Narrative capital and youth practitioner professional identities

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Abstract
This research focuses on youth practitioners' professionality set within in the landscape of neo-liberal performativity and re/de-professionalism present in public services in the UK over the period 2005-2014. In response to this contextual landscape, portrayals of six practitioners reveal differentiated constructed identities and professional narratives; arising from these portrayals, the study contributes a model of 'narrative capital' as a resource for professional resilience and development.

The study is set within the context of professional re-modelling and public service reforms of the UK's 'New Labour' government (1997-2010), more recently re-positioned under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government (2010-present). Using a narrative inquiry approach, the research explores individual experiences (including a period of study on a professional development award programme at a post-1992 UK higher education institution) and concepts of professionalism and professionality for practitioners in the youth services sector.

The portrayals present an articulated sense of passion and commitment to the work, acknowledging the role and influence of mentors and significant others. Feelings of frustration and isolation are also evident, particularly in relation to an increasing focus on managerialism by employers. Identification with a shared professional identity and a broader professional community is diffuse and reflects the fragmented terrain of youth services in recent years.

The research makes an original contribution to knowledge relating to practice in the conceptual framework of narrative capital for professional resilience in the formation of youth workers in Higher Education contexts. Specifically, whilst practitioners experience different personal trajectories, three broad affordances are posited:

- **affirmation of integrity** – *in telling my story, I connect with, make sense of and make connections between the core elements and experiences of what makes me who I am;*
- **fuel for self-belief** – *by telling my story, I develop confidence in who I am and my agency and self-worth as a professional;*
- **future readiness** – *through telling my story, I create possibilities for a future self, what the focus of my work might be and what I might become.*

Arising from this analysis is the recommendation that professional formation and development programmes in HE focus on narrative capital co-construction and development. Such programmes offer access to and support for distributed sites of individual and collective critical reflection and professional learning, challenging complicity with agendas of performativity and de-professionalisation.

Key words:
narrative capital; youth practitioners; professional identity formation; professionality

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed:

Dated:

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Acknowledgements

My professional, working life has centred on working with young people – from playwork, to teaching, to youth work and therapeutic work. When I started working on my doctorate, my two daughters were 11 and 13. As I struggled with being a father, I pulled back from direct working with young people and invested my professional energy in the programmes studied by those I interviewed in the course of this research.

My daughters are now 18 and 20 and my professional role of *working* with young people has been replaced by a parental role of *living* with young people … and then more recently of learning to let them go. I hope my two daughters are in some small way as proud of me as I am of them. This thesis is dedicated to them both and to all the students and practitioners on the professional development programmes I have been privileged to work with – especially of course, Jackie, Mia, Caitlin, Robert, Kathy and Chloe.

Special thanks go to Katie Marsh for transcribing the interviews, to Jess Hamlin for proof reading my draft thesis, to my supervisors and mentors, Avril Loveless, Ivor Goodson and Carol Robinson, for their wisdom, questioning and affirmation and to Rachel, for being there, always.

Mark Price
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"One simply siphons the excess thoughts from one's mind,
pours them into the basin, and examines them at one's leisure.
It becomes easier to spot patterns and links, you understand, when they are in this form."
J.K.Rowling, 1995

"You can't always get what you want,
but if you try sometime, you just might find,
you get what you need"
Mick Jagger and Keith Richard, 1970

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."
T.S.Elliot, 1922

1.   Introduction

1.1   Context

This research explores the *professionalisation* (Ministry of Education, 1960; Cooper, 2013) of *youth services practitioners* – the experience and process of professional identity formation – and their developed *professionality* (Hoyle, 1975; Evans, 2008) – the on-going set of practices, self concepts and underpinning values and ethics related to this profession and professionalism. Further and emerging considerations include the value and affordances of individualised professional, *narrative capital* (Goodson, 2013) and the extent to which the practitioners identify with and feel they belong to an emergent, shared professional community.

Youth services practitioners include predominantly those whose role may be broadly defined as supporting vulnerable young people (usually 13-19 years or up to 25 for those leaving care and those with disabilities or additional learning difficulties) who are at risk of or have become already excluded or disengaged from learning and education, and from society more widely. Under the Children's Workforce Development Council's footprint (CWDC, 2009), this range of roles was referred to as the 'young people's workforce'; the CWDC[1] also referred to this sector as providing 'Learning and Development Support Services' (ibid) and includes youth workers whose remit has become increasingly focused on *targeted youth support* provision (DfES, 2007), arising from New Labour's *Every Child Matters* strategy (HM Treasury, 2003).

Along with a number of similar programmes offered by other higher education (HE) institutions in the UK, since 2005 the University of Brighton's (UoB) School of

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[1] Following the Children Act (2004) and related review and development of children's services under the Blair/Brown Labour governments, the CWDC was the lead agency responsible for workforce reform and co-ordination of 'integrated' services. It was disbanded as part of the so called 'bonfire of the quangos' at the end of March 2011. Some aspects of CWDC's work were transferred to what is now the National College for Teaching and Leadership specifically and the Department for Education more generally. Professional recognition and validation of qualifications for those working with young people were not included in this transfer.

Education (SoE) has offered a 2½ year, part-time foundation degree[2] in *Working with Young People* (FdA WYP – also referred to as 'the FdA' or 'the Foundation Degree' in this study), which sits within the University's undergraduate, work-based professional learning programme. This award was formerly endorsed by the CWDC on behalf of the Department for Education and is aimed at experienced practitioners working in a range of roles in services for young people and related learning, development and youth support services (e.g. youth support worker, Connexions[3] Personal Adviser (PA), learning mentor, inclusion worker, personal tutor etc); successful students are deemed to hold a 'professional qualification' and for Connexions PAs, this award has previously been recognised by employers as conferring 'professional status'.

This sector, along with early years, is one that has undergone substantial workforce re-modelling, with associated emergence of dimensions of 'new professionalism' (see for example, Edmond, Hillier and Price, 2007; Colwell, Canavan, Price and Edmond, 2007; Price, 2008). It is this nascent 'profession' that this research explores, drawing significantly on the more established profession of youth work, whilst incorporating elements of social work and related education, health, social care and youth justice practices.

Nationally, the issue of professional identity, recognition and status has become contested in both policy and strategy. Reductions in investment and commitment to the professionalisation 'project' have heralded political questioning and scrutiny in some 'para-professional' areas (e.g. early years; youth work), alongside neglect and abandonment in others (e.g. playwork; Higher Level Teaching Assistants), largely as a result of the Coalition government's focus on communitarianism, volunteerism and the 'Big Society' (see for example, Calder, 2010). This shift has also been paralleled by initiatives for 'fast-tracking' professional recognition for teachers and social workers

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[2] A foundation degree is a largely vocationally orientated HE award, introduced in the UK in 2001 (DfEE, 2000a). It is a level 5 qualification, equivalent to the first two years of a full time, three year honours degree.

[3] Connexions was the service framework for young people introduced by New Labour (DfEE, 2000b) to provide information advice and guidance, including particularly provision of intensive support for young people at risk of becoming or already having become 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET).

(e.g. the *Troops to Teachers* (2013) and *Frontline* (2014) programmes respectively), as well as a deregulation of professionality in the case of teaching and the so called 'free' schools (Department for Education, 2012).

The Coalition government's strategy of asserting 'austerity' measures to public service funding has had a devastating impact on youth services in particular. A survey of local authority children and young people's services (Higgs, 2011), identified that of those responding, 56% of youth services and 40% of Connexions services were amongst provision most vulnerable to public sector spending cuts, whilst the Commons Select Committee Report (June 2011) into services for young people commented that "The low priority afforded to continuing professional development of the youth workforce is concerning" (House of Commons, 2011). More recently still, Unison (2014) reported between 2012 and 2014, cuts in funding to youth services in the UK totalled at least £60 million, resulting in the loss of over 2000 jobs across the sector.

Yet broader issues of contested professional recognition were emerging long before these cuts, as managerialism began to take hold across public services during the previous Conservative led administration in the UK. Barnett (1994, p.192) acknowledges the impact this had on professional learning at this time and calls for HEIs to maintain a focus on professional autonomy:

> Disciplines, objective knowledge, occupational standards, skills and the whole ragbag have to be seen for what they are: ideologies exerting power and constraint, requiring a certain form of human development. In this sense, both the academics and the operationalists are in league in framing *their* conception of ideal human being and in requiring the student to conform to it. If we see higher education as a form of becoming in which students become *themselves*, an altogether different notion of becoming is required.

Others (see for example, Bacon et al, 2000; Ball, 2001 and 2008) have continued with this critique of the way that public welfare services – teaching, nursing and social work are of particular interest – have been subjected to an increasing focus on managerialism, performativity and bureaucratisation within professionalisation and professionality.

In considering the role and contribution of HE to professional formation, (and positioned ideologically as an antithesis to managerialism), the UoB FdA and related programmes have focused particularly on the development of autonomous professionality. This is rooted in notions of *praxis* (Smith, 1999), reflected in the statement of ethical conduct in youth work (NYA, 2004); as a route to professional recognition, the FdA programme is posited on the concept of students 'becoming themselves', professionally speaking. This is seen to be particularly important for practitioners working in contexts of informal learning and learner vulnerability, where competing discourses require careful balance of potentially opposing tensions and a maintained focus on ethical practice. Such a focus contextualises this research, which considers the nature of and processes associated with individualised professional formation and professionality.

1.2   Policy

The policy context referred to in section 1.1 and then examined in the literature review (chapter 2) relates to three broad dimensions of focus. Both the explicit and implicit impact of these on the participants in this research (and on the broader professional field) contextualises the portrayals presented in chapter 6, the narratives embedded in these portrayals and then locates the affordances of narrative capital posited in chapter 7. The following paragraphs summarise these three dimensions of policy.

The first dimension centres upon the endemic march of performativity and managerialism across public services in the UK, typified by the increased focus on measurable outcomes and targeted services. Implicit within this is the impact of such performativity on both the focus of the work and then the ability of professional practitioners to meet specific 'targets' within this landscape. This is especially so where services continue to be eroded, under staffed and under resourced as a result of 'austerity measures' (see Ball, 2001 and 2008; Sugrue and Solbrekke, 2011).

The second area relates to the move towards centralised UK policy discourses and associated increased professionalisation of youth services in the early part of the 21st century, followed by the reverse trend of the current UK government over the last five years away from coherent, resourced and professionalised services for young people. Within this is the systematic dismantling of previous moves towards building such services as Connexions and related frameworks for professionalisation and integrated practices, including the role of higher education / employer partnerships to further such professionalisation. This has been accompanied by governmental neglect and abandonment of previously supported policy for more generic youth work and associated employment terms and conditions for youth work professionals (see Unison, 2014; NYA, 2014).

The developing trend within government policy for the downplaying of an independent, rigorous, research based academic contribution to the professional formation and development of public service professionals presents the third dimension. This is typified particularly in teaching and social work as well as in youth service practices, reflected in the removal of support for independent, professional regulatory bodies, alongside the promotion of 'fast track' programmes previously referred to for school teachers and social workers and evidenced recently in the Carter Review (2015) into initial teacher education in England.

1.3   Rationale

My work within the SoE at the UoB broadly focuses on professional development provision, utilising distributed models of work-based learning (e.g. Centre for Outcomes-Based Education, 2006; Mills, Siebert and Tuff, 2008). Specifically, I lead on modules which draw upon and explore reflective practice, professionalism and inter-professional practice; until recently I was programme leader for the undergraduate work based professional learning programme, which includes the *FdA Working with Young People*, the *BA(Hons) Youth Work* and the *BA(Hons) Professional Studies in Learning and Development*, the range of awards undertaken by those interviewed in

this study. A significant element of my work is located in the exploration, support and facilitation of professional formation, particularly in relation to those working in learning and development support roles, such as early years practitioners, playworkers, teaching and learning support assistants and those working with young people in formal and informal educational contexts.

Throughout all my professional working life, I have been interested in the stories people tell about themselves – how they came to be doing and being who they are, how they experience this and view themselves and how they see their future unfolding. This interest and focus is embedded in much of my academic work as an HE teacher and lecturer and provided the stimulus for my doctoral research – to explore how those working in what feels to be an uncertain profession, came to be part of it and to what extent they identified with and felt part of this profession.

During the first stage of my professional doctoral studies, a previous assignment (EdD Assignment 2) focused on the place of reflective writing in the professional formation process for those working in children and young people's learning and development support services, as they move towards a claimed and individually defined, self-conception of their professional role. A later assignment (EdD Assignment 3) saw a development of this focus through exploring the narrative of professional practitioners following their completed programme of study at the UoB. The central theme emerging from this Assignment 3 study was the richness of practitioner experiences and the multi-layered nature of their individually constructed, professional identities. Rather than identifying themselves as belonging to a *community* of practitioners, with commonly held norms, knowledge and practices, greater emphasis was placed on a more individual, personal-professional selfhood.

As the basis of this initial study, I had undertaken four, extended interviews, exploring individual experiences and perceptions of 'young people's professionals' all of whom had recently become 'professionally qualified' through successful completion of the FdA WYP in the SoE. An element of each interviewee's narrative was the incidence and influence of significant individuals and the roles and relationships in the interviewee's

professional formation process; it is the place and impact of these relationships (e.g. *which* relationships; what *type* of relationships – formal/ informal; professional/non-professional etc; what *quality* of relationships – nurturing, challenging, inspiring etc), as well as broader issues of individual and shared professionalism and professionality, that formed the impetus for this current research study.

In scoping the focus for the research study presented in this thesis, I wanted to explore further the *co-construction process* in profession formation – how others' roles and relationships are defined and brought in and out of focus, helping student practitioners navigate their way across 'threshold concepts' (Meyer and Land, 2003), moving from the instrumental or competent, towards creativity, agency and autonomy; towards 'roundedness' and a point of arrival as professional practitioners. It was also intended that this investigation would therefore contribute to the articulation of what it means to become a youth support services professional and the role of HE in facilitating this process.

Two key concepts underpin this research. Firstly, the notion of *professionality* – the individual's own constructed, developed and both internalised and externally projected professionalism and professional selfhood; and secondly that of *narrative capital* – the personalised resource and associated affordances developed by the individual in describing and presenting themselves in relation to their professional identity, role and practice. These concepts are explored in more depth in chapter 2.

1.4   Aims

This research focuses on the construction and formation of *professional identity and professionality* and associated *narrative capital* developed during these processes. The place of narrative capital is contextualised specifically by the particular socio-professional and economic landscape and climate which have emerged within education and related services the UK and elsewhere globally in recent years (see Sahlberg, 2012; Junemann and Ball, 2013).

Findings from my previous study (Price, 2011) highlight the positive influence and impact of relationships with significant individuals (tutors, mentors, work colleagues, partners, family and friends) on the professional formation process, echoing findings of others in exploring related professions (e.g. McNally, 2006). Such relationships are now considered further in relation to practitioners' developing professionality and generalised resilience[4].

The initial aims which framed the original focus of this study were:

1.4.1 *to examine how those working in young people's learning and development services articulate their professional identity and professional formation process;*

1.4.2 *to explore to what extent and how relationships with mentors and significant others influenced and shaped their professional identity;*

1.4.3 *to explore and determine why and how significant dimensions, qualities, elements and perspectives shape and become embedded within individual, professional identities.*

As the research unfolded and initial analysis was undertaken in constructing the portrayals presented in chapter 6, the focus of the study was further refined to include the following additional aims:

1.4.4 *to consider the value and affordances of professional practitioners' developing 'narrative capital';*

1.4.5 *to consider how this understanding impacts on and informs higher education programmes and associated pedagogy;*

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[4] The term 'resilience' here (and throughout this thesis) is used in a broad, 'everyday' sense in relation to those attributes and qualities that enable us to withstand and recover from stress, rather than from any more formalised or theorised perspective.

1.4.6   *to contribute to wider discussions and knowledge regarding*
        professionalisation, professionality and narrative capital in practice based
        communities and contexts.

2.   Literature review

2.1   Introduction

This literature review presents themes which have shaped the approach to the enquiry, the landscape considered in preparation for the research journey, and then those concepts and other reference points that have been employed as theorised tools in analysing the data, both at the point of data collection (during the interviews) and later, in reflection at a distance.

A *narrative* approach (Bryman, 2012) to constructing the literature review has been taken. Searches for previous assignments within the professional doctorate programme were used as a starting point, accompanied by material and sources I am familiar with through teaching modules on professionalism and professional identity formation. Elements of *systematic* review processes (ibid) were also utilised to bring focus to the review. These include use of key words to support focussed literature searches and drawing broadly on sources and analyses offered over the past 25 years, contextualising the review within the current socio-political and organisational-structural climates within UK public services.

Differing but related and connecting themes have been identified and developed through the review process. The relationship and inter-connectedness of these themes offers points of academic reference but also provides a 'mill' or compound 'lens', through which my own perspective and position as a researcher is refracted.

Firstly, issues of professionalism are explored both generally and then specifically in relation to the developing professional recognition of youth services practitioners;

secondly, individualised processes of learning are considered, focusing particularly on self, reflection, relationships and interventions, including the potential for paradigm shifts and transformation; thirdly the position of the individual is explored in relationship to professional community or communities, the development of narrative inquiry and narrative capital as the process and product of professional 'story-telling' and the context of self in relation to social action and justice. The following headings are used to explore these thematic reviews:

Issues of professionalism and professionality:

- Professionalism, professionality and professionalisation – *starting from a Bourdieusian perspective, this section includes some broad reflections on how the concepts of professionalism, professionality and professionalisation – becoming and being a 'professional' – have developed.*

- Professionalism and professional identity in young people's services – *here, a review of policy and practice developments (and related perspectives) is undertaken, relating specifically to the professional identity of and recognition for the youth practitioner.*

Individualised processes of learning:

- Personal, professional and multiple selves – *beginning with humanistic and transpersonal constructs of the self, consideration is given to the plurality of selfhood and related identities which give rise to agency and action in a professional context.*

- Reflection, reflexivity and transformation – *the process of professional learning and development is explored, with a particular focus on critical reflection and its contribution to the shaping of professional self, identity and perspective through interrogation of thoughts, feelings and actions, including reference to Mezirow's*

(1991) model of transformative learning and Meyer and Land's (2003) notion of 'threshold concepts'.

