of belonging and safety elsewhere. For children who are excluded from mainstream systems because of a disability or their gender, ethnicity, race or sexuality, these more informal spaces can provide a safe haven.

Both EHE and social network sites benefit from being non-places as they are not highly regulated which means that many social norms or expectations which might exclude them, simply do not exist. These non-places therefore enable diversity and individuality of young people. Social network sites are a space where young people can congregate and socialise without face-to-face interactions or restrictions of time and place.

EHE also enables more educational freedom, it is a place where educational standards do not exist and this can allow individual abilities to flourish. Children and young people's learning can be led by their interests and skills as well as their own needs for later employment, rather than government body's agenda's.

### **Conclusion**

EHE and 'under the radar' social network site interaction remain largely unregulated; consequently broadening the diversity of children and young people's social and cultural worlds. Yet, the fact that these spaces are 'under the radar' non-places means that although there certainly are benefits to these spaces, there are also issues for social justice.

The authors therefore content that there is a need for more research into such 'unregulated spaces' as their currently un-reported contexts means that there is a social 'problematism' of these informal spaces, which is often driven by personal assumptions and views rather than informed research. Such research would be most beneficial if it was informed by children and young people themselves. The studies discussed in this article have begun this process and the authors would welcome any interest from other researchers who may want to take this exploration further.

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Conradie, L.

The University of Bedfordshire

Everyday Life and Children's Agency: Young people engaging with youth work practitioners and volunteers on social network sites.

Young people interact on social network sites in order to have adult-free spaces. However, as a result of the way that young people are seen- as deviant but also vulnerable, they have been followed online by adults, for example, parents, teachers and youth workers. Due to the nature of youth work- start where young people are at- both physically and emotionally; social network sites as spaces for delivering youth work as a form of informal education were bound to be explored.

Young people use sites like Facebook as an extension of their offline live and therefore mostly use it with friends and peers that they see every day. Adults following young people online have led to young people using new and innovative ways to assert their agency in interactions with adults, e.g. parents and youth workers. These strategies include interaction, interaction with social norms for engagement (mostly set by the young person) avoidance and duplicity. In some instances young



people feel as if their agency has been compromised however these strategies allows them to retain agency within these ever changing online spaces.

## ***Appendix J***

Abstract: Liesl Conradie for submission to Media: Theory and Practice conference.

e-mail: liesl.conradie@beds.ac.uk

A report published by the National Youth Agency (NYA) in England in 2008 found that the great majority of social network site on-line interaction between youth work practitioners and young people took place 'under the radar'. 'Under the radar' in this context was defined as outside the relevant guidance and without line manager agreement. My research set out to find out why and how this is taking place, and the meaning attached to this practice to the different role players.

As part of my qualitative research I interviewed 21 youth work practitioners (paid and voluntary workers) from a variety of backgrounds and 14 young people over the age of 16. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic area it was difficult to find participants. Therefore it was decided to not only interview participants with direct experience but to include participants who have thoughts or feelings concerning the research area.

Youth work practitioners and young people differ in their reasons for wanting to 'befriend' each other on social media and what this signifies; is it a professional or a personal relationship or a hybrid? Boundaries and expectations of the 'audience' become blurred and perforated. Combined with the ever-changing nature of the technology itself maintaining or developing professional

relationships through social network sites becomes challenging. This presentation will explore the boundary management that both young people and youth workers employ in order to maintain the relationships that they foster with each other 'under the radar' online.

**Abstract: Liesl Conradie. yresearch: the conference 2015**

**Contact details: [liesl.conradie@beds.ac.uk](mailto:liesl.conradie@beds.ac.uk)**

**(This presentation is based on findings from my D.Prof research- submitted on 8 October 2014)**

**The impact on boundary management of unsanctioned connections between youth work practitioners and young people through online social network sites.**

Social network sites are online spaces that can be used for positive interaction between young people and youth work practitioners. The focus of this presentation however, is social network site interaction that falls outside the guidance of the local authority, through unsanctioned interaction through practitioners' personal but also work profiles.

Twenty one practitioners and fourteen young people were interviewed, using a semi-structured interview guide. Boundary management and what this was perceived as by the different participants was one of the key themes that emerged through the research process. Young people wanted to interact with some practitioners through the practitioners' personal profiles but the majority of practitioners rather wanted to interact with young people through work profiles. Young people viewed and trusted these practitioners as friends and were willing to share their personal, but also socially intimate information with them. Most practitioners viewed their relationship with young people as a professional relationship and aimed to maintain their personal and professional boundaries. However, practitioners did not extend this same awareness to the boundaries of young people. This was further confirmed by the practice of client

searching through a variety of profiles to access socially intimate information of young people. This created new risks but also opportunities to young people but also practitioners within a contemporary environment that neither young people nor practitioners had to deal with before.

This presentation's focus is on the varied perspectives on boundaries as compounded by the nature of the relationship deemed to have developed between a young person and a practitioner. The impact of these unsanctioned relationships on youth work relationships are explored as a form of contemporary risks but also opportunities.

Keywords: online, boundaries, unsanctioned, space, youth work

**Abstract: Liesl Conradie. Journal of Youth Studies Conference 2015**

**Contact details: [liesl.conradie@beds.ac.uk](mailto:liesl.conradie@beds.ac.uk)**

**Contemporary Youth Contemporary Risks: Unexpected online opportunities and risks: unsanctioned connections between young people and youth work practitioners on social network sites**

Social network sites are online spaces that can be used for positive interaction between young people and youth work practitioners. The focus of this presentation however, is social network site interaction that falls outside the guidance of the local authority, through unsanctioned interaction through practitioners' personal but also work profiles.

Twenty one practitioners and fourteen young people were interviewed, using a semi-structured interview guide. Boundary management and what this was perceived as by the different participants was one of the key themes that emerged through the research process. Young people wanted to interact with some practitioners through the practitioners' personal profiles but the majority of practitioners rather wanted to interact with young people through work profiles. Young people viewed and trusted these practitioners as friends and were willing to share their personal, but also socially intimate information with them. Most practitioners viewed their relationship with young people as a professional relationship and aimed to maintain their personal and professional boundaries. However, practitioners did not extend this same awareness to the boundaries of young people. This was further confirmed by the practice of client searching through a variety of profiles to access socially intimate information of

young people. This created new risks but also opportunities to young people but also practitioners within a contemporary environment that neither young people nor practitioners had to deal with before.

This presentation's focus is on the varied perspectives on boundaries as compounded by the nature of the relationship deemed to have developed between a young person and a practitioner. The impact of these unsanctioned relationships on youth work relationships are explored as a form of contemporary risks but also opportunities.

Keywords: online, boundaries, unsanctioned, space, youth work

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