- Relationships, interventions and the learning experience – *an exploration of intervention typology and dimensions of interaction, focusing on issues of authority within the learning relationship and levels of formality and intentionality.*

Broader issues of professional community, narratives and praxis:

- Communities and practice – *considering concepts of community, social capital, communities of practice and activity theory, implications for situated opportunities for collective and collaborative professionalism and professional development in higher education and the workplace are also explored.*

- Narrative inquiry, voice and narrative capital – *how narrative tools and processes can be utilised in the form of an examination and articulation (or enquiry) of the self in the learning process of becoming professional and becoming a professional; reference is made to use of language and metaphor.*

- Praxis and phronesis – *with reference to Aristotle and Freire, the place of praxis is considered in the context of the commitment of professional practitioners to social justice through engaging in troublesome criticality, especially in relation to selfhood and 'right' action.*

2.2   Professionalism, professionality and professionalisation

The view of professionalism, professionality and professionalisation adopted here is informed by a Bourdieusian (e.g. Bourdieu, 1983; 1990) perspective, articulated through the concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *doxa,* in relation to specified *practice*. In the context of professionalism, *field* may be considered to refer to the structured space of

professional recognition, both formalised and regulated, as well as the more informal and assumed/agreed professional space – hence the professional *field* includes both the scope and focus of professional, regulatory bodies, as well as the professional networks and *communities of practice* (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Habitus refers to the assumed dispositions and professional, cultural reference points – dress codes; language; behaviours etc., particular to the specified profession. Alongside these perhaps more visible attributes of professional culture, *doxa* refers to the unconscious, deeper seated values, beliefs and assumptions common to those in a professional field, which are perhaps revealed through professional *habitus*. Professional *practice* may be then regarded as the deliberated activity, encompassing the sum or reflected product of the elements of *field*, *habitus* and *doxa*. Hence, the status, autonomy and power afforded to professions, especially the older ones, could be considered as the rewards of joining a profession, with the proviso that access is restricted to those who embody the appropriate professional *habitus and doxa*, regulated and policed by professional bodies and perhaps through the tacit approval of society as a whole.

In Bourdieusian terms then, concepts of professionalism are situated in the selected application and access to restricted areas or 'clubs' of public power, standing and recognition, often mediated by class, gender and education. For example, historically, clerics, medics and the judiciary traditionally came from privileged, educated and cultured classes. And of course they were mostly men. Higher education sought to both serve and shape these professions, acting perhaps as professional 'finishing schools'. A common feature of the oldest professions therefore concerns their place in the 'establishment' – that they undoubtedly seek to do 'good work', but also provide architectural cornerstones for the structuring of society, including reflecting the social class system with all its inherent inequalities.

As society sought to take greater responsibility for all its members, including offering service to those previously less fortunate and/or less well provided for, so *new* professions began to emerge in 19th century, including of particular relevance here,

those of teaching, nursing and social work. These 'people professions' have continually sought (and on occasions, struggled) to establish their credentials, including for example, the move towards professional status achieved at graduate level over the latter part of the 20th century. And if those from the older professions comprised largely of men from the wealthier, more privileged classes, so the newer professions attracted and were seen as the legitimate province of women (Hargreaves, 2010), predominantly from the middle classes.

In examining aspects of professionalism and processes of professionalisation, the *trait* or typology approach seeks to define required characteristics or key features of professions. Millerson's (1964) identification of such defining features includes:

- a skill set based on theoretical knowledge;
- specified education and training;
- professional competence demonstrated through examination;
- adherence to a code of conduct;
- service for the public good;
- professional organisation.

The trait model is further refined by Sims, Fineman and Gabriel (1993) who suggest that professions may be defined by the extent to which they are able to claim a monopoly of powers over its applications; that the code of ethical practice is self-regulating; that the profession has the sanction of the community at large and that the professional organisation is able to exert control over its own qualification and entry procedures.

Instrumentally, entry into a profession has traditionally been through accredited membership or licence from the appropriate regulatory body, following a period of study at higher education and assessment of practice by one's more experienced peers. A significant determining factor has been the level of independence of both the professional body itself and the institution of professional learning, the university.

Hence a level of professional autonomy is implied that extends beyond expertise knowledge and skill into *agency*, with accountability centred both upon membership of the professional body, underpinned by support from the wider society. The application of this significant level of specialist knowledge and skill is required to be bounded by and contained within an appropriate professional body to protect the populace from inscrutable and/or untrustworthy practitioners. This reflects a structural-functionalist view, which suggests that as specialist knowledge develops and emerges in defined (and socially relevant?) areas, so new professions may emerge. A corollary of this of course, is that as access to specialist knowledge increases, so this has the potential to enable greater interrogation by the non-professional populace of professional autonomy and decision making, and so potentially de-stabilise and ultimately de-professionalise established as well as emerging professionalism.

Sims et al (1993) suggest that in modern times, there is a potential conflict of status and autonomy afforded by professional membership and by the organisation employing the professional. Sims et al (ibid, p.427) make reference to the cynical viewing of professions as "labour cartels" and debates on the nature of professional knowledge and its process of acquisition, the "natural conflict" in large organisations (hospitals and universities, for example), particularly between professionals and managers, the huge increase in access to information provided by the internet, and the erosion of professional status by the increase in *professionalisation* of occupations previously not acknowledged as professions.

The issue of contextual relationship and power and how these dimensions are mediated through *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1986) underpins what Morrell (2007) proposes as a "semantic and practice-theoretic account" (p.26) of professionalism. This is articulated through three 'arguments' – *knowledge*, *organisation* and *power* – which are used as points of analysis. This model emphasises "the complexity of interaction in the occupational, organizational and social contexts for professional work" (p.27). Morrell's framework embraces the possibility of new models of professionalism emerging, as knowledge, organisation and power change, socially and structurally, and

also recognises the potential for such professions to both act as stabilising influences in society and perpetuate social inequalities.

Central to the formation and development of such professionalism, professional identity and professional practice is the issue of *social capital* (e.g. Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1988) – the extent to which professional networks and relationships both mediate and support (and limit?) participation and engagement in a professional field. The concept of a *community of practice*[5] (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) is of particular relevance here – the professional community of practice being defined by its professional *domain* or focus of practice, participation in a *community* of relationships and interactive activity and being in sustained professional *practice* – being actively engaged in the professional domain, rather simply observing at a distance.

In thinking about the interdependence of such terms as professionalism, professional identity and professionalisation as they apply to the teaching profession, Hargreaves (2000) makes a useful distinction between what he terms the *four ages* of professionalism:

- The pre-professional age – *a focus on the craft and technical processes of teaching (the flow of the lesson; maintaining order and structure etc); acquired through apprenticeship as a novice to an experienced practitioner*
- The age of the autonomous professional – *increased status, pay and autonomy; teacher education embedded within universities*
- The age of the collegial professional – *as teaching appears to become more complex, more demanding, teachers turn to their colleagues for collaborative support and professional development*
- The fourth age – post professional or postmodern? – *redefining or de-professionalising teaching in response to the range of policy drivers and public debates about what is teaching and who teaches*

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[5] See section 2.7 for further exploration of communities of practice

Hence, these 'ages' present a development of the professionalisation process, reflecting key issues of professional stratification and focus of practice. Hargreaves (ibid, p.152) suggests that when asked what it means to them to be professional, teachers will usually respond in terms of being professional – "the quality of what they do; and of the conduct, demeanour and standards which guide it" – and being *a* professional – "how teachers feel they are seen through other people's eyes in terms of their status, standing, regard and levels of professional reward", Hargreaves goes on to consider the tension between these two processes of professionalism and professionalisation and comments that whilst they are often presented as complementary processes, they can also be contradictory:

> defining professional standards in high-status, scientific and technical ways as standards of knowledge and skill, can downgrade, neglect or crowd out the equally important emotional dimensions of teachers' work in terms of being passionate about teaching, and caring for students' learning and lives
>
> (Hargreaves, 2000, p.152)

Hargreaves' 'four ages' model is useful here, in that it illustrates the complexity of the shifting sands of craft, instrumentation, status, agency and reformation in relation to emerging professionalisation.

Again, in more recent times, particularly in relation to policy developments in services for children, families and young people under the latter part of the previous Conservative administration (1992-1997) and continued under New Labour (1997-2010), concepts of *new-professionalism, para-professionalism* and the *associate professional* have emerged (Edmond and Price, 2007; Evans 2008), as functions of service, engagement and intervention have become hybridised, often cutting across the traditional demarcation of education, health and social care provision.

Svensson (2006, p.580) suggests that professionalism may be regarded as "an outcome of knowledge and ethical culture acquired by higher education and work experience, possibly and often deliberately, producing legitimacy" and that the new/para/associate professionalism agenda has sought to "invoke trust and

confidence in new forms of work organization" (ibid). The introduction of foundation degrees, first piloted in 2000, was a move by the Blair government, as a reflection of the 'Third Way' discourse or 'modernisation agenda', to both bring about service reform and foster widening participation in Higher Education. Doyle (2003) describes this as "democratising access to higher education and empowering the individual, whilst 'tooling up' 'UK PLC' to compete in a global economy", situating the policy clearly in the territory of a *social integrationist* discourse (Levitas, 2005). For these associate or para-professions, whilst the door to professionalism for teaching assistants, playworkers, and family support workers was opened through the introduction of foundation degrees, their status was limited from the outset, with those accessing such opportunities likely to have lower salaries, have lower levels of autonomy, and lower levels of public sanction and standing (Edmond and Price, 2007).

For many practitioners, especially those in the new and emerging professions, working in Hargreaves' (2000) post professional age of public services, pervasive policy change and accompanying structural and professional re-formation, including use of temporary and zero hours contracts and internships, continues to reflect and contribute to the on-going experience of instability and unpredictability of services. Practitioners find themselves working in "an altered, fractured and contested terrain" (Sugrue and Solbrekke, 2011, p.3). Their professional fields are "increasingly characterised by fragmentation" (ibid, p.2) whilst their identities are by necessity, "characterised by flux, with stability being more elusive while openness to change is a more definite requirement" (ibid, p.ix).

Hence, the topography such public service professionals inhabit – the culture, terrain, landscape, climate etc – requires the professional to be in a pervasive state of what might be referred to as *psychosocial transition* (Zittoun, 2006). Marsico (2012) suggests that as the professional is required to continually review and engage with both changing contexts and associated new forms of engagement and interaction, they often find themselves relying on old models of knowledge and practices, schemata which no longer serve the practitioner well. The broader social context is that the professional may also be struggling to come to terms with international and cross

cultural issues such as global consumerism and the impact of the digital revolution and that micro and macro social change needs to be acknowledged. Drawing on Engeström (1999) and Daniels (2011), Marsico (ibid) suggests that professionals should be encouraged to embrace semi-permeable *trajectories* of identity in order that they can play a "key mediation and modulation role in the processes of change" (ibid. p.127). The implication here is that not only do professionals need to develop the resources to embrace such trajectories, but by doing so, they become agents of the change process themselves. This is particularly relevant to later discussions of *phronesis* and *praxis* (see section 2.8). Sugrue and Solbrekke (2011, p.1) also acknowledge a "crisis of confidence both within and between professional communities" and point to a "proliferation of roles", and "groups of workers who lay claim to the status of being 'professional'", exemplified perhaps by the professionality and professionalisation of youth practitioners.

2.3   Professionalism and professional identity in young people's services

As a *service* and as a *profession*, youth work has both been born out of a public desire to do something *for* young people in terms of their perceived needs, but also as a response to concern *about* young people in relation to their behaviour. This is evident in the earliest beginnings of youth work in the 19th century (Smith, 2002), through a range of governmental policy initiatives over the second half of the 20th century, including significantly the Albemarle Report (Ministry of Education, 1960) which, in response to a perceived moral panic about teenage delinquency, promoted the building of dedicated youth centres and paved the way for specialist youth work training. This training was later developed into a framework for professional recognition of youth workers determined by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers (NYA, no date) with programmes leading to professional recognition validated by the National Youth Agency's Education Training Standards Committee.

In this context, whilst not formally a professional *council*, the NYA has all but taken on this role through the latter part of the 20th century, through both the professional training validation process and also through promoting a statement of ethical practice (NYA, 2004). This was essentially a 'values' statement – both in relation to the *purpose and principles* of youth work and in relation to *practice*, including professional engagement and interaction with young people. It also represented an attempt to bring some rigour to a field of practice whose own practitioners often found it hard to define, although Young (1999) perhaps captures best the accepted view at the time that youth work was essentially a relationship based process.

Those in senior leadership roles in the field met for a series of three ministerial led conferences in the early 1990s (Ord, 2004), to define a *curriculum* for youth work, with four cornerstones of *education*, *equality*, *participation* and *empowerment* being adopted by many youth 'services', primarily in the local authority sector (Merton and Wylie, 2002). A central tenet of this curriculum was the process of *voluntary association* – that young people choose to engage with youth workers.

In accordance with New Labour's modernisation agenda though, the first decade of 21st century policy reformation saw youth work becoming increasingly focused on *targeted* youth work (e.g. DfEE, 2001; DCSF, 2008), for many at the expense of more *generic* or *universal* services for all young people, reflecting the core values of engaging with young people on their terms, supporting choice and decision making on issues they identify, in the context of promoting social justice (NYA, 2004). Smith (2002) for example, observes that as a result of this move towards targeted work, "the role of youth work within state-sponsored services was, in effect, downgraded".

This process of focussing of a targeted service was heralded by the introduction of 'Connexions' (DfEE, 2000), which was positioned through the strap line 'the best start in life for every young person'. The path for Connexions had been laid down by the *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999) and *Bridging the Gap* (SEU, 1999)[6] governmental

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[6] Bridging the Gap also introduced for the first time in policy terms the concept of 'NEET' – not in education, employment or training – young people

reports which respectively articulated the 'problem' – the potential social exclusion of 16-18 year olds leaving school without progressing on to either further education (FE), employment or training and the associated threat to the economic wellbeing of Britain; and the 'solution' – a support service especially for those from "disadvantaged backgrounds or experiencing particular difficulties" (SEU, 1999, p78). Those to be targeted were further defined as including care leavers, those who abuse drugs, youth offenders, and those who become pregnant as teenagers. The purpose of what became known as *personal advisors* (DfEE, 2000) was to engage with young people who were identified as already not in education, employment or training (NEET) or who were at risk of becoming NEET, to identify barriers to EET and with the young person, then address these barriers. This Connexions 'manifesto' also articulated the "new profession of Personal Advisor" (SEU, 1999, p.45), which would initially be drawn from careers, youth and social services, from the teaching profession and from youth offending teams. Yet to ensure coherence to this hybridity, it was noted that it would also "be vital that the new profession is underpinned by a robust training framework" (ibid).

In relation to the wider, post Every Child Matters (HM Treasury, 2003) reformation of children and young people's services, the Children's Workforce Development Council was tasked to oversee this new professional framework. The CWDC developed both a set of professional standards for the Learning and Development Support Services (a broadening of scope from the original Connexions brief) and a framework of professional recognition. This included initially a Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisors and then latterly both an NVQ Level 4 qualification, achieved through assessment of a portfolio of competence and the Level 5 Foundation Degree in Working with Young People and Young People's Services, achieved through a minimum of two year higher education led professional learning. More recently, a new Level 5 Diploma in Learning and Development Support Services (Ofqual, 2014), sitting within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Ofqual, 2012), has emerged.

Following consultation on the initial Guidance on Professional Practice (DfEE, 2002a), a code of practice for Personal Advisors (PAs) (DfEE, 2002b) was produced, highlighting

"six key principles of PA practice" (p.2) including working in the best interests of, establishing trust with and promoting the rights of young people. Key reference was also made to working with parents, carers and families, upholding the Connexions profession and maintaining a commitment to reflection on and maintenance of professional practice. The focus throughout is on *practice* and hence has a substantively more instrumentally focus compared to the value based youth work statement of ethical conduct (NYA 2004), initially developed only two years earlier in 1999/2000.

The original vision and strategy statement for Connexions (DfEE, 2000, p.46) observed somewhat aspirationally:

> These issues of a new professional qualification are likely to have implications for other professional groups working with young people, including social workers. Arrangements for the development of a new profession, including training, will need therefore to be consistent with any developments in the reform of social work training. It will also be necessary to consider what if any form of registration will be required for this new profession and who should take responsibility for it.

None of these issues of consistency were really addressed throughout Connexions' short life. From a youth work perspective, practitioners were suspicious of the new initiative, which seemed to take resources, energy and focus away from youth work. Smith (2007) is especially critical, citing fundamental flaws in role definition and focus, highlighting the essential 'case management' focus of the work. From a careers guidance perspective, Watts (2001) and more latterly Colley et al (2010) are also very critical of the impact on Connexions, particularly in relation to ethical practice.

As previously reported (see section 1.1), in recent years, youth services have been dramatically affected by reductions in funding, framed within 'austerity' cuts to public services. These include broader 'generic' or 'universal' services, as well as targeted provision, including Connexions which as a named service has all but disappeared. Associated hits to professional education and development programmes in higher

education and elsewhere have been recorded (Mourant, 2010; Buckland, 2013) leaving the sector in its most de-stabilised position in years.

In policy terms, the Coalition government's flagship initiative for young people has been the National Citizen Service (DfE, 2012b), although this has been criticised by many, including the Education Select Committee (2011), for diverting funds away from existing youth service providers and established practices. Following a not insignificant level of consultation, the Coalition government also published its own strategy document, *Positive for Youth* (Department for Education, 2010), which seemed to reaffirm a commitment to supporting in some form, an on-going young people's workforce. Arising from a specific discussion paper (Department for Education, 2011) entitled *'The development of the young people's workforce'*, the Government commissioned the Catalyst Consortium, led by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services and including the National Youth Agency, to co-ordinate a skills development strategy, including the possible role and remit of an *Institute for Youth Work*, which had previously been the focus of wider professional discussion and conjecture (Davies, 2013). Since publishing the Positive for Youth strategy though, the DfE has relinquished responsibility for youth policy to the Cabinet Office (GOV.UK, 2103) which might be regarded as a further distancing or downgrading of services and associated professionalism by the Government.

However, support in the field for an Institute of Youth Work (IYW) has been encouraging and under co-ordination of the NYA, the IYW was launched in September 2013 (IYW, 2013a). Membership of the IYW is open to volunteers, practising and non-practising members, as well as individuals with a recognised JNC endorsed professional qualification joining as a Certified Member, the highest level of membership. Hence whilst not explicitly charged as such, the IYW is positioned to take on the role of a professional 'council' for the youth sector, should the field itself make a commitment to the body. To parallel previous moves in defining the parameters of professional practice, the IYW has also published a *Code of Ethics* (IYW, 2013b), including reference to maintaining professional boundaries, engaging in ethical reflection and supporting and promoting young people's personal and social development. It is this latter point

that aspirationally posits a profession that focuses more holistically on young people, rather than on an attitudes/skills deficit model, including targeted behaviour change and concepts of citizenship and civic responsibility.

Those now in targeted youth support roles though, find themselves increasingly working under a case management model (Hall, 2013), dominant within social work and in ideological opposition to the traditionally relational model of youth work. Hall asserts that as youth support practitioners actively engage with the Common Assessment Framework and Team around the Child processes (products of the Every Child Matters agenda) in order to be part of the wider children and young people's services landscape (and so protect their legitimacy and validity against cuts to services), so these procedures erode the youth support practitioners' own professional role and place them rather as case managers, positioned just below the social care threshold, with associated pay, status and access to information. Along with this re-positioning, practitioners report (Bragg et al, 2013) an increase in their own anxiety with limited support and guidance from managers.

2.4   Personal, professional and multiple selves

Humanistic and transpersonal theorists and practitioners see identification with a core 'self' (as opposed to personality or ego; see Jung, 1971), as central to understanding the way we construct meaning and interpretation to our lives and our world. Closely associated with this core self are our constructed paradigms and beliefs, which are then reflected in our actions and behaviours – our everyday identities, roles and relationships. The notion of *professional selfhood* is explored in this context.

Rogers (1961) places the self at the centre of experience, learning and development. Our world is our reality, constructed through responses to our life as it unfolds. Our level of *ontological security* (Giddens, 1991), the degree to which our constructed, 'everyday self' is rigid or flexible, malleable or hardened and whether there are known

or unknown contradictions in our psychological 'make-up', all may impact on the extent to which professional learning and formation are possible.

Rogers' (1961) notion of positive self-regard and the potential incongruence between *self-concept* (how we see ourselves, constructed through a process of intrapolation of messages of affirmation and disapproval/rejection from others) and the 'organismic self' (the person we 'naturally' are) are important too. The emphasis here is on a largely constructivist view of the self and the broad perspective adopted in this exploration reflects the Vygotskian (1978) process of internalisation of concepts and practices through externalised interaction and dialogue. The Piagetian concept of *schemas* (1971) is also relevant here. A schema might be described as a summative frame of reference or condensation of what a child knows about something, which they develop in order to understand and engage with the world. However schemas are not fixed and are actively constructed and modified as the child experiences and interacts with the world. When the child discovers a new aspect of the world, s/he attempts to 'assimilate' their experience and understanding by using existing schemas. Where the schema does not fit anymore, the child 'accommodates' this by modifying the schema. Schemas and associated concepts of assimilation and accommodation have relevance in terms of the development of an individual 'lens', although these Piagetian concepts which have given rise to wider, constructivist literature, appear to be more extraverted than a personalised, introverted notion of 'self-concept'.

The transpersonal movements in psychotherapy support the notion of sub-personalities (e.g. Rowan, 1990) and Rowan and Cooper (1999) outline the idea of multiple-self constructs. Using this model, transformation occurs when the experience demands not only a new paradigm but a new self. The old or predominate self is not abandoned but a new self develops alongside. Our everyday language reflects this process, particularly reflecting the associated emotional drive: "I was beside myself…" Within this model, it could be seen that what is being demanded within professional development programmes is the support for the development of a professional self, separate from but related to the personal self. Hence, student practitioners are

required to move between their differentiated selves in a process self-regulation and accommodation. Cooper (1999, p.62) notes:

> the more fixed and inflexible the self-not-self boundary, the more violent and startling any transformations are likely to be. If there is some fluidity, then the self-concept may be able to bend its outline to incorporate new self-experiences; but the more rigid it is, the more there is only self and alter self, with no transitional possibilities in between.

Edmond, Hillier and Price (2007) explore Foundation Degree students' experiences of managing professional development on work-based learning programmes and the impact of this on personal well-being. It is clear that the separation and competing demands of these two selves can cause undue stress where the emerging professional self is perhaps not congruent with the personal self. Price (2008) goes further to suggest a third, 'academic self' is also required to be maintained, alongside the personal and professional selves, resulting potentially in further tension and stress.

Argyris and Schön (1974) differentiate between an individual's *espoused theories* – the ideas we might convey to others that we believe or would like to govern our actions – and *theories in use* – the ideas that in reality (and perhaps unconsciously) govern our actions. The extent to which there is congruence between these two elements is often the subject of critical reflection. Where there is a significant mismatch or lack of congruence, then this demands the re-assessment by the individual within the scope of the individual's 'governing variables'. Thus, the consequences of an action are reviewed in relation to an 'action strategy' – the plans used to maintain governing variables within an acceptable range. Where the conflict of variables is too great, then reflection and review of the governing variables themselves is required.

The willingness to reflect on experience and loosen the hold on current understanding and values is dependent on the learner's ontological security. Atherton's (2005, p.1) analysis of resistance to learning introduces the concept of *supplanting learning* which "calls into question previous ways of acting or prior knowledge" and describes how the psychological cost of learning prevents 'shift' and the supplanting process "leads to a temporary 'trough' of diminished competence" (ibid, p.2). Atherton outlines three

ways in which supplantation can occur: by external crisis, by 'hitting bottom' and by a facilitating environment. Atherton (ibid, p.1) also makes the following important observation:

> Supplantive learning is difficult enough when it is entirely under the learner's control, but when it is required, demanded or forced, or creeps up out of awareness, or there is significant emotional investment in previous beliefs or ways of acting, it becomes problematic

This is significant therefore, if the process of reflection and learning, of moulding and adapting to a defined set of professional values and perspectives (the professional *doxa*), forms an essential and required element within professional development programmes in higher education. This also points towards how a learner's self-concept or identity changes through paradigm shifts (see section 2.5); essentially, we tend to identify ourselves through our values and beliefs and feel threatened when they are under question. This in turn has implications for everyday roles, identities and relationships alongside developing professional selves. Hence this enquiry aims to explore how practitioners experience the emergence of an individualised professional selfhood and how this is pulled into focus (in relation especially to other previous and current identities) through higher education and related processes and relationships along the way.

2.5   Reflection, reflexivity and transformation

In writing of learning to learn, Claxton (1999) acknowledges the importance within the learning process of being able to accommodate or link "separate domains of experience" (ibid, p.95). In professional development programmes such as the Foundation Degree, as the professional self is explored and articulated through learning logs and other reflective writings, students learn to manage the interface between this professional self and other personal selves.

Drawing on Dewey (1938) and Lewin (1951), Kolb (1984) outlines a cycle of learning, where experience provides the source for new learning, which is only complete when

the learner has reflected upon the experience, analysed and made connections to other experiences and then experimented by putting the learning into practice. Holman, Pavlica and Thorpe (1997, p.135), however are critical of Kolb's model, in that it "overlooks or mechanically explains the social, historical and cultural aspects of self, thinking and action". This is especially significant where youth practitioner professionalism is situated within a political context.

Amongst others, Boud, Keogh and Walker (1996) make a case for the consideration of emotions in reflective practice. Brockbank and McGill (1998, p.46) acknowledge the way that the learner "fuels energy from her emotional being, giving rise to expressions like 'passion to learn'; 'hunger for truth'; 'thirst for knowledge'". For some learners, this is a process of empowerment and transformation and has echoes of 'working towards wholeness' within, for example, a psychotherapeutic relationship. Wellings and McCormick, (2000, p.21) describe this as being "composed of moments of reflection, an awareness of what we feel and think … a deepening of understanding by way of a 'felt sense' leading to a 'felt shift'".

However, not only do we learn from experience, but we learn *how* to learn from experience and this learnt, learning preference becomes a core element of how we view ourselves – our self-perception. The lens, through which we view new experiences, becomes shaped by our previous experiences. This is how we make sense of the world and construct meaning and we create our frames of reference or 'paradigms'. Reflection becomes therefore a *praxis* focused process (see section 2.9), to critically interrogate paradigms, perspectives and actions, to develop professional selfhood and resilience and to promote agency and autonomy for the common good.

Students may experience tension in undertaking assessed reflection as part of the professional formation process. This relates to the extent to which they feel they can legitimately engage in reflexive learning – to be praxis focused. Brookfield (2005), drawing on Habermas (1975), argues that non-reflexive learning involves acquiescing to the dominant hegemony. For professional development programmes, this may well be framed within a structure, referenced by a professional, regulatory body and

associated occupational standards. To engage in assessed reflection that is interrogated and evaluated by their peers and their tutors, requires the student to take risks in challenging themselves and each other, including the dominant professional culture. Brookfield (2005, p.250) suggests:

> Reflexive learning involves us talking over with others the conflicting evidence available to us regarding whether things have been ordered the best way they could be in society

The process of professional reflection and development of a conscious reflexivity itself is an immensely personal one – a kind of personal enquiry, researching the self. Speedy (2008, pp.138-139) promotes "writing as a form of inquiry", as a process that "uses writing as a research tool or a craft in its own right". Watton, Collins and Moon (2001) in guidance to their students, suggest that the quality of reflective writing sits on a continuum from superficial, descriptive (perhaps 'surface') writings to deeper, questioning and more profound writing. They go on to set the challenge for student to 'move beyond' the descriptive towards the profound. This guidance clearly reflects Hatton and Smith's (1995) analysis of different, increasingly sophisticated forms of reflective writing, referred to as *descriptive reflection*, *dialogic reflection* and *critical reflection*.

We might anticipate that students move to deeper levels of reflection as they progress professionally and academically. But they need to learn this process – to learn to reflect and learn to write reflectively. Such processes of critical reflection towards fostering reflective practice have become widely established in significant range of professional development programmes in education, health and social care (Chivers, 2010). Cheetham and Chivers (1998) argue that reflection on practice is a key driver for improvement in individual professional competence, however it is important here to differentiate between broader process of reflection *on experience* (including perhaps the learning experience itself), the more focused issue of *reflection on practice and performance* and the perhaps less well defined or more generalised issue of *informal learning*, including of significance here, the way learner-practitioners might learn through influence and assimilation of others' practices and perspectives.

Mumford (1995) proposes four approaches to learning, observing that these may be deliberate, conscious processes or less conscious, accidental or even random processes:

the *intuitive* approach – the learner learns directly from experience without awareness utilising what are sometimes described as 'natural' processes;

the *incidental* approach – learning here arises from a particular chance incident or event, which causes the learner to reflect on what happened afterwards, often as a result of a experiential 'jolt';

the *retrospective* approach – here, the reflection takes the form of a review over time, including both specific events and incidents as well as more generalise routine experiences;

the *prospective* approach – the learner considers not only past events and processes but considers possible learning opportunities in the future about how learning might be anticipated or planned for.

Not only does this model appear to point towards preferred individual learning processes but also has implications for how learners are supported to maximise their professional learning and create their own professional identity.

Sometimes circumstances or events lead us to re-shape our lens and shift our paradigms. We see our world in a new light. Learning can appear to happen in fits and starts or it may be a more evenly spread development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and understanding. Sometimes learners get 'stuck'. Occasionally big shifts happen. These shifts tend to involve 'quantum' leaps in understanding, a re-appraisal of previously held attitudes and values – the 'a-ha' moments. It is as if the learner encounters some kind of hurdle of understanding, which is either overcome or provides an insurmountable obstacle. Such transformative dimensions of learning

within the professional formation process, potentially both occur through planned learning opportunities, as well as arising from unplanned incidents and events.

Mezirow (1991) and Moon (1999) present definitions of *transformative* learning. The common elements include reference to taking *reflection*, *deep learning* and *working with meaning* to a further, higher or deeper level in some way, resulting in a permanent change in the learner's view of their world.

> Reflective learning involves assessment or reassessment of assumptions. Reflective learning becomes transformative whenever assumptions or premises are found to be distorting, inauthentic, or otherwise invalid. Transformative learning results in new or transformed meaning schemes or, when reflection focuses on premises, transformed meaning perspectives
>
> (Mezirow, 1991, p.6)

These 'a-ha' moments therefore occur when a significant shift occurs in the learner's frames of reference or 'paradigms'.

It is these values, reference points and paradigms that provide a context or starting point from which to explore a new issue or situation. We develop these perspectives unconsciously during early childhood, where upbringing, culture and social class provide the paradigm 'bedrock'. During adolescence we may begin to explore, question and seek out consciously to review and perhaps replace our 'given' values and beliefs with new ones, claimed as our own (Marcia, 1980). In adulthood, we may settle into a comfortable position, only to be shaken by life events or through conscious exploration within new learning situations. Undertaking a professional development programme provides such an opportunity for conscious review for many students.

These values and paradigms become entwined with our identity and self-concept. Hence when we question our *beliefs*, we question *who we are*; when others question us, they in effect say "are you sure you are who you think you are?" Sometimes this process can be uncomfortable or psychologically painful. Sometimes there is the relief

of "oh, now I understand!" Sometimes there are feelings of 'stuckness' – which can result in frustration, despair or anger. Occasionally, the moments stack up during a period of 'incubation', until a critical mass is reached and a shift or point of new insights occurs, usually accompanied by a release of emotional energy, in many cases fuelling action.

Transformative learning is reconceptualised by Meyer and Land (2003), situated in the notion of the *threshold concept*, referring to discipline specific, 'troublesome knowledge' (Perkins, 1999). Meyer and Land (ibid) summarise threshold concepts (as opposed to 'core concepts', the discipline specific, building blocks of knowledge) as *transformative, irreversible, integrative, bounded* and *troublesome.* The emphasis placed on 'troublesome' knowledge is interesting in relation to transformative, self-learning. Through engagement in critical, reflective practice, including reflective writing, students are asked to place themselves in positions of vulnerability by exploring those 'tricky' issues – the times when action is unclear and competing values result in ethical dilemmas. In the case of undergraduate study, this is likely to be at a time of professional formation and less well developed academic 'muscle'. Students whose professional identity is perhaps less well focused or secure may be resistant to this exposure to vulnerability and risk, especially where the *process* and/or *product* of reflection is subjected to academic and professional assessment.

In relation to self-concept and self-knowledge, the ability to critically interrogate the self is restricted by the reflexive nature of the self – the tool of analysis being closely aligned to, if not synonymous with, the focus of analysis; the psycho-social equivalent of pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps. Meyer and Land's (2003) thinking is important though in the emphasis placed on interrogation of troublesome knowledge being a 'portal' to new learning – a gateway through which the learner does not conceptually return. This may be seen as key to the acquisition or development of individualised professionality.

2.6   Relationships, interventions and the learning experience

The place of interactions and relationships with others is regarded as central to fostering reflexivity and selfhood generally (Bamberg, 2011) and this would appear to be the case within the professional formation process particularly. In exploring the nature of such interactions and relationships it is possible to draw on differing typological frameworks. From a broader, generalised perspective, a framework for intervention analysis (Heron, 1975 and 2001) will be considered first, followed by a more particular exploration of professional mentoring as an example of a specific learning relationship. Within this examination, issues of hierarchical power and intentionality are considered.

Heron's (1975) model of six category intervention analysis was originally developed in relation to the fields of counselling and psychotherapeutic work emergent in the human potential movement of the 1970s. Heron (2001) later acknowledges that this framework can also be applied to a wide range of professional practitioner-client relationships in such fields of education, health, social care, as well as for solicitors, accountants and architects. In acknowledging the professional development programmes which draw on this model, Heron (2001) includes that of youth and community work and indeed this model has been used as a core conceptual framework for analysis and professional development on youth work programmes at UoB since 1999.

Usefully, Heron (2001, p.3) defines an intervention as "an identifiable piece of verbal and/or non-verbal behaviour that is part of the practitioner's service to the client". Whilst on the Foundation Degree and related programmes, this model is presented with the youth professional as *practitioner* and the young person as *client*, in the context of this study and reflecting wider usage within the *educative* function of professional supervision (Kadushin and Harkness, 2002), the tutor, mentor or learning facilitator takes on the role of *practitioner* and the youth professional in learning, the *client*.

Heron's (1975, 2001) six categories of intervention are divided into two dimensions of *authoritative* interventions, where the practitioner is to some degree taking responsibility *for* the client, with inherent implications of power, seeking to guide the client and/or raise his/her awareness of self, actions or perspectives; and *facilitative* interventions, less hierarchical by nature and where the client is encouraged to take responsibility for his/her actions, learning and selfhood. For each dimension, Heron (ibid) identifies three functions or categories of intervention:

Authoritative interventions:

Informative	the helper or facilitator provides information or instructs the learner or client in a generalised way
Prescriptive	the helper or facilitator gives advice or explicitly directs the learner or client towards specific action
Confrontative	the helper or facilitator questions or challenges the understanding, values, or behaviour of the learner or client

Facilitative interventions:

Cathartic	the helper or facilitator enables the learner or client to explore and express thoughts or emotions, perhaps previously unacknowledged or unexpressed
Catalytic	the helper or facilitator enables the learner or client to become self-directed in relation to specific courses of action
Supportive	the helper or facilitator seeks to foster learner or client self-confidence and self-belief

Within the learning context, the issue of *authoritative* power is therefore significant. Baldwin and Williams (1988, p.100) describe learning as being challenging generally:

It challenges the learner to build on the existing, but more especially, to move away from it towards the new, the unknown, to move from security to insecurity… The degree of challenge can be measured by the degree of discomfort that it generates, the degree to which the learner perceives the demand as a risk, a threat to their existing order.

Baldwin and Williams (1988, p.101) go on to make specific links to the context of learning in a group context and the way in which the group can both provide challenge and support individuals:

It can be a challenge for some people to seek and receive support, but ironically and self evidently, they will need support to meet that challenge. Support provides people with a security which allows them to move into insecurity.

The process by which educators facilitate the inter-dependent processes of support and challenge, not only within facilitator-learner relationships and interactions but also those between co-learners, may be multidimensional, in relation to both the focus of relationships and interventions, but also in relation to issues of power and status. This leads the discussion to the concept and process of *mentoring* – both formal and/or structured, as well as informal and/or opportunistic.

Pawson (2004, p.7) identifies four mechanisms of mentoring which clearly each echo Heron's typology:

affective contact	"offering the hand of friendship"
direction setting	"offering advice and a guiding hand though difficult choices"
coaching	"hands on the mentees' shoulders – encouraging, pushing and coaxing"
advocacy	"grab the mentees' hands, introducing them to this network"

Here, there is an implicitly increasing level of intentionality in relation to mentoring intervention.

However Pawson (2007) goes further than simply exploring mechanisms or interventions in his analysis of the mentoring relationship and consideration of both social identity and status positions are offered. Issues of status, power, and differentiated mentor/mentee professional role identity are relevant to this research.

Benjamin et al (2009) explore the experience of learning by those in this emerging youth support profession, engaged on the Foundation Degree Working with Young People at the Open University – a parallel programme to that at UoB. This study highlights the significance of the nature and quality of support offered to student practitioners in the workplace and the potential for long-term impact on professionality. In return, employers reported an increase in students' confidence articulation in discussing their work. This report echoes and earlier investigation by Gill (2003) who indentified that it was the quality of support offered by workplace mentors which students report as being more important to their learning and development, rather than status or organisational role.

2.7   Communities and practice

Our everyday understanding and use of the term *community* derives largely from Tonnies' term *gemeinshaft* (Harris, 2001), in referring to a particular, defined group whose members share one or more of a combination of geographical location, identity, interest and activity, values and beliefs. Hence, a local neighbourhood or a group of individuals with a common experience and a focus for interaction, may refer to themselves or be referred to by others as a 'community', but with an allied meaning which goes beyond simple association but rather implies a commitment to and benefit from a sense of 'belonging'. Tonnies (Harris, 2001) differentiates *gemeinshaft* from *gesellshaft*, often translated as 'society', where there is usually a greater need to enforce social control and the collective sense of commitment and loyalty is lower.

One of the benefits of community is that *social capital* can be fostered. Linking back to earlier discussions of field, habitus and doxa (see section 2.2), communities can often provide access to relationships, resources and networks across and beyond the community itself. Putnam (2000, p.19) suggests that social capital "refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" and argues that social capital allows citizens to resolve collective problems more easily, enables communities to advance smoothly and widens awareness of how our fates are intertwined.

This model of flexible networks providing the threads of relationship from which communities are woven, is developed by Gilchrist (2000) who observes that such networks are always complex, whilst Woolcock (2001) usefully identifies three dimensions of social capital as derived from relationship networks: *bonding* – relating to the close relationships which can exist between friends, family and neighbours; *bridging* – the looser relationships and contacts that go beyond immediate family and close friendships, including looser acquaintances and work colleagues; and *linking* – reaching out beyond the immediate community, to include those in related but differing fields and social positions, enabling members greater access to a larger pool of resources. At its heart, the idea of social capital derived from a flexible framework of relationships and networks, is of immediate relevance to professional communities and these exist in many arenas, both through informal forums and more structure professional bodies.

Of course the phrase 'social networks' now has gained new meaning, as the internet and related digital communication and information sharing systems have enabled 'online' communities to develop. Such communities now provide expanded opportunities for practitioner connectedness and social capital and capacity building, whether it is as 'grass roots', communities of *resistance* (e.g. In Defence of Youth Work, 2013), as well as more formalised, professional bodies (e.g. Institute for Youth Work, 2013).

It was Lave and Wenger (1991) who originally described a *community of practice* (CoP) in relation to the opportunities afforded by such groups as vehicles of social learning through *legitimate peripheral participation* (ibid), particularly of novices or apprentices into a particular arena of practice. Wenger (1998) went on to develop the CoP model as including or requiring the following dimensions: a shared *domain* of interest or competence which distinguishes its members from others; a shared set of interactions and relationships which give rise to the *community*; and that its members are in *practice*, with an associated pallet of language, tools and processes, whose utility is explored and reinforced through recounting experiences. Smith (2009) observes that there is sometimes a romanticised view of CoPs in that issues of power and status can sometimes be ignored, whilst CoPs as arenas for professionalisation might also be criticised for the potential absence of regulatory gatekeeping of the profession – but this of course misses the point somewhat in terms of the self-regulatory nature of CoPs.

Activity theory, first developed by Vygotsky (1978) and Leont'ev (1978), was later refined by Engeström (1987; 2001) to provide a framework for meta-analysis of the inter-relationship between *actors* (or practitioners), *community* and *objects* and provides perhaps a more complex set of affordances for practitioner learning and engagement than CoPs. Engeström (2001) suggests that learning can be expansive where those involved in an activity have the capacity to interpret the *object* or motive of the activity (not to be confused with the objective or goal) within and across *systems* which may be complex and changing. As such, expansive learning therefore demands active participation within a community, in order for new knowledge to be developed and new practices shared. This analysis is helpful here as it develops the notion of a community of practice further, particular in thinking about an emerging profession in the early stages of development. Through engaging in such dynamic expansive learning cultures and environments, practitioners have opportunities to become agents of their own professional construction.

2.8   Narrative inquiry, voice and narrative capital

Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) and Day et al (2006) amongst others, note that for teachers, professional identities and selves are constructed from the process of professional practice, situated in the context of personal experiences, culture, values and identities. In exploring this construction process, Clandinin and Connelly (2000, pp.2-3) see narrative inquiry as "to move back and forth between the personal and the social, simultaneously thinking about the past, present and future and to do so in an ever-expanding social milieu" – hence the process of professional formation for many practitioners, including youth services professionals, involves such a shift between personal and professional experiences, practices and identities. For example, it is not uncommon for student practitioners on the Foundation Degree programme to be parents of young people and of course, all have been young people themselves. Hence, professional preparation and development requires students to re-construct their own personal-professional narrative, which then provides a central core or pivot around which everyday practice is balanced or tethered.

The tools of such personal-professional narrative inquiry include the words, the language, the metaphors and half formed images which we chose to adopt in our story telling. Boone and Bowman (1996) consider the way that counselling positions the focus for exploration on the client's chosen metaphor for his/her search for meaning, whilst Claxton (1999) also emphasises the place of metaphors within language and memory development as part of story-telling in the process of lifelong learning. With student reflective writing, the use of metaphors as exploratory learning tools is also common and in professional development programmes such as the FdA, the professional self is explored and articulated through learning logs and other reflective writings. Within this process, students learn to manage the interface between the emerging or developing professional self and other personal selves.

Speedy (2008) explores the key themes of reflexivity and liminality in relation to narrative inquiry in the field of psychotherapy, when she notes that "we are continuously engaging in the spaces that which is known and that which is not yet

known" (ibid, p.28). The nature of professional self-formation through reflection might then be considered to be an 'autoetymographical' one – we choose and use words to represent our changing truth and meaning.

Goodson, Biesta, Tedder and Adair (2010, p.131) conclude that there exists a "complex ecology of narrative learning" and differentiate between "narratives as tools for learning … and the on-going process of narration itself as a site for learning" (ibid). Goodson et al conclude that our capacity for learning through use of narrative processes is maximised when these two elements are in "productive balance" (ibid). This observation is especially helpful in terms of fostering on-going professional development. In the context of a defined professional qualification programme where professional status is achieved on successful completion of the HE award, there is a temptation though to regard the narrative development process as 'closed' on graduation, even if it so in a formalised sense.

In relation to narrative constructions of professionality, Power (2008) argues for the development of professional imagination, which she describes as enabling professionals to "gauge a sense of their own efficacy within contemporary settings, without resorting to either an over-individualised or to an over-determined position" (2008, p.144). She goes on to suggest that we need to "address the relational, temporal and dispositional attributes of our profession and our careers" (ibid, p.156). Power concludes that "if professionals are to hold on to their sense of professionalism [then] the more sophisticated their understandings, the greater the chance of developing creative and articulated responses" (p.157). Hence, the skills and understandings associated with reflexivity and critical analysis of self, action and the inter-dependency of the two, need to be fostered.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) position the extent to which professionals are able to claim and exert professional responsibility within a broader concept of *professional capital*. They relate the notion of capital to individual and collective worth, particularly in relation to "assets than can be leveraged to accomplish desired goals" (p.1). Focusing particularly on teachers, Hargreaves and Fullan (ibid) assert that professional

capital has three elements: *human capital* – individual skills, knowledge, attributes and values; *social capital* – the interpersonal and collective social wealth afforded by connections, networks and communities; and *decisional capital* – the 'in the moment' judgements afforded through wisdom, insight, and agency. This model of professional capital, is positioned in opposition to that of *business capital*, which the authors (ibid) claim underpins the assessment and performance led education strategies favoured increasingly in the USA and the UK, reflecting climates of performativity (Ball, 2001 and 2008) and the commodification of learning (Moore-Jones, 2013). It might be anticipated then, that practitioner narratives, reflecting individualised professionalities, reveal elements of both professional *and* business capital.

In exploring narrative as a learning process, Goodson et al (2010) suggest that narratives may vary in quality and intensity, as well as in terms of the utility or impact the narrative has in relation to the narrator's sense of personal development and/or well-being. The authors (ibid, p.127) assert that narrative learning "is therefore not solely learning *from the narrative*, it is also learning that goes on *in the act of narration* and in the ongoing construction of a life story" [authors' italics]. Through the process of narrative enquiry, practitioners hence construct a *narrative capital*. Goodson (2013, p.129) notes that an individual's narrative capital "will need to be deployed in the recurrent 're-selfing' that the new flexible economies will demand".

In developing narrative capital, the practitioner's *voice* is key. Couldry (2010) explores the place and value of voice, contextualised specifically as a counter to western neo-liberalism. Referring to a term used by Caravero (2000) among others, Couldry (ibid, p.13) claims that voice "values all human beings' ability to give an account of themselves; it values my and your status as 'narratable selves'". In the context of such western neo-liberalism, Goodson (2013, p.7) considers *narrativity* to be a "'mediating membrane' or 'point of refraction' between external structure and personal agency". Through exploring different styles or forms of narrativity, Goodson (ibid, p.62) considers the "different ways of telling, living and representing our life stories". In emphasising the importance of re-selfing, he concludes by speculating that a "capacity

to theorize and locate our life story may provide a highly developed resource for responding to life events" (ibid, p.118).

2.9   Praxis and phronesis

It is sometimes said (only partly jokingly) that as is the case for many of those attracted to the 'helping professions', people do not become youth practitioners for money, fame or status, but rather for a love of young people and commitment to making a positive contribution to society – the notion of 'good work', from both a Kantian sense of *duty* and a more utilitarian perspective of making a difference. Underpinning this social conscience is the concept of *praxis*, examined here in its relationship and contribution to professionality and the part it potentially plays in relation to an individual practitioner's narrative.

For Aristotle, *praxis* (practice), along with *theoria* (theory) and *poiesis* (production), was held to be one the three core activities and bodies of knowledge open to humanity. Alongside knowledge, in Aristotelian terms (Aristotle and Irwin, 1999), 'wisdom' is seen as having two strands: *sophia* – the search for universal truth, and *phronesis* - the ability to reflect on and determine action consistent with 'right living'. Like others in related services, for those becoming professionals working in the field of young people's services, phronesis may be regarded as central to praxis.

The development of the concept of praxis and its relevance here to notions of professionalism in youth work practices, also relates to Friere's (1972) *critical pedagogy*, where the democratic development of knowledge and understanding derived from reflection on and application to practice as an individual and collective process of liberation. Ideologically, this is congruent with the focus on *empowerment* as a cornerstone of the youth work curriculum (Merton and Wylie, 2002).

Smith (1999) observes of praxis:

It is not simply action based on reflection. It is action which embodies certain qualities. These include a commitment to human well being and the search for truth, and respect for others. It is the action of people who are free, who are able to act for themselves. Moreover, praxis is always risky.

The implication here is that praxis is contingent on issues of agency and ethical practice and hence requires a level of professionalism, fostered through a process of engaging what Barnett (1997, p.12) refers to as "critical interrogation of practice", the purpose of which is "to critique action so as to produce more enlightened forms of action" (ibid). On professional formation and development programmes such as the Foundation Degree, the intention is that through the process of developing critical reflection and analysis, there comes about a willingness to look at things from new perspectives. Moon (1999) makes links between Freire's (1972) process of 'conscientization' and Mezirow's (1990) use of the term 'perspective transformation' in relation to learners' potential for change. Moon (ibid) embraces the concepts of 'transformative' and 'emancipatory' learning in developing the work of Habermas (1971), when she asserts that:

Emancipatory interests rely on the development of knowledge via critical or evaluative modes of thought and enquiry so as to understand the self, the human condition and the self in human context. The acquisition of such knowledge is aimed at producing a transformation in the self, or in the personal, social or world situation or any combination of these.

(Moon, 1999, p14)

Thus a function of developing 'critical being' and 'working with meaning' is to open up to the possibility of expansive, emancipatory learning. The process of reflection on practice and the integration of self, action and commitment through professional development, is central a praxeological perspective.

To conclude, reference may also be made to *dasein*, a term used by Heidegger (1962) in describing the process of being in the world not as separate from, but rather in terms of a projected self as a constituent part *of* and *within* the world. Thus praxis may

be regarded as refraction of dasein, a commitment to professional, participatory response-ability.

2.10   Summary and conclusions

The thematic review of literature presented in this chapter presents a series of theoretical and policy based points of orientation which have informed the conceptual positioning of the research and ground the refractive lens through which my engagement with the participants is regarded. Some of these (for example, reference to the Bourdieusian influences on professionality and professionalism in section 2.2) are not referred to or explored explicitly in either the thematic analysis of the six portrayals or the presentation of the central propositional model arising from this analysis (chapters 6 and 7). Other areas though (for example those relating to models of intervention and mentoring (Heron, 1975, 2001 and Pawson, 2004) provide key reference points both formatively and summatively. These thematic reference points and their influence on this research are represented in Figure 1 (page 49).

In examining the nature of professionalism more generally and then specifically in relation to youth service practitioners, the central issue of a porous, flexible professional self-hood is presented and regarded as significant to a professional narrative developed through self-reflection and critical engagement with others from the professional community. This enquiry though, seeks to explore the nature of professional narrative capital as a 'resource'. What is its *substance* and what is its *affordance?* Or rather, what form does the professional's narrative capital take and how does this influence or offer possibilities for the professional? And to what extent does this capital reflect an articulated commitment to a values-based approach to right action and emancipation? Looking more broadly, what common elements of narrative capital for youth service professionals are present and emerging in this time of change, politically? And finally, what role might Higher Education play in supporting the maintenance and development of individual and collective narrative capital?

These questions, arising from the review of literature presented here, are reflected in the research aims (section 1.4), the methodological positioning (chapter 3), the framework of thematic analysis employed (chapter 5), the co-construction of the practitioner portrayals (chapter 6) and the model presented of narrative capital affordances (chapter 7).

Figure 1: The influence of selected literature on the conceptual positioning of the research

professionality,
professionalism and
professionalisation
(e.g. Bourdieu; Millerson; Sims, Fineman
and Gabriel; Morrell; Hargreaves; Marsico;
Sugrue and Solbrekke)

young people's services – key
professional and policy related
developments and their critics
(e.g. Merton and Wylie; Watts; Smith; Hall)

*the political, social and
personal dimensions which
impact on the profession
generally and the individual
particularly*

*the shaping of the
professional field –
external driving forces and
tensions and their impact
on practice*

communities and practice
(e.g. Putnam; Woolcock;
Lave and Wenger; Engeström)

personal and professional
self-hood
(e.g. Rogers; Rowan; Cooper;
Argyris and Schön; Atherton)

*interactions within the
professional field and the
shared social dimension to
professionalism*

*how an individual's
professional self
develops in relation to
personal self-hood*

**conceptual
positioning of
the research**

*exploration and articulation of life
stories in professional contexts and as
a personal resource and voicing of
identity and autonomy*

*models of relationship in the
professional learning context
and associated impact on
professional identity*

relationships and
interventions
(e.g. Bamberg; Heron;
Kadushin and Harkness;
Pawson; Benjamin et al)

narrative inquiry and capital
(e.g. Clandinin and Connelly; Speedy;
Goodson et al; Power; Couldry)

*a values based approach to
practice and professionalism
which situates criticality and a
commitment to social justice at
the core of the professionality*

*the importance of reflection and
self-awareness as a key element in
professional learning and 're-selfing'*

praxis and phronesis
(e.g. Aristotle; Friere; Barnett)

reflection and transformation
(e.g. Claxton; Kolb; Brookfield; Mumford;
Brockbank and McGill; Mezirow; Moon;
Meyer and Land)

3.   Methodology

3.1   Introduction

The methodological position of this enquiry reflects both the research focus and questions and the context in which the research is undertaken. The key foci of the research are twofold:

- the construction and formation of perceived *professional identities* of youth service practitioners;
- the associated *narrative capital* and affordances developed related to these identities and related professional development processes and experiences.

The national context which frames the experience of the research participants and the broader professional field has been discussed previously (see sections 1.1 and 2.3), but it is also important to acknowledge the local academic context in which the research is undertaken and the influence this has on the adopted methodology.

The University of Brighton, a post-1992[7] higher education institute, identifies itself (2012, p.3) as being "committed to conserving, generating, transmitting and sharing knowledge locally, globally and professionally, with a focus on its application for social purpose", and offers "higher education that contributes critically to citizenship and to the public good" (ibid).

Previously, the University's Corporate Plan (2007-2012) had emphasised its work as being:

> characterised by the extent to which it draws on the proximity and permeability of professional and academic disciplines; and which prepares students well for their future professional and personal lives
>
> (University of Brighton, 2007, p.5)

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[7] The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act in the UK afforded polytechnics (including Brighton Polytechnic) university status. These institutions are also sometimes referred to as 'modern universities' and tend to be regarded as focusing more on vocational or applied disciplines of study, than older universities.

Hence, my role as both a programme leader and a researcher is contextualised by concepts of professionalism and professional preparation and development, through participant critical engagement and practice with and in the workplace. This in itself implies a reflexive position which is broadly *constructivist* – that professionality and professional identity are both formed and acquired. Efforts previously by the CWDC (2009) to define the young people's profession to date have focused on role, skills and job function. However this enquiry aims to develop understanding of the profession by exploring practitioners' narratives of their own constructed professionality. In this section then, I aim to explore in more depth how this stance is positioned methodologically in terms of an identified research paradigm and approach, accompanied by associated methods utilised in the research process.

In epistemological terms, knowledge of one's professional self and status can be considered to be the basis of one's everyday professional 'reality' (e.g. Willis, 2007), constructed through experience, reflection on that experience, and associated, developed frameworks and paradigms which support this reflection and interpretation of experience. This echoes humanistic and transpersonal therapeutic perspectives (e.g. Rogers, 1961; Rowan, 1993; Wellings and McCormick, 2000), which see one's identification with and connection to a felt sense of 'self' (rather than personality or ego) as the centre of existence and meaning making.

This investigation is qualitative in its approach, as the research seeks to explore learner practitioner' perceptions and experiences. The questions asked relate to *'what was it like?'* and *'how was this for you?'*, with a focus on the *descriptive* and *reflective*, rather than on the *enumerative* or *quantitative*. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p.46) suggest "The data of qualitative inquiry is most often people's words and action, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour."

The research methodology is *phenomenological* in its roots (see Curtis and Mays, 1978), where central beliefs are located in subjective, active consciousness and that understanding is developed through reflection *on* consciousness. Hence in some sense,

there is no absolute truth but rather a number of individual, personal truths and therefore this enquiry adopts an approach which reflects an *existential* approach to phenomenology (Shutz, 1967, cited in Burrell and Morgan, 1982) and one where consideration of *reflexivity* is paramount (see earlier discussion in chapter 2 and the following section 3.6). *Intersubjectivity* – the way our experience of the world is viewed through a subjective lens, which is dependent on and shaped by our interactions with others – is central to this process.

In exploring individual experience, understanding and meaning, the methodology adopts an *idiographic* approach. The research explores individual constructions and interpretations, looking for common themes and patterns without seeking necessarily to make broad generalisations. In considering post-modernism (and writing as a method of inquiry in particular), Richardson and St. Pierre (2005, p.969) assert that "the interpreter has to assume the burden of meaning-making, which is no longer a neutral process that simply matches word to world." This lack of neutrality and the active, participatory and co-constructivist nature of the research will be considered further in this chapter (section 3.6) and in chapter 4.

Moustakas (1990) and Etherington (2004) emphasise the exploratory nature of *heuristic* research, providing a 'map' in which the researcher might locate themselves in the research process. Etherington also points towards the transpersonal nature of heuristic research (e.g. Braud and Anderson, 1998) in finding meaning in creative, intuitive and synchronistic events and experiences. These events and experiences may result in shifts in self-perception and personal/professional paradigms, as internal tensions attempt to be resolved. The research aims to explore this ontological dimension, the development of professional 'being'. The process of identity acquisition or development of this state relates closely to the theme of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), and of students grasping 'threshold concepts' (Meyer and Land, 2003) (see section 2.5).

This enquiry therefore aims to be *interpretivist,* adopting a *constructivistic* stance, focusing on "the meaning making of the individual mind" (Crotty, 2003, p.58). It is

acknowledged that it is not possible to generalise from the six individual portrayals towards a broader, collective or theorised view of the youth services workforce and its developing professionalism. However, what is developed is an analysis of the portrayals in providing evidence of individualised, narrative capital which offers associated affordances to youth services professionals practising in the current service provision landscape, shaped by and in response to the recent and continuing political and economic climate in the UK and beyond. The value of these affordances and the relationship of these to the centrality of narrativity in the professional development process unify the *focus* of the research with the *process* or methodology.

In developing what might be described loosely as an *integrative* perspective to narrative based methodologies, the remaining sections of this chapter focus on several approaches with which this enquiry resonates to greater and lesser extents. These include: narrative inquiry; participatory inquiry; discourse analysis; autoethnography; and co-constructivism.

Finally in this section, a note regarding *purposive sampling* (Jupp, 2006) is provided as a methodological approach to subject selection. In selecting interviewees, this research has adopted a purposive sampling approach, where "respondents are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration of the research objectives" (Office for National Statistics, 2010). The intention was to engage with ex-students whose professional identities and narratives, it was anticipated from the outset, would provide contrasting, illustrative examples of professionality. Hence the approach taken reflects elements of *heterogeneous* or *maximum variation* sampling (Teddlie and Yu, 2007), without deliberately seeking to represent the full extent of possible, professional identities present in the population of youth service practitioners. This judgement was based on a qualitative appraisal of potential subject profiles and histories as former students, alongside data held by the University of Brighton relating to current employment. Probability sampling strategies (e.g. random sampling techniques) were rejected due to the small sample size.

In considering the disadvantages of purposive sampling, clearly my own subjective appraisal of the potential pool of subjects and hence the basis on which subjects were selected, represent the main limitations of this approach, together with the range of professional, employment roles present in south east England. Whilst acknowledging these limitations, the breadth of subjects selected is evidenced through the range of narratives developed and presented in chapter 6.

3.2   Narrative inquiry as methodology

Previously (see section 2.8), narrative inquiry was considered in the context of its place in the development of an individualised professional identity. Here, narrative inquiry is examined in a broader methodological context. This methodology is regarded as an *iterative* process involving the identification of *generative* questions asked of the participants (see chapter 5) which reflect the research aims outlined in section 1.4 and which serve to guide the focus of data collection. Such questions have a dynamic quality and should not be regarded as fixed or restrictive, but rather bend and accommodate the developing, emerging threads or themes. This concept of an emergent and co-constructed discourse and analysis is central to the process and hence there are some aspects of the data collection and coding which relate to *discourse analysis* (Adelman, 1981; Potter & Wetherall, 1987; Lupton, 1992) where analysis of the data is clearly dependent on the perspective and interpretation of themes by the researcher and subject or participant (see section 3.4).

In this research, the practitioner is asked to present her or his own story, through open, loosely structured interviews (Sfard and Prusak, 2005) in relation to 'border' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999) or 'boundary' (Kerosuo and Engeström, 2003) crossing – the process and action of becoming professional, moving from non-professionally defined roles, domestically, recreationally and in some cases in educational contexts, and managing conflicts and tensions with these, at times competing, personal roles and identities.

The approach taken is a collaborative one – working with the practitioner to explore the place (incidence, influence and contribution) of relationships, events and encounters within their respective professional formation process. Hence, the research process is based on a series of in-depth collaborative inquiries into what might be considered to be a *co-constructed* professional selfhood. Data *collection* (practitioners reflecting on their experience) and data *analysis* (further collaborative analysis of the narrative) at times interweave through the dialogical relationship.

Etherington (2004) suggests four possible approaches to analysis of narratives: content analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995), conversation analysis (Cortazzi, 1993), grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). She observes that for each of these approaches, "the narratives are the starting point rather than the end point of the analysis" (2004, p.81). Etherington makes the point that *narrative analysis* (as opposed to analysis of narrative) "views life as constructed and experienced through the telling and re-telling of the story" (ibid). Hence, in narrating or 'telling the story', the interviewees construct their reality. Their story or narrative thus includes both their *identified reality* and their *developed analysis* – their constructed self.

This process and methodology reflects Goodson's and others' work in exploring teachers' personal professionalism. Goodson (2003, p.74) describes process this as being:

> complex and not definite: there is no absolute model. Each teacher has to construct a personal professionalism that suits his or her life history, training, context and above all, personality.

This research then seeks to explore and develop a similar understanding of a constructed, personal professionalism for those working with young people in other, less formally defined, but nevertheless purposefully 'targeted' roles. In the research process, there is a movement in between the personal and the social, between what has happened previously and what is felt or identified now, a space within which there is an ebb and flow between reflection, analysis and synthesis. Such reflexive and liminal spaces, which the interviewee co-habits with the interviewee as collaborative

researchers, are regarded by Speedy (2008, p.28) as "highly political, personal, imaginative and social spaces".

When considering issues of *validity*, it is important to acknowledge that "narrative research does not produce conclusions of certainty" (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p.91), but rather the validity of such research is located in the groundedness and integrity of the research process and the trust and understanding developed between researcher and subject. Such issues and associated ethical considerations are explored in more depth in chapter 4. Similarly, in relation to the *reliability* of such research, at an instrumental level this is largely dependent on accuracy of the process of collection of raw data – at a basic level this is dependent on the quality of the sound recording device[8] used in the interviews and then the accuracy of the transcription process. Here, it should be acknowledged that the transcriptions did not perhaps fully capture all the nuances of verbal and non-verbal utterings and emphases but in reviewing each interview, both at the stages of collaborative analysis and summative analysis and presentation of the portrayals in this thesis, I returned to the original sound recordings as primary data sources.

A further, perhaps deeper or more fundamental issue of reliability relates to the constructed sense of the narrative in terms of process of memory recall and thematic representation and interaction, located within the context of the research interview. Cortazzi (1993) explores narratives as employing constructed *frames* or schemas, which he considers to be "a more static representation of knowledge" (p. 63) alongside *scripts* which he suggests that being more dynamic and constructed in the context of the narration. However, Goodson et al (2010, p.11) assert

> Life narratives are constructed, as Bruner puts it, in order to make clear why it was necessary (not causally, but morally, socially, psychologically) that the life has gone in a particular way.

Hence, it is the very constructed nature of the narrative that gives it its note of reliability – of individualised *voice* (Couldry, 2010) and re-created meaning.

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[8] Zoom Q3 Handheld Digital Recorder

Sandelowski (1991, p. 165) presents this succinctly when she suggests that narrators "strive to achieve the most internally consistent interpretation of the past-in-the-present, the experienced present and the anticipated-in-the-present".

3.3   Participatory inquiry

Guba and Lincoln (1994) identify four differentiated and potentially competing paradigms of inquiry: positivism; post-positivism; critical theory; and constructivism. Heron and Reason (1997) propose *participatory inquiry* as a fifth paradigm where, in epistemological terms, the research seeks to extend "experiential, propositional and practical knowing" through a methodology which embraces "political participation in collaborative action" (ibid, p.15).

Heron and Reason place great emphasis on the axiological question of *value* in research – what is really worthwhile? An essential element of the research paradigm that underpins this enquiry is the value of relationship and interaction as fundamental elements and processes of the professional activity of those that work with young people (and other related professions). It is acknowledged that the research process of this enquiry is not a neutral or passive process, but rather inevitably impacts in terms of further development of professional identity and selfhood through relationship based interaction, the very process the enquiry aims to research. Hence, this enquiry aims implicitly to contribute to the participants' on-going professional development – to further develop their professional narrative and selfhood – although this in itself is not a primary aim of the research. Indeed, after the recording device was switched off and in subsequent communications, several of the participants commented on how engaging in the research process had been invaluable in helping them review their developing professional focus, including in some cases, supporting decision making with regard to possible future career changes.

This process is perhaps in contrast to a more purist approach to *participatory action research* (PAR) which focuses on the more traditional action research cycles of

knowledge and action aimed at producing identifiable change in real world practice. Hence PAR usually embodies emancipatory processes that "value local knowledge and attempts to empower communities to expose and liberate themselves from repressive systems and ideologies" (O'Leary, 2010, p. 154). The subjects of the research presented in this thesis are conscious in their active, collaborative participation in a process which seeks broadly to further the development of the youth services profession as a whole, but also more individually, regard the process as an opportunity to revisit and perhaps 'stock take' their own professionality. The process of co-construction of narrative analysis is also participatory in its nature, but nevertheless one where power is not shared equally between researcher and subject – any development of an individual's own sense of narrative is a reflection of the research *process* rather than a desire or intended research outcome. Hence, the development of an individual participant's narrative capital and associated affordances (see chapter 7) were not explicit aims of this research and as such it would be erroneous to consider the methodology adopted here to be an example of PAR.

Finally, Bergold and Thomas (2012, paragraph 3) observe that participatory inquiry "cannot be canonized in the form of a single, cohesive research methodological approach", but rather what is important is the 'style' of the process, particularly in the context of researching "habitualized practice" (ibid). In undertaking the interviews and subsequent email exchanges, the participatory style of this enquiry is located both within the focus of the exploration and dialogue, as well as the reflection and analysis developed (see section 3.6). The products of these participatory, co-constructive processes are evidenced in the six portrayals presented in chapter 6.

3.4   Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis as methodology is considered here in the way it regards examination of text as an exposition of meaning within a socio-political context. Hence utterances, in either written or spoken form, are examined not only as personal, individual constructions of meaning, but also in the extent to which they reflect or

reveal social or political discourses. In particular, discourse analysis as a reflection of *critical theory* (particularly the work of Habermas and Foucault), seeks to develop an interrogation and exposition of dominant discourses and representations of hegemonic influence.

Whilst this research focuses primarily on individual narrative, the socio-political context within which these narratives are developed is acknowledged, as is the extent to which the narratives are positioned in response to dominant social discourses. In particular, three broad discourses are relevant:

- *the discourse of the participant's employer,* particularly in terms of a required professional role and focus and a bureaucratic approach to professional ethics (McCulloch and Tett, 1999) in youth service practices;
- *the discourse of recent and current UK governments,* particularly those neo-liberal discourses which focus on improving outcomes for young people and which focus on performativity (Ball, 2008) in the workplace and the necessity for austerity measures and cost cutting;
- *the discourse of higher education,* to both function within the climate of these first two discourses, whilst offering a critical voice of resistance.

To varying extents, the individual narratives might be expected to reflect these discourses. However the focus of the research and hence the methodological stance taken is to explore narratives in context, rather than the context and associated discourses explicitly.

As previously acknowledged (see section 1.1), the process of HE based professional development experienced by the participants as students, is positioned to facilitate an exploration of assumptions, a critical examination of actions, and an opening up to the possibility of personal paradigm transformation in order to support professional agency and autonomy. However, given that the gaining of 'professional status' for most involves assessment against externally approved professional standards, students

on the FdA are inevitably required to demonstrate a level of individual reflexivity which in itself reflects a personalised analysis of discourse.

In considering how a discourse analysis methodology might inform a more integrative research approach, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, p.4) propose that "multiperspectival work is not only permissible but positively valued" and go on to suggest:

> while the content of the package should form an integrated whole, it is possible to create one's own package by combined elements from different discourse analysis perspectives and if appropriate, non-discourse analysis perspectives
>
> (ibid)

To some extent then, this is reflected in the processes of both 'story telling' through the extended interviews, as well through transcript analysis following each interview. In this context, perhaps it is more accurate to consider the methodology of this research as reflecting elements of a more generalised *thematic content analysis* approach (Anderson, 2007), which, whilst embodying elements of discourse analysis, takes an approach which focuses more on individual narratives in context, rather than on contextual discourses.

3.5   Autoethnography

The processes of self-observation, reflection (particularly through writing) and self as research focus, are fundamentally auto-ethnographic processes (Hayano, 1979). Whilst this research does not solely focus on the participants' or my own written narratives, elements of autoethnography are evident in the integrative perspective adopted here, particularly in relation to the email exchange undertaken with participants following exchange of interview transcriptions. In reflecting on my own stance as a practitioner-researcher, I have also included a brief piece of autoethnographic writing in order to connect with and critically explore my own experiences of professionality and affordances of narrative capital (see chapter 8),

reflecting hopefully Ellis's (2004, p.46) suggestion that "personal narratives propose to understand a self or some aspect of a life as it intersects with a cultural context".

In its relatively brief history, autoethnography has more traditionally positioned itself in opposition to more analytical ethnographies and is possibly best described as *evocative autoethnography* (Ellis, 1997). In contrast, Anderson (2006) proposes an *analytic autoethnography,* which seeks to develop broader theoretical understanding of the social field the subject-researcher inhabits. Anderson goes further, describing the analytical autoethnographer as a "complete member researcher" (2006, p.378), researching their own experience and self within their own ethnographic field. This has a resonance for me as a former youth services professional, whose own narrative embraces various professional meanderings, now researching the field I once more fully inhabited. (See section 4.4 for discussion of 'insider researcher' issues.)

3.6   Co-construction and issues of reflexivity

Ellis (2008, p.84) describes co-constructed narratives as focusing on "the interactional sequences by which interpretations of lived experiences are constructed, coordinated, and solidified into stories", noting that "this mode of doing research provides an alternative to traditional interviewing, especially when the topic under consideration is emotionally charged, personal, and sensitive" (ibid). Whilst in this enquiry, the focus of the research is the participant's own narrative, the lived professional lives are ones which I have participated in; within the context of the participant's experience as a HE student and in both the interviews and post-interview analyses, I took the role of a 'relational partner' offering my own reflections on the participant's experience, epiphanies and developing narrative.

In this sense, the portrayals presented in chapter 6 may be regarded as co-constructed narratives, each embodying a *journeying* of experience and learning. Of these journeying processes, Brew (2001, p.280) notes:

the activities in which the researcher engages, whether or not they appear to have a direct bearing, are viewed as relevant to research because they inform the life issues which are the focus of interest. The researcher grows or is transformed by this. The content or topic of the investigation is less important than the issues or underlying questions posed, or by the ways in which they dovetail with the researcher's life or career. The researcher is central to the focus of awareness.

In acknowledging my role as researcher, consciously engaging as co-constructor in each participant's narrative, it is therefore important also to reflect on issues of reflexivity. Shacklock and Smyth (1998, p.6) posit "a researcher can, through the possession of critical knowledge about the research process be placed in an empowered position to recognise and transform constraints implicit in the research process" and go further to suggest "the process of reflexivity is an attempt to identify, do something about, and acknowledge the limitations of the research" (p.7), whilst Nightingale and Cromby (1999, p.228) highlight the importance of:

an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research.

This theme is developed further by Willig (2001, p.10), who differentiates between personal and epistemological reflexivity:

'Personal reflexivity' involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research. It also involves thinking about how the research may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers. 'Epistemological reflexivity' requires us to engage with questions such as: How has the research question defined and limited what can be 'found?' How has the design of the study and the method of analysis 'constructed' the data and the findings? How could the research question have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation?

This differentiation between personal and epistemological reflexivity is subtle in relation to this enquiry. At a personal level, I am required to maintain awareness of how my professional assumptions, values and experiences have shaped the research (through being a youth worker, psychotherapist and HE lecturer) and at an

epistemological level, how the phrasing and forming of the research aims and focus and the developed methodological approach have shaped and 'contained' the data and emerging findings. These themes are revisited in chapter 9.

3.7   Conclusions

In concluding this chapter, and in providing a link to the following chapter on methods and ethical considerations, Friere's (1972) theory of *dialogic action* will be briefly considered. In processes where in dialogue with others, we create and recreate ourselves (in this context of this enquiry, focusing on the professional self), issues of purpose and power are of fundamental importance. For Friere, the purpose of dialogic action is always to reveal and make explicit truth and understanding (including social and political contradictions), ultimately leading to liberation – the process of conscientization. At the heart of this process is the intrinsic position of power and influence of the facilitator or educator in relation to that of the subject – in this case the research participant. The role I held as a tutor and programme leader has a different purpose and methodology to that I hold as a researcher. However the history and inter-personal dynamic between myself and each participant, becomes embodied in the 'in-the-moment' relationship and associate levels of trust and interdependence which are clearly at the heart of the research methodology. Such issues will be considered in more detail in the next chapter.

4.   Methods, conduct and ethics

4.1   Introduction to the data collection process

Ex-students from the FdA WYP and BA(Hons) PSLD, were invited to participate by email. Practitioners were selected from amongst those who were:

- no longer current students at the University of Brighton; *and were*
- living and working locally; *and were*
- working in a professional role allied to that which they were in when they studied at University.

Using a purposive sampling approach previously discussed (section 3.1), from a total of 21 possible participants, seven were selected to reflect the generalised range of roles and experiences of those having studied on the FdA WYP and the associated BA(Hons) Professional Studies in Learning and Development 'top-up' route. One possible participant (who was pregnant at the time and about to go on maternity leave) was selected to pilot the initial interview phase, which was then continued (with some minor modifications) with remaining sample of six.

Participants were interviewed twice. The first scoping interview was based broadly on *"tell me your story…"* A letter of consent (Appendix 1), emailed prior to the first interviewed and signed at the commencement of the first interview, detailed three questions:

- *How did you come to be working within young people's services? What were the key events, processes, milestones along the way?*
- *What is it that makes you who you are 'professionally'? What would you say have been the most significant factors in developing your own 'professional identity'?*
- *Thinking particularly about becoming professionally qualified, what relationships and interactions have been most influential in your own professional development*

and formation process? What was it about those relationships and interactions which particular influenced your development?

The interview process was interactive and responsive. My questioning, reflection and clarification, responded directly to the focus and direction of the participant's presenting narrative. The directive interventions I made were intended to move the focus of the questioning on, ensuring coverage of the three areas of questioning outlined above. However, as discussed in chapter 3, I was not a 'neutral' interviewer. Interpretations and analyses were offered and explored collaboratively, usually in the sense of considering and negotiating connections between narrative threads. Interviews were held either in university offices or in the participant's own home (according to the participant's preference) and lasted usually between 80 and 90 minutes each.

Following the first interview, the transcribed text was sent by email to the participant who was asked to reflect on themes discussed and consider starting points for the second interview. Hence, the starting point questions for the second, follow-up interview were broadly *"what did we cover in the first interview that you think was particularly significant or important…"* and *"can I ask you some more about …"* The focus for the second interview was negotiated and further reflection and collaborative analyses entered into through email exchanges (copies kept, as further sources of data), telephone conversations (notes taken) and occasional, brief, face-to-face encounters at the university campus where I am based (notes taken).

Following the second interview, the process of transcription and collaborative reflection and analysis was repeated. Hence the data for this research comprises the transcribed interview texts, collaborative email exchanges, notes taken during telephone conversations and face to face encounters. My own research diary was also considered as a source of data and a point of reflection on data collection, methodology and data analysis.

The interviews were recorded on a small, digital audio recorder and were transcribed as Word documents. All data was stored in a password protected, virtual 'cloud' facility and on a data stick, stored in locked drawer in my office on university premises. Paper copies of 'in progress' coded transcripts for further analysis, were stored in a locked drawer at my home.

4.2   Ethical considerations

In broad terms, ethical considerations in this research relate to:

- *deontological issues:* of duty and accountability (including regulatory requirements) – to the participants, to my employer, to the community of youth service professionals and to the wider academy;
- *individual rights:* of those engaged directly in the research process (the participants) and those implicated explicitly and implicitly in the processes and/or products of data collection;
- *consequential issues:* the outcomes and affordances of the research process – in terms of the specific product(s) and any wider utility and/or impact

These three considerations reflect the basic ethical principles of *The Belmont Report* (U.S. Department of Health & Human Sciences, 1979), which have been adopted (e.g. Lancaster University, no date) as fundamental principles of general social research ethics:

- Respect for persons: *treating people as autonomous agents; protecting the vulnerable*
- Beneficence: *doing no harm and maximising beneficial outcomes for society; balancing risks and benefits*
- Justice: *treating human beings as equals: not being exploitative, distributing risks and benefits fairly*

In addition, the research was conducted in accordance with the Institute for Youth Work's *Code of Ethics* (IYW, 2013b).

Key instrumental issues are now explored, before moving on to consider more interpersonal and process issues arising from the particular context, focus and methodology of the enquiry, reflecting the above considerations and principles.

4.3   Ethical approval

With reference to the University's *Ethics and Governance* (UoB Research Office, 2010), this research was granted approval at the level of Tier 1 and as such it was judged as not presenting more than minimal ethical risk.

The University's *Guidance on initial scrutiny of research proposals* (ibid) identifies the following ethical principles

- Participants will be fully informed both verbally and via an information sheet regarding the purpose of the study and how it will be carried out, including full details of what their involvement will entail.
- It is clear to participants that their participation is voluntary, and they may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.
- Where possible, participants will give their consent to taking part by signing a consent form.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place for the collection, handling and storage of data, and issues of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy have been considered.
- Any questionnaires, interview questions or recruitment posters, leaflets or letters to be used in the study are or will be clearly written in language suitable for the target audience and worded in a way which is unlikely to cause offence or distress to participants.
- Where the research is likely to involve participants who might not adequately understand verbal or written information given in English, arrangements will be made for translation of recruitment materials and information sheets, and provision of interpreters for verbal communication.

At the design stage, at the point of Research Plan Approval and throughout the process of the research enquiry, these principles were adhered to.

In addition, in judging whether a research proposal should be referred to greater scrutiny at Tier 2 of the Ethics and Governance framework (UoB Research Office 2010), a number of potential risks are detailed. Of these, the following are judged to be relevant here:

- Causing psychological or emotional stress, anxiety or humiliation.
- Addressing sensitive topics, such as beliefs, painful reflections or traumas, experience of violence or abuse, illness, sexual behaviour, illegal or political behaviour, or people's gender or ethnic status.

The potential risk to participants in exploring sensitive issues and/or the interview process resulting in emotional anxiety or stress is considered in the following sections.

4.4   The participants

All interviewees were professionally qualified and experienced practitioners. For this reason, it was considered that interviewees were unlikely to be considered vulnerable due to age, social, psychological or medical conditions. No 'gatekeeper' permission or access to records of personal or confidential information, or documents of a sensitive political, moral or religious nature were required.

Whilst those interviewed were asked to reflect on their experience as students and practitioners, care was taken to avoid questioning in relation to those sensitive topics listed in section 4.3. As an experienced counsellor and psychotherapist, I am sensitive to and experienced in managing the boundaries of personal disclosure and care was taken at all times to ensure the focus of the interviews remained framed within the research process. Issues of power, influence and 'research as therapy' are considered in more depth however, later in this chapter (see section 4.6).

Data collection and storage processes are referred to earlier in this chapter (see section 4.1). At the point of transcription, all names of the participants themselves, those other persons and places referred to in the interviews and all other identifying features were anonymised.

As participants were no longer students at the University and had not indicated previously an interest in returning to study, there were judged to be no conflicts of interest between myself as researcher or potential tutor, and their roles as practitioners locally or as prospective students.

4.5   Insider research

There is an aspect of this research that may be interpreted as *insider* research (Asselin, 2003), in that interviewees were all known to me and had studied at the University of Brighton and that inevitably, participants were likely to refer to recent and potentially current practices in the School of Education. For this reason, participants were only selected where I or others in the School of Education have (or have had) no current potentially compromising or conflicting personal or professional relationships with them. More broadly, examination of the challenges and dilemmas posed by dimensions of insider research does raise two potential ethical considerations.

Mercer (2007) suggests that the differentiation between insider and outsider researcher in terms of membership of the ethnographic group or community studied is not always clear-cut. In relation to this research, there are two relevant communities of which I might claim membership – that of youth services professionals and that of higher education educators and mentors, although I now only inhabit the former as function of the latter. Nevertheless, there exist issues of familiarity with the participants' professional field, which in some respects enables me to co-habit the field of co-constructivism with greater authenticity. The 'double edge' (Mercer, 2007) here of course, is that this familiarity also leads to diminished criticality, although Mercer (ibid) also suggests that this familiarity is limited, in that members of a social group do

not share all the same characteristics of others in the same group and the challenge of 'rendering the familiar strange' is to maintain this awareness – whilst my narrative may have features common to others, it is fundamentally different.

The second issue of insider research relevant here, relates to Humphrey's (2012, p.572) observation that it is "more likely to uncover sensitive material about stakeholders and sites" which then potentially "poses symbolic or material threats to participants or institutions". The focus of this research however is not ultimately to present a critique of individualised professionalism and professionality per se, but rather to explore and posit a model of affordances of capital, developed through individual narratives (see chapter 7).

4.6   Power

Issues of power, influence and responsibility are central to the ethos and culture of youth services and youth professionals and a commitment to the process of *empowerment* is regarded as a core youth work value (see Merton and Wylie, 2002 and Ord, 2004). These associated principles underpin the ethical position adopted throughout this enquiry and in relation particularly to data collection and the co-construction process.

Inherent in both the tutor/student dynamic and again in the researcher/subject relationship, is an imbalance of power and influence. As a tutor, I was responsible for teaching and assessing their academic progress over a period of time, which amounted to five years for some of those interviewed. For all six of the participants, this relationship will have defined and framed fundamentally any future dynamic or relationship between us (I knew none of the participants before their enrolment as students). As a researcher, from the outset of this process I requested their participation. No extrinsic motivation or reward was offered and (presumably) those who participated in the research did so for a number of interrelated reasons, ranging from wanting to re-establish links with the university, wanting to gain insight and

understanding into their own process and professionality, wanting to contribute to wider discussions and developments about the nature of professionalism in youth services and wanting to see me again, do me a favour and/or gain my approval.

These issues cannot be ignored but neither can they be removed or diminished completely. Rather they should be acknowledged and their influence either minimised as much as possible whilst on occasions, explicit consideration of such dynamics engaged with, either 'in the moment' of the interviews or at the point of analysis. As an overriding principle, Reason (2000, p.2) observes: "What is the point of findings that are 'true', if they have been produced in circumstances that disempower people, that distort social relations, and add to the monopoly power of dominant groups?"

I hold (or have held) professional recognition and associated accountability as a teacher, youth worker, counsellor/psychotherapist and HE lecturer, where for each, the professional/client relationships are explicitly defined in terms of a respect and adherence to professional boundaries, including avoidance of abuse of professional power. At the point of 'contracting' for this research process and the development of researcher/participant relationships, the overall intention and likely process was outlined in some detail. The interviews were conducted in the spirit of understanding and development, emphasising issues of confidentiality, respect and professional integrity. Prior to undertaking the interviews, I discussed with each interviewee the semi-structured interview process. Each was familiar with this generalised methodology from her or his own experiences as an undergraduate researcher.

The relationship I have and bring into the research process with each participant clearly impacts at some level on the interview process. Generally, I hold each of the former students in high regard and my sense that this regard is mutually held. My standing in the professional field may also be a relevant factor here too, in that I am seen as a 'senior' figure locally and the participants at some, perhaps unconscious, level may have experienced either a need to gain my acceptance or approval or alternatively to prove their professional maturity to me. There are no obvious pointers

to these dynamics in the interview transcripts but it is important to acknowledge the potential for such factors to enter and influence the research process.

The lack of neutrality or objectivity as a researcher was raised earlier (see section 3.1), albeit briefly. In the context of consideration of issues of power and responsibility, this issue is touched on again here, in that it is acknowledged that in adopting such a co-constructivist methodology, there is potential for me as the researcher, to exert my influence unduly. The path I tread in entering into a dialogue that supports development of a participant's narrative is a delicate one. During the interviews themselves, wherever possible I sought to enable the interviewee to 'sit in the driving seat' in terms of directing focus, pace and depth. However, it would be disingenuous not to acknowledge that it was my influence which directed the overall balance of 'journeying' in terms of at times, shifting focus and moving the interview on.

In terms of constructing the narrative portrayals presented (sections 6.1 – 6.6), this was a more straightforward process in that I have exerted a much higher level of control and influence as the researcher. It was my overarching analysis, which developed both the previously identified and emerging analytical themes, upon which the narratives were constructed. Overall, this imbalance of power was ameliorated as far as possible by asking the interviewee to consider choices relating to the focus of questioning and exploration beforehand and to send the participant their completed narrative profile in draft form for comment and amendment.

Analysing the interview transcripts and related data (emails and other opportunistic encounters) in the construction of the participants' narrative portrayals presented here, is essentially an editing process and the 'truth' of the narrative is more ethically offered as *a* truth, rather than *the* truth. Sikes (2012, p.123) observes:

> For those who choose to use narrative and/or auto/biographical approaches … ethical issues and questions around truth are often more obvious, immediate and challenging than they are for researchers working within other traditions

Sikes (2012) continues in asserting that such ethical considerations relate to not only the representations of people's lives, but also in terms of any claims made relating to generative or emergent theory. In terms of this thesis, issues of power and associate truth are clearly therefore relevant not only to the interview process and subsequent analysis and formation of the narrative portrayals, but also to the extended theorising of the affordances offered by such narratives, presented in chapter 7.

Central to dimensions and inferences of power and truth in the research relationship, is the issue of 'trust' and the associated concept of 'intimacy', held within the dynamic between researcher and subject. These issues will now be explored in more detail in the context of emotional risk.

4.7   Risk and emotional response

Disclosure of personal details, experiences and potentially emotional responses to key people and events all require trust and in the everyday parlance, a 'safe space'. Safety in this context is usually taken to refer to socio-emotional or psycho-social safety – *by telling you things, can I trust you not tell others and not to make me feel embarrassed/stupid/shameful/unprofessional?*

As previously acknowledged, a level of trust between myself and the potential participants existed prior to me contacting them and in selecting them as potential participants, I judged that the level of trust they had in me was such that they would feel safe enough to talk about their lives and professional selves. Hence, from the outset (including initial contracting), care was taken to avoid undue psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation within the interview process, enabling the participant to jointly guide the direction and depth of questioning and discussion.

Bergold and Thomas (2012, paragraph 13) acknowledge the need for such as 'safe space' within participatory research methodologies, where participants "can be confident that their utterances will not be used against them, and that they will not

suffer any disadvantages if they express critical or dissenting opinions". In the context of the portrayals presented in this thesis, two potential contrasting but equally sensitive aspects of personal narrative should be considered.

The first aspect relates to disclosure of personally held beliefs or challenging views and opinions. The way that Robert shares his obvious frustrations with his current employer (see sections 6.4.5 and 7.4.1) demand a level of trust where he (rightly) assumes that his views will not be revealed to others in the professional field.

The second, sensitive aspect of personal narrative requiring a safe place, relates to disclosure of significant painful experiences or relationships from the past. On only one occasion, one of the participants, Kathy, makes reference to a particularly sensitive, personal issue (see section 6.5.1). On this occasion, Kathy's emotional balance and her sense of integrated selfhood were judged to be robust and I followed her disclosure and developing narrative with care. Following this interview, I checked that she was comfortable with exploring these issues in relation to her developing sense of professionality and she confirmed that she felt it was central to her narrative. It is important to report here, that Kathy does not go into detail regarding the nature of her traumatic experience, only the impact she felt it had on her education and developing adolescent self.

In recounting potentially emotionally charged elements of the individual's narrative, it is crucial that the researcher does not allow these to overly influence or dominate the research relationship. Sikes (2012, p.129) acknowledges the "responsibility we take on when engaging in methods which have much in common with counselling approaches which have life change, rather than information collection as a primary aim". The narrative researcher's aim (and ethical imperative) is to hold and maintain the 'safe space', whilst avoiding therapeutic collusion – *if you tell me more, maybe you'll feel better and I can help you more…* I hope and trust my experience as a psychotherapist stands me in good stead in maintaining my role as a researcher.

5. Thematic analysis

Coded analysis[9] of all material (interview transcripts and email) was developed from both anticipated themes relating to the original research aims (themes 5.1 – 5.3 below and relating to aims 1.4.1 – 1.4.3) and emerging themes (themes 5.4 – 5.6 below). These coded themes of analysis reflect those themes explored in the literature review (chapter 2).

In developing the six practitioner portrayals, the following coded themes were identified and adopted as common framework for each:

5.1 Coming into the work – steps towards professionalism

Each interviewee has their own story – a sequence of events, some planned, some 'accidental', which preceded their entry into beginning to work with young people and then their subsequent embarkation into professional training and recognition. Within the telling of this story is a reclamation of their past selves and then placing this in the context of their present and future, professional selves.

5.2 Relationships and personal interventions (including professional mentoring)

Key relationships play a significant part in each person's story – both in terms of their entry into the work and subsequent journeying through their professional development. Specific supervisory or professional mentoring relationships are explored, including the role of university tutors and peers. The concept of 'role modelling' as part of a process towards becoming and/or being professional is also considered.

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[9] As illustrative examples, see Appendix 2 – Jackie's first interview transcript, with highlighted codings; and Appendix 3 – summary of coded extracts from the same interview transcript.

5.3   Reflection on professional learning and identity

Interviewees reflect on the overall process of professional learning and becoming and/or being professional. This reflection also focuses on the context and conditions for propitious professional learning and formation.

5.4   Transformative learning and crossing a threshold

Significant events or shifts in perception, ethical position or values (including undergoing revisions internalised self-regard) – perhaps through interviewees' direct involvement in study, through their practice or as a result of changes in their personal life – are explored.

5.5   A professional community

The extent to which interviewees see themselves engaged in or belonging to a professional 'community' is considered. Recognition of this community by practitioners themselves is explored, as is the wider public recognition of an identified community or profession. The role of HE in fostering this professional community is an emerging theme.

5.6   Values and commitment - in search of praxis

As part of this focus on becoming professional, becoming *a* professional and belonging to and engaging with a professional community, is the extent which altruism, right action and a commitment to equality, inclusion and social justice underpin the process. Interviewees explore their own personal meaning derived from their HE experience and their practice.

Subsequent to the development of these portrayals, the emergent and theorised model of affordances of narrative capital evolved from consideration of the way the portrayals reflected a sense of reflected past, lived in present and potential future as representations of professionality. This theorised model is the central tenet of this thesis and is presented in chapter 7, drawing on the six narrative portrayals presented in chapter 6.

6.   The professional practitioner portrayals[10]

The foundations of the following six portrayals, arose initially through the dialogical process in action during the interviews and associated interactions and were further developed through the thematic analysis described in chapter 5 following the period of data collection. In relation to this co-construction process, the interrelationship between myself as researcher and the ex-student as participant, is a subtle one in terms of nuances of experience, perspective, influence, and unconscious redirection of emotional responses between each of us. These elements result in a consequential co-construction that is unique to our own particular dialogical interaction at that time and context. I take on the role of an 'active witness' in these interactions and the level of understanding developed and response to and between the two of us in each set of paired interviews, offers potential for a deeper level of co-construction to arise. Selected threads of these co-constructions are then woven together in the presentation of each portrayal.

6.1   Jackie

> *"we've seen life and life's fucking shit sometimes and we sat with it*
> *– that's the professional I am, that's the professional I want to be"*

Jackie is 52 and is currently re-training as a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist. She previously trained as nurse and was later employed as a Connexions Personal Advisor working within a college setting. It was within this role that she undertook the Foundation Degree in Working with Young People and Young People's Services, before moving on to complete the BA(Hons) Professional Studies in Learning and Development.

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[10] Within the portrayals, square brackets are used to either indicate a word or words added to make sense of a fragmented quote or to replace an organisational name to protect anonymity; a square bracket with three dots [...] is used to indicate words omitted; three dots with no square brackets indicates a pause or incomplete sentence.

Jackie was interviewed twice – initially in March 2012 and then six months later in September 2012. Between times, we exchanged emails, reflecting on the first interview and issues that came up at the time and subsequently.

6.1.1   Coming into the work

Jackie left school and trained to be a nurse, confessing at the start of her second interview that she was idealistic and wanted to help people. Through the various career changes and identity evolutions that Jackie experiences and describes in her interviews, this theme of a commitment to 'doing good' is constant.

Jackie begins her narrative by describing how having her daughter and being a single parent necessitated her moving on from nursing. She recalls a friend who was working with young job seekers: "she said 'oh you can teach health and social care'" [1:1][11]. Then, being on income support, she trained to take a basic teaching adults programme at her local further education (FE) college.

Whilst at the FE College, Jackie got to know the tutors. She observes that this was "all serendipity really" [1:1], with her tutors commenting [1:1] "'oh you've got to do so many hours teaching we'll have you for cheap, we won't pay you, you can teach some of our NVQ[12] students'". From there Jackie's work at the college increased, teaching NVQ and Foundation students[13].

By now, Jackie's daughter had started school and Jackie needed more money. She also commented that the college "weren't offering me a proper job" and "it really wasn't happening for me" [1:1] and so she returned to nursing, working night shifts – "my old bread and butter job" [1:1]

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[11] [1:1] indicates Interview 1, Page 1 of the interview transcription

[12] National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are work-based awards introduced in the UK in the 1980s and supported by a framework of competence led training and assessment against national occupational standards. These awards are now generally being replaced by the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

[13] Foundation courses are usually offered at colleges to support students who otherwise may not have the qualifications necessary for applying for a place at Higher Education.

Jackie nursed again for a while and whilst on income support, she returned to college and took a counselling skills course but observes that she "wasn't really up and running" in terms of professional recognition and describes the course as "kind of something and nothing" [1:1]. This perhaps reflects Jackie's awareness of her need for professional validation, for others to recognise her, as well as for her own intrinsic self-affirmation.

Here, Jackie's situation appears to reflect a searching for employment, first and foremost which accommodates her need to care for her daughter but also gives her opportunity to develop her working 'self'. In an email exchange [10/6/12] following her first interview, Jackie comments on this process being one of "different life and professional experiences, age and timing – the lack of a plan and the role of luck and opportunity".

Having completed her counselling skills training, Jackie then applied for a post as Connexions Personal Advisor at a nearby FE college. Having had some previous experience of being a personal tutor at a college, she "milked that in my CV … [and] I kind of understood what the role was. And I had the counselling background and I think a lot of luck" [1:2]. Working partly in a nursing home, partly 'bank nursing' she realised her career was "really stagnating – I wasn't going anywhere and I knew it" [1:2]. Jackie seized the opportunity her new role provided and the requirement to undertake professional training – "I said 'thank you very much', because I knew I needed a degree" [1:2].

6.1.2 Relationships and personal interventions

As a student, perhaps Jackie's most significant peer relationship was with another woman Eve, who studied alongside Jackie on first the Foundation Degree and then the Honours Degree programmes. Eve was slightly older but similarly 'well grounded' in

life: "Eve was a very important colleague I think, I think we really knew what that opportunity was and we were gonna to use and we were gonna take it" [1:3].

Later in the first interview, Jackie goes on to explore what it was that Eve provided in terms of friendship and support:

> If I'd said 'I was painting the students faces blue', Eve would have said well, she was doing it as well. She would have backed me up. She might have taken me aside and said 'what the hell do you think you're doing, Jackie?' but […] I just knew very quickly with Eve, that she was an ally and a really good friend [1:7]

The validation Jackie received from Eve appears to be significant in terms of Jackie's faith in herself and her work, in what at the time, was an undeveloped professional role.

Jackie goes on to consider the reciprocity of her relationship with Eve:

> I think we complemented each other because we were very different but I think it was her friendship… she was much more organised than me and far less frenetic, so she anchored me. [1:7]

In recalling her experiences of studying alongside Eve, Jackie explores less the professional focus of her developing work with the young people, but rather the interpersonal, co-support they offered each other:

> I think we were quite a good balance because when I was going 'well I don't know what we're meant to be doing' she would organise me. I would go off in big fat inspired moments but she would write it down, so it wouldn't get lost […] I think we recognised that we were good for each other in that way. [1:7]

The other significant professional relationship for Jackie during her studies on the Foundation Degree was with her work based mentor, Joanne. During her first interview, Jackie describes Joanne as a "good woman" [1:12] but comments that it was "quite a formal relationship" [1:12]. In considering the nature of the support Joanne gave Jackie, she observes:

I went to her a few times when I was feeling quite overwhelmed with work and she was very thoughtful – she was very insightful. She was very practical in the way she addressed my needs, and also very encouraging [1:12]

In her second interview, Jackie reflects of her early experiences of nursing and comments that "what I needed the profession or the older nurses to give me was containment and focus" [2:10]. For Jackie, Joanne provided not only containment and focus but also a potential *role model*. Towards the end of the same interview Jackie makes links between what she sees as Joanne's integration of personal and professional values and personal and professional selfhood:

she had integrated it and was embodying it [and] by going to university, learning those things, putting them into practice for years and years and years, you know making mistakes and actually eventually it does start to become a part of you [2:13]

Jackie makes this point explicitly in her first interview: "the woman she is and the role that she is had merged" and "she was a true mentor - I mean I could look up to her and say 'I'd like to be like that'" [1:13].

Throughout her reflection on key relationships, Jackie refers to the place of values, both in relation to her own identity but also in terms of contributions to the broader professionalisation of services for young people.

I really did feel that actually what I brought and what I valued was really valued by the university and by the course and [...] I think that is something that you do communicate, Mark, I really do and it certainly was communicated to us and it was understood by us and we all knew in our hearts and I know the others had that in their hearts because we sort of said it to each other [2:10]

In considering these differing significant professional relationships – with Eve, Joanne, myself and the other tutors – throughout Jackie is concerned most with *core* qualities and attributes such as faith, respect, 'goodness' and ethical practice.

6.1.3   Reflection on professional learning and identity

Early on in the first interview, Jackie reveals awareness of her own internal, motivation for self-development "I realised how clever I was" [1:1] and "I wasn't going anywhere […] I knew I needed a degree" [1:2]. Jackie's ability to reflect on and assess accurately her own professional needs is highlighted when she goes on to comment on the opportunity to study at university:

> Jackie: It's amazing to think about it now that some people didn't want to do that whereas I just knew that was my ticket really.
>
> MP: In what way?
>
> Jackie: I suppose we're talking about professionalism. I had all these skills and years of experience in nursing but I'd been out of it with nursing. [1:2]

Hence for Jackie, the move to re-train in working with young people is a progression from nursing and is more aligned to how she began to regard what might be termed her new 'professional selfhood':

> I think at that time my motivation for that job was that I wanted really out of nursing and I wanted to go more towards counselling because I'd done the counselling course and I thought right this is much more of a pastoral role [1:2]

Jackie's reflection on self and agency goes further in recognising that the opportunity to undergo professional training also presented an opportunity for her employer and for what was at the time, an embryonic Connexions service, to shape the emerging professional role:

> I like to think that it was really good for the college as well and for Connexions because I think actually there was enough..., not really knowing what the job was, and there was enough maturity and experience in me, plus the guidance of the course to actually create something really quite new and positive [1:3]

As well as being explicit about her professional selfhood, Jackie also explores how her personal experiences and self-concept were equally at the fore when embarking on the Foundation Degree:

> I've got to make this life for myself and I think one of the defining things about me as the woman I am is the fact that I've raised a child alone and I have been a single parent. I think that has moulded me in many, many ways. […] I didn't have a family that had much money, that wasn't the background I came from, but what I did know was that I was bright [and] that the one thing that was gonna get me through was me and that I needed to develop me because there was nothing else to develop. [1:3]

Jackie moved on to consider the extent to which her experience of studying at university, compared to previous learning, had fostered this awareness of and reflection on professional selfhood:

> There was spaciousness to it [and] it taught me to respect my own thinking because I think I'd always been quite contained and the way that I thought and the ideas that I had weren't valued in those circumstances; whereas they were being valued in this role and in this course. [1:6]

The sense of validation Jackie articulates here reflects a *person-centred* ethos of learning and parallels the process of facilitating agency and self-empowerment at the heart of youth services. Jackie reinforces this:

> Obviously there was a very clear framework of what we were going to learn but within that there was still that very exploratory nature of the course at the heart so it wasn't just 'you will come out like this'. It was 'you will have learnt these things but the meaning of those things to you will be… we'll find out' [1:9]

In reflecting on the process of becoming 'professional' Jackie appears to reject this concept in some ways and refers instead to the notion of 'vocation':

> When I started nursing it was a 'vocation'. It's a really old fashioned term now but it really was that I want to be a nurse I want to help people. If you say that now it's like 'oh, don't you want to be a professional?' No, I just want to help people. I think really at the heart of it for me it's about a vocation [1:14]

Jackie suggests that the concept of 'vocation' has become a little discredited; however the notion of altruistic endeavour is not necessarily at odds with professionalism or professional recognition. At the end of her second interview, Jackie alludes to a relationship between social class and professionalism, when she asserts:

> [Having a] vocation seems to be not good enough to go to university - it's something you do with your hands, you know, not very bright. Whereas the clever people go to university and I think that really somehow really rankles me because I think vocation's become the dirty work […] whereas profession is for the intelligent, bright ones who have got a future [2:15]

For Jackie, "a vocation was about the actual job and the meaning of the job and what it would involve and what it would mean for me as a human being with other human beings" [2:1] and "the shittier the clients got, in some ways the more I was being… the more that was being asked of me as a human being" [2:4]. Hence, the humanity of the work, the altruistic commitment to service is at the heart of Jackie's professional self-concept: "there was a sense of it in my being – that it was quite noble and having integrity" [2:1].

6.1.4   Transformative learning and crossing a 'threshold'

In considering her own professionalisation, Jackie observes that she developed from professional 'adolescence' to professional 'adulthood':

> I was going through a bit of a teenage rebellion with it but I still feel that nursing, now that I'm a fully grown adult, I can appreciate what nursing gave me [1:4]

Jackie continues, describing a state of professional 'becoming' and 'arrival':

> I do think we are all in a state of becoming. I do think that. I've arrived so many times in my life I don't think I'm just not going to do it anymore because I just think there are platforms and you move on […] what I think is beginning to happen is that I'm beginning to not care, so maybe I'm near to arriving! [1:8]

Hence, for Jackie a state of 'being' is acknowledged to be associated with a particular identity or status:

> I can remember being eighteen and it was the first ward that I ever worked on, and I can remember being with a patient that was dying - I'd never seen anyone die before. We'd made him comfortable and we left him there and I could have left him but I just thought I can't leave him, I can't leave this man. And I was terrified and oh my God what's he going to do, I was just a kid really but I remember thinking that's my job, I'm the nurse! [1:13]

Jackie articulates further this 'felt sense' or shift in her internalised professional self-concept:

> and I can remember this silent communication from my heart to his and I remember it so clearly and just saying 'I can't go with you but I'll walk to the door' - and that transformed me as a human being [1:14]

At the end of her second interview, Jackie returns again to the nature of transformative learning and the place it occupies in her professional selfhood in terms of working with others:

> And there are times when I feel [...] a light's gone on and something is happening between you both [...] and what it is, is you are receiving as much as you're giving but what you've got is years of doing this so actually you can really give something quite delicious. It's lovely and there's nothing better than giving, there really isn't [2:13]

Again, Jackie refers to the metaphorical 'light' and the 'enlightenment' process – which she is now able to *see* with clarity, her professional identity and selfhood.

6.1.5   A professional community

Jackie's perception of her professional self in her own terms and the process through which she has journeyed and arrived or come into this state, is articulated clearly throughout her interviews. However, her membership or identification with a specific

and defining 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998, 2006) is only considered in relationship to the role of the course in providing a vehicle and opportunity for such a community to develop.

In her first interview, Jackie recalls the way that emerging governmental policy had further shaped what was an embryonic, and hence fragile, profession:

> What was really interesting about that time, I mean it almost seems like, I mean it's heart breaking now when you look at how things are and it wasn't exactly a revolution that was going on, but when we were on the course it was a very particular moment because we were waiting for this paper to come out […] and how will this mould and how will we interpret this [1:5]

In the same interview, Jackie continues to point to the role of the course in nurturing this community as a development from more traditional youth work:

> It was almost like OK we're not going to call you doctors anymore – we're going to call you medical practitioners. You're not going to be youth workers you're going to be Connexions workers. So actually it really felt to me … because I think that you had a vision […] and I got the sense when I read those social policy documents there were those with vision who had obviously seen the limitations of youth work and wanted something new [1:10]

As well as the course providing an environment for facilitating the development of a community of practice, Jackie also acknowledges her own and other practitioners' roles in establishing this community in the workplace:

> I could see the vision happening because I was working alongside the people that were administering the EMA[14] and I was networking because the whole thing was about networking and so I was networking with those people saying "refer them to me" [1:11]

However, Jackie also observes that this community of practice was not universal and:

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[14] Education Maintenance Allowance – financial support paid directly to an FE student whose family income was below a given threshold

> I met a lot of really lazy Connexions workers, I really did, who were just milking it. And they were crap. But they were people who hadn't done the course that we'd done. I just thought they didn't have vision [1:10]

For Jackie, it is the absence of engaging with exploration and discovery and of shared vision and values that separates some practitioners from engaging with and belonging to this community. In thinking about others who may take on similar roles to the one she occupied, Jackie is also mindful of the need for an ethical framework and professional boundaries to be established:

> If they're not contained by ethics and professional boundaries and limitations on how they actually relate to their clients, [they] could cause havoc for those clients by well-meaning good-heartedness [2:8]

Jackie has since moved on from her former role and observes, perhaps with nostalgia, "I've lost touch with those people, I'd be really interested in how they've adapted to all the shit we have to deal with now" [1:5], although, she still refers to some aspect of shared values and identity in her use of 'we' – perhaps in the sense of a wider community of practice – of practitioners committed to a principled 'service'.

6.1.6 Values and commitment: in search of praxis

Emerging through all the interviews and email exchanges with Jackie is the issue of integration of the personal and professional self – and how this integration is the defining essence of professionalism and professional selfhood. Early in her first interview, she presents, with significant clarity, how the Connexions post provided a professional role where:

> those parts of me that aren't a professional, those parts of me that are Jackie the human being and those qualities within me that I think are my greatest strengths and what I like most about myself and I think that had been contained by nursing, were finally liberated [1:4]

Jackie continues, elaborating on these qualities which she feels are central to her professional self: "I can be extremely rough and ready but I can also be extremely subtle and very refined and they're all me and it's delicious" [1:4]. The relish with which Jackie embraces her 'roundedness' as a person is infectious and reflects the importance she places on being authentic or 'real' as a human first and foremost, as opposed to the distance that is sometimes implied by the term 'professional'.

In exploring further the issue of values and principles used as reference points for professionalism and ethical practice, Jackie identifies 'respect' as key:

> It's something I've learnt over years that I've really loved people but I've not respected them and so relationships have failed or petered out or whatever. And 'respect' I think is as important as 'love', I've discovered within me [1:13]

Jackie's reference to love is perhaps surprising and it is not something I can recall we have ever explored explicitly on the programmes at UoB. And yet, its importance to Jackie is clear when she expands on this further in the second interview:

> I think it's extremely simple and I think it's something that all of us as human beings feel towards one another. I think it's the goodness in all of us that we feel towards our fellow man, I really do, and I think that we all need and want to express it. You know because that's what makes us human and the opportunity to become more human is why I think so many of us come into these sorts of jobs. But we have to stiffen up a bit and we can't be allowed to just do it willy-nilly, we need be focussed and have limits, boundaries and focus [2:9]

Jackie sees the role of the University in fostering a commitment to such human values as contributing to professional 'standards', though perhaps not in the more formalised, regulatory sense:

> I think universities stand for values in my book, they stand for standards and standards that exist beyond political fashion or beyond financial constraints [2:10]

At the end of the first interview, Jackie provides an anecdote arising from her recent experience in re-training as a cognitive behavioural therapist, which again provides an illuminating sense of her embodiment of 'praxis':

> I was sitting with a patient this morning and this woman was sixty and telling me for the first time about a miscarriage she'd had and she'd never really talked about it to anybody before. And, I know that I would have been sympathetic at twenty five and I know I would have done a good job but actually, we were two gnarled older women, not old women, but we've seen life and life's fucking shit sometimes and we just sat with it. And we were both mothers and I just thought - actually that substance that you can't get hold off is what was in the room and what really mattered and I thought that's the professional I am, that's the professional I want to be [1:14]

At the end of her second interview, Jackie returns to how this commitment to praxis 'feeds' her own *conscious competence* (Broadwell, 1969; Robinson, 1974):

> You know you're working with people at their most vulnerable and actually every time you're with someone that's vulnerable you're given a choice. You can either kick them or you can help them. What I've learnt is if you help them, you grow and so the next time you're with somebody there's something a little bit stronger and a little bit more robust in you or a little bit more, 'shaped up' for the job. That's good for your self-esteem and wellbeing. That's kind of why I do it [2:13]

This seems to summarise Jackie's understanding of and commitment to the integration of the personal and the professional praxis, a reflection perhaps of professional wisdom or *phronesis* – practical wisdom as a driving force for *right action.*

6.2 Mia

> *"I don't know when I'm ok but I know when I'm not ok.*
> *...when you're ok, you don't think about being ok*
> *– you only think about being not ok when you're not ok"*

Mia is 35. After leaving school she worked in retail for 13 years before moving into working with young people, initially as a teaching assistant and then through a number of learning and youth support roles, including that of a Connexions Personal Adviser.

During this time she studied on the FdA Working with Young People and then on the BA(Hons) Professional Studies in Learning and Development programmes. She has since decided to undergo further professional training and development as a mental health nurse.

I interviewed Mia twice, initially in March 2012 and then again in September 2012. Between the two interviews we exchanged emails, reflecting on emerging themes. We have also 'bumped into' each other a few times on the University campus, where she is now a student once more, again exchanging news and further reflections.

6.2.1 Coming into the work

Mia's early working life was in retail and this was where we started her first interview. She describes how she didn't complete her 'A' levels but over a 13 year period, began firstly working at a hardware and clothing store, before moving on working for a well-known, national retail chain. Mia recalls how she "loved the whole interaction with customers" [1:1].

Seemingly very quickly, Mia was given more responsibility and was promoted accordingly, along with moves around the country:

> I went from assistant manager to manager to training manager. So new managers coming into the company would come and stay at my store and I'd train them up. And then from there I moved to [xxxx] as a development manager [and] 'cos I did so well at that, then I moved to [xxxx] and did a bit of time in their head office and then they trained me as an area manager and that's how I moved to Sussex [...] I had eighteen stores across the South East [1:1]

This level of responsibility brought with it financial rewards ("I'm not even halfway to what I was on salary wise" [1:2]), in return for long working days ("I'd get up at four in the morning and wouldn't get home until nine at night" [1:2]). For Mia, as a relatively young woman, this funded what she now feels to be a somewhat extravagant lifestyle:

> Because I earned a lot of money, I also spent a lot of money and as a result of that I had quite a lot of debt… because I always knew there was a nice big chunk coming through at the end of the month. So [...] if I went out I went out (and I properly went out!) and I'd say to friends 'let's just go to London for the night' and I wouldn't think twice about paying for a hotel or a taxi back to [xxxx]. Stupid amounts of money because when you're earning that much money it doesn't actually have any relevance to life [1:2]

The focus of her work too, began to sit uncomfortably:

> I got to a point where you could do all the training but all that mattered at the end of the day, was the sales and the budgets [...] I realised my passion of what I was doing wasn't actually about the sales. I enjoyed the interaction with people and customers but actually what I had enjoyed about my job was training and developing people [1:1]

As a counterpoint to her career in retail, Mia started to volunteer at a local young people's information, advice and guidance drop-in centre and at a project for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people. Mia comments "I felt that those skills that I had in interacting with people and developing people translated really well for me to work with young people" [1:2]

Recalling that time, Mia's work-related self-image contrasts with how she (and others) see her now:

> When you're at that level in retail you become quite hard and you have to be quite sales and target driven so the people you're working with… I didn't actually think I was a very nice person at work because you have to have this image of... I'd get up every day and be full make-up, suit, heels [...] people that know me now can't even imagine the immaculate me with not a hair out of place [1:2]

Mia describes this point of realisation as "a real kind of turning point in my life" [1:2] and it led to the decision to leave her career in retail with no other paid work to move onto:

> I had no idea and I didn't want a retail job and I'd dabbled in looking at training and development jobs within retail but again thought 'I want to shift towards working with

young people'. And I ended up finding a job working as a TA[15] in a [secondary] school. [1:3]

For Mia then, her identity at work underwent a huge change. Not only was she earning considerably less ("Salary wise I think I was earning less than what my previous tax deduction was!" [1:3]), but the focus and meaning of her work was transformed:

> I loved it! I did one-to-one with a girl with learning difficulties and lots of social barriers within her learning difficulties and the general support with behaviour with a couple of other young people and I really, really enjoyed it! [1:3]

Mia had also decided "I really need to get some qualifications, if this is what I want to do" [1:3] and applied for a place on the Foundation Degree. During this time, Mia continued in her role as a TA, mainly working with young people with behavioural needs until she was approached by her Deputy Head and asked to take on the role of 'progress development manager'. Mia describes the role as being "really for teachers to refer young people to me to do one-one work on behavioural issues – issues outside school, barriers that were effecting their engagement in education" [1:3].

Echoing the way her role rapidly developed in retail, Mia's role as a learning support assistant for young people with behavioural needs also developed quickly, again perhaps reflecting her ability and the faith others placed in her:

> They called it a 'personalised learning facility', a unit within the school for the disengaged, which [...] was very similar to what I was doing before but more group work so they were all in my room together and we'd do lots of social skills and 'workshoppy' type sessions. But on top of that I was also responsible for keeping them up to date with English, maths and science and ICT and I had 16 students from Year 7 to Year 11, all in at different times […] and all with massive issues [1:7]

Throughout this period, Mia built upon the skills and approaches she had brought with her from work in retail:

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[15] teaching assistant – NB in the UK this is a term more commonly associated with primary education; in secondary education the term 'learning support assistant' is generally more widely used

I was picking up skills from the people around me. And I think that's something I do particularly well, learn off other people around me quite quickly and I'm able to say 'actually I quite like that style or that technique' [1:4]

But this was also clearly a challenging time for Mia:

I was being asked to teach and deal with everything, which to be honest I actually loved it [...] however there's an element of… I felt a bit under confident with the teaching side. I wasn't an English teacher, I wasn't a maths teacher and I was having to get the learning plans off the actual teachers, read through it and it wasn't really me [1:7]

This challenge stimulated Mia further to look for a role that she felt more comfortable with:

I then started to think I want my old role back so then I started applying for jobs and I applied for two Connexions PA jobs, one with the county, one with [independent sector provider] and I got both of them and I went for the one with [independent sector provider] 'cos they paid more [1:7]

It was in this role, working as an intensive Connexions PA with young people with drug and alcohol issues that Mia undertook the remainder of the FdA, before progressing on to the BA PSLD 'top up' programme.

6.2.2   Relationships and personal interventions

During the first interview in particular, Mia identified a number of colleagues in her different work settings who either influenced her emerging professional identity or helped her to understand her needs in broader, professional development terms.

In her first role as TA, Mia picked out the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) as being significant in supporting her professional learning. Mia recalls the holistic perspective that the SENCo brought to her role:

she was really passionate about not just children getting an education but children having a good time at school; children not being always known as the one that's 'kicked off' again. She was really key about identifying the young people's behaviour, as opposed to just them as a person. I think I picked that up and rolled with it [1:4/5]

Where possible, Mia sought out the SENCo's company at school:

I'd spend a lot more time with her than other TAs did. I think just because I'd do things and go discuss it with her like 'this has happened' and 'this' is what I've done and so she was more aware of the work I was doing because I'd go and talk to her about it. [1:5]

This relationship has parallels with a professional relationship Mia has recently developed with a colleague in a clinical/psychiatric role:

We quite often sit and talk about our cases and go off into lots of theory, which is quite nice. We have quite an academic relationship if that makes sense, which is quite nice 'cos I don't really have that with anyone else [1:11]

With regard to relationships in the work place that supported or facilitated her professional learning whilst on the Foundation Degree, Mia contrasts the two mentors she worked with at the time. The first she encountered whilst working at learning support assistant at a local secondary school: "the school provided me a mentor that was a teacher and she really didn't get the course" [1:6].

There was clearly a mismatch here between the mentor's function and identity as a teacher, Mia's responsibilities within the school to support young people with behavioural needs, and the broader issue relating to an understanding of the youth practitioner's role. Mia is critical of her school in this matter:

I don't think they had the full commitment to find someone that had the time to really understand the course and the requirements of the mentor. It was like 'there's your mentor, get on with it' [1:6]

Reflecting on this mentor's focus of intervention in relation to her own learning needs, Mia asserts: "rather than constructive feedback, it was more 'yeah, that's really good, you're doing really well' – she wasn't challenging enough for me" [1:6].

A move away from the formalised context of a school to a new post as a Connexions PA, employed within the specific context of young people's services and its associated informal learning processes, Mia's new mentor provided a different experience:

> I got a new mentor who was someone that had previously done the course and I think for me that was a big turning point [...] because I had a mentor who'd gone through the process and she was really challenging [1:7]

Mia is explicit about what it was that her new mentor gave her in again terms of specific modes of intervention:

> I've always been a bit of a 'last minute Minnie' and she forced me to [...] every week write, reflecting on this and what I'm going to link it to ... and I think just that whole process of... she'd look at things and be like 'you've done this before, why are you writing about that when you know about that?' [1:7]

Here, Mia identifies the role of her mentor in not only ensuring she undertook the weekly reflective writing tasks, but also in the way in which her mentor challenged her thinking and professional understanding. Mia concludes with an acknowledgement of the impact of this process both on the focus of her work with young people but also on her professional confidence, when she observes: "I think by that point I felt more confident in my role" [1:8].

6.2.3   Reflection and professional learning

Throughout the interviews, Mia reflects on elements of her learning process and the steps she needs to take, to facilitate her professional development. This includes undertaking further training which demonstrates Mia's on-going commitment to developing her professional selfhood and a willingness to place herself in a position of

expansive learning, as well as potential vulnerability. This pattern of willingness to shift her professional position has been reprised in relation to her more recent decision to re-train as a mental health nurse:

> It kind of feels like history repeating itself. I've built my salary up and [now] I'm gonna' go onto a student bursary of six grand. I've no idea how I'm gonna' manage on that but I've decided as long as I can pay my rent and eat, then life's good [1:12]

Mia questions her apparent restlessness and need for challenge in her professional role when she observes:

> When I feel myself getting into 'this is Monday and this is repetitive', then I need to kind of seek out a new challenge to snap me out of that. So the part of sort of, making myself uncomfortable and giving myself that big challenge, is actually… some of it is probably about escaping from that, slipping into 'this is my 9 to 5, this is how it's going to be for the next 20 years' [2:3]

Mia is not only aware of her *need* to learn and develop, but also the *process* of her learning. When we explored how she learned, both in terms of the work-based and the university elements of professional development, she was precise in articulating what each element offered her. Firstly, in relation to learning within her work setting:

> I was picking up skills from the people around me. And I think that's something I do particularly well, learn off other people around me quite quickly and I'm able to say 'actually I quite like that style or that technique' [1:4]

And then in relation to studying at university:

> I learnt so much from that Foundation degree and some of it was reaffirming. I was doing things, whether it was an innate response to what was happening around me or just because of things that I'd picked up and learnt from other people but I think the course gave me a theory to that, which I didn't have [1:5]

For Mia, the key issue is her developing consciousness of her role, skills and ways of working:

I think the course gave me a really strong foundation to be confident in what I was doing in work. There was relevance to theory, policy. Before the course I guess I was just doing things because I thought they were right, whereas the course made me think about what I was doing in a different way [1:6]

It is this *consciousness competence* (Broadwell, 1969; Robinson, 1974) that the FdA aims to foster, and Mia identifies this as central to her developing professionalism:

I don't think I'd consider myself as a professional if I hadn't have done the course. [...] I think going on the course opened my mind to what I didn't know and then helped me to develop what I do know, but then has also retained that I don't always know everything [1:8]

But Mia is also aware of her limitations, especially when her personal life challenged her to remain professional. This period coincided with Mia moving on from the FdA on to the honours 'top-up' where the requirement to be engaged in structured, reflective practice learning groups was removed from the programme:

things weren't very good at home so I think I struggled with that first year. And I think not having that reflective practice… I think if I'd have maybe forced myself to do that or if I had a mentor I could have kept a bit more focused [1:8]

Mia labels the process of building on learning throughout her developing career as "layering up" [1:13]:

I think what I've learnt from my degree and the Foundation degree and my role now with young people I'll take and retain it into mental health nursing [...] and I can see a pattern of doing this, changing, doing this, changing. I don't think that's a bad thing; I think that's how we continue to learn. [1:13]

And she touches on the desire for learning as a process of challenge and discovery in contemplating re-training and an accompanying career shift:

I thought 'well OK I'm qualified I'm not gonna' lose that, I'm not gonna' lose my degree'. I've always got that, but with the economic status of the country and looking at… I have been looking at other jobs but they all seem to be side steps and to less salary, which I don't really want - I want a challenge. [1:11]

And:

> I'm so excited about going into something new and I think because in my head, and I'm quite aware it might change, the clients that I work that I really enjoy are the young people with schizophrenia, the young people with dissociative disorders, because they challenge me and when I meet them I have to really think and I go and look things up [1:11]

For Mia, being continually challenged and confronted as a learner is clearly a motivating factor:

> I like to constantly learn or constantly be pushed to the limits […] I feel I'm just always interested to find out why. I was one of those children that was, "but why?" [2:1]

This is a lifetime commitment for Mia: "I'd like to get to fifty three and still wonder what I'm going to do at sixty three" [1:13].

6.2.4   Transformative learning and crossing a threshold

The theme of holding the 'unknown' at a particular point of *reflection in action* was developed further by Mia and is highlighted as being of significance in terms of her arrival as a professional:

> that was the turning point where I thought I was a proper professional practitioner because I felt that I'd got this really good foundation of knowledge and I knew what I was doing and I could look at a situation with a young person and […] rather than initially I think I might have been quite narrowed into one direction [and] looking at a situation and saying 'we need to do this', I'd be looking at a situation and thinking of lots of different aspects of it [1:8]

Rather than being overwhelmed by this, Mia sees it as a freeing process. Interestingly, it is as if she seeks validation for this perspective when she asks:

> Mia: Does that make sense?

<blockquote>
MP: That makes perfect sense. So then you choose or select which strategy or which option is the most appropriate?

Mia: Or go with a couple. [1:8]
</blockquote>

This observation perhaps evidences the shift that Mia has experienced in relation to a *felt sense* (Wellings and McCormick, 2000) of professional agency.

6.2.5   A professional community

Mia refers obliquely to a shared professional knowledge and experience in analysing her relationship with the second work-based mentor she was supported by whilst studying on the Foundation Degree (see section 6.2.2). Here, the key issue for Mia was that this new mentor had undertaken the FdA herself. This gave Mia and her mentor a shared understanding of course specific structures and processes, but also provided a framework, perspective and language to discuss practice and explore common professional issues.

Mia refers again to the importance of relationship and shared experience providing a platform from which to offer reciprocal support, when she describes the learning environment of the 'top-up' degree that many successful FdA students progress onto:

> A lot of the people in the groups were the people I'd done the Foundation Degree with so I think having that relationship already really helped in being able to support each other [1:8]

Until recently, the FdA was one of two approved routes to professional qualification for PAs and others in similar 'young people's services' professional roles, with an NVQ based on demonstrating competence, as the alternative route. The way that the FdA has provided the basis for an emerging, local community of practice is also reiterated by Mia when describing the relationships and working practices within her work setting:

they asked me questions about cases because we have peer supervision and I use the theory I learnt from the course quite a lot and they'll say how do you know that and I'll be like because I did it at uni and with their NVQ they don't really have that. They do to some extent but I think there's something about learning with groups of real people, as opposed to learning through a pack [1:9]

Mia pursues this theme:

there's me and [xxxx] who've both done the degree and I think we both do have the ability to unpick things more and challenge what's going, on as opposed to going straight ahead with something. I think because with the NVQ the evidence stuff, the whole process of meeting other practitioners from different areas and building from their experience and talking to them I think that has been invaluable as well. Lots of times when we go to meetings [and] people go 'how do you know them' and I'd be like 'oh, I went to uni with them' [1:10]

In her second interview and recalling a conversation she'd had recently with colleagues, Mia considers how belonging to this professional community supports notions of professional recognition and identification of 'professionality' in wider circles:

Is it enough to be able to say to yourself 'I've got a BA, I know what I'm doing therefore I am a professional'? Or is it important to kind of have that little badge, if you like? And it was really interesting because it seems like you wouldn't go to a doctor unless you knew he was a doctor. And I was like, 'yeah but then is every profession like that?' [2:19]

Hence Mia asserts the value of an externalised professional recognition, in addition to any internalised, professionality.

6.2.6   Values and commitment: in search of praxis

Throughout both interviews, Mia returns her regard for herself in relation to notions of being a *good* person, the value of the work itself and the specific focus or purpose of the work. In exploring her journey into working with young people initially, she describes how her position in retail, with a growing focus on sales targets, meant that

she felt increasingly that she wasn't a 'nice person' at work. Mia returns to this theme towards the end of her second interview:

> I was horrible. [...] Well no, I don't mean I was like literally horrible but like I think it was part of that job role that I was quite cold because I had to be. So I associate kind of that high level of money with actually me being quite cold and sort of distant from people [2:13-14]

Hence the implication here is that 'good work' enables one to be a 'good person'. Mia's passion and commitment to the work itself comes through when she talks about times when difficulties in her personal life begin to impact on her working life:

> so you're interacting with people, your job is interacting with people and ultimately, especially in kind of my last job, is trying to improve the life chances of the people that you're working with and giving them skills, which translates into kind of being passionate about life..., and so then if your life is not great, then […] it's really hard to, kind of, like put that aside. [2:9]

Mia appears to doubt the validity of her professional self to support others when her personal circumstances are unstable:

> What you're passionate about is people having skills for life and when you're not actually being able to manage your own skills in life, it's a bit like […] 'how can I support other people when I'm not supporting myself?' – So, it kind of gives you that sort of self-doubt [2:9]

And yet, what Mia understandably perhaps, experiences as a source of self-doubt, may also be seen as 'fuelling' the passion and commitment to the work she and others experience.

6.3   Caitlin

"One massive thing I learnt right at the beginning, it's about where they're at.

Let's start there and then maybe be able to work on things,

whatever they want to work on"

Caitlin is 46. She is employed as a practice manager in a local authority children's services department. Previously she had worked as youth work practitioner in the same authority and before that had a role in banking. She studied on the Dip HE Youth and Community (latterly the FdA Youth Work) before continuing with her studies on the BA(Hons) Professional Studies in Learning and Development.

I interviewed Caitlin twice, initially in May 2012 and then again in October 2012. Between the two interviews we exchanged emails and further reflections.

6.3.1   Coming into the work

As a child, Caitlin's early career aspirations were to be involved in education: "we used to have children in our back garden and I'd be teaching… so I think there was always this [wanting] to help people learn I suppose" [1:1]. On leaving school though, "for some bizarre reason" [1:1] she entered banking and whilst her 12 year first career might have been considered to be successful, Caitlin reflects that:

> When I look back now, I had no thought in it at all. It was just, 'oh someone's offering me a job' and it all looked very exciting and you know I did really well. I moved up to branch manager [and] went through the ranks reasonably quickly. Ten years of it was great but the last two was absolutely soul destroying because I realised it wasn't where I wanted to be [1:1]

In particular, Caitlin identifies that "the people thing" [1:1], originally such a motivational factor for her, had become diminished in her work, which as a result, had become "soulless" [1:1]. On this basis, her next move took her into working with young

unemployed men as a job search co-ordinator, which involved coaching them in interview techniques, putting together a CV and trying to get them back into work. Caitlin appraises:

> When I look back now I must have been so patronising because I had no experience in this at all but what I learnt more from it was actually that people don't live the lives I'd think they'd live [1:1]

This realisation proved a motivational factor for Caitlin; she comments on how this experience "ignited" [1:1] something for her: "because I thought 'oh this is really interesting' and it definitely lights a fire in me" [1:1].

Supporting young people's development reconnected Caitlin with her original childhood thoughts of going into teaching ("my lifelong ambition" [1:2]) and so her next step was to work in a secondary school as a learning support assistant – "just to get a feel for what it was like to be in a school" [1:2]. The institutional and organisation cultural aspects of the work though did not sit comfortably:

> I loved the interaction with young people, [but] didn't particularly like the environment in the staffroom – it all felt very, you know … 'those kids'. They didn't even like them it seemed [1:2]

In common, with others in the field, Caitlin, at this stage, appeared to be in search of a context for working with young people, which would enable her to engage in a meaningful way. Her next step was as a result of a fortuitous observation by a friend who saw an advert by the local authority in the weekly listings paper for what at the time was called the 'Youth Development Service' and thought of Caitlin:

> I went for, like a briefing I suppose, just to see what it would be like. They offered me six hours a week [and] within three months I had a full-time job working for the Youth Service [1:2]

The development of Caitlin's career in young people's services echoed that of her time in banking, in that, alongside studying at university, Caitlin's role developed rapidly

from that of a youth services practitioner to being a youth work manager and then a broader remit in Children's Services as an operations manager, which she still holds.

6.3.2 Relationships and personal interventions

Early on in her first interview and then throughout both interviews, Caitlin emphasises the importance of other colleagues' confidence, faith and trust in her as influencing factors in relation to her professional development and practice. Jane was Caitlin's first manager when she began working in youth services and it was Jane who initially encouraged Caitlin to apply to study at university. Caitlin reflects that her self-confidence was not high initially:

> I don't think I valued myself at the beginning [...] I think I just thought I want to be a youth worker – I want to work with young people [1:11]

However, Caitlin remembers Jane being "quite a pushy person" [1:11], telling Caitlin to "you need to get on that course" [1:11]. Initially, Caitlin felt "a bit bamboozled" [1:11]:

> I didn't even really know what I was signing up for, which is terrible, when I look back now it was like 'OK yeah, I need to do this because I need to get qualified' [1:1]

At university, Caitlin's experiences of being challenged were also not comfortable. But she does acknowledge the significance of this level of intervention:

> The bits that I completely felt uncomfortable with... or quite uncomfortable in my seat, was when I was challenged. You know it might have been by someone like yourself – other academics that might have come in or I'd have a tutorial and I'd come out and I'd be thinking, and it made me quite… but that actually is what I really like. Although I don't like it in the moment, it's where I learn the most [1:5]

Similarly, Caitlin recalls she found Jane's interventions a little confrontational:

> I did struggle with Jane and we've talked about it since which I think is amazing … because she will question, and I do think even now that sometimes she is a little bit

harsh in her questioning [but] when she does that now, I certainly don't think she's questioning me as a person. I now admire that in her cos I think 'ah, actually what she's doing is prodding me a bit to go 'well, why do you think that?'' [2:2]

Throughout, Caitlin refers to the issue of *trust* being key – particularly that of her managers:

> a lot of that was to do with my managers – managers that I really trusted and still trust now actually and that I have friendship outside of work with, who obviously saw something in me that they felt there was a good grounding there and 'with some training I think she'll do OK' [1:3]

One such manager was Jeremy – "he was someone I trusted right at the beginning" [1:11] – initially Caitlin's mentor whilst she was a student at university and then later her manager when she became a manager herself. Caitlin compares Jane's and Jeremy's intervention styles:

> I remember going to an equal opportunities day when I'd only been in the service about six months […] and I was getting really confused about this whole […] thing about PC and language, 'you can't say 'lady'' and it's like 'for goodness sake why can't you say 'lady'?! Jane's approach was 'well, of course you can't say lady it's derogatory to women' and dah de dah. And I was thinking 'I don't understand this' because I hadn't looked at the history and I'm embarrassed to say it now but I didn't get that. But Jeremy was one of those people that was much more measured and he said 'what I'd suggest is, it's about language; look up the word, look where it derives from' and his kind of calm measured approach – it wasn't very revolutionary – 'you know you've got to stop all this inequality'. He was very… 'look where it comes from' and that really spoke to me [1:11]

6.3.3   Reflection on professional learning and identity

Caitlin's reflection on her own learning process begins with an assertion of her commitment to learning: "I love learning and I don't think I'll ever stop wanting to learn whatever it is" [1:1]. However, looking back on her early career in working with young people, she is clear about her need for further learning and professional

development: "I was always very aware I had no qualifications, which always made me feel a little bit like a fraud" [1:2].

Things moved quickly though for Caitlin and within 18 months, encouraged by her manager, she had embarked on her studies at university. Caitlin again confirms thirst for learning and development: "I love theory, I love reading because it makes you question" [1:5] and reflecting on her later experience of ending her studies at university: "it actually took me a while to put my books and my folders away – they were like my comfort blanket" [1:4].

Here perhaps, Caitlin makes reference to representations of learning and knowledge in relation an internalised sense of security in her professional selfhood. Caitlin amplifies this theme, describing how her learning and in particular the place of conceptual theory, became in an integral part of her developing practice and identity:

> I think it gives me that confidence that I feel I'm lacking at the beginning when I'm sitting with people and saying things and I'm thinking I don't really know where this comes from. But then the theories would sort of... that's why I do that or that's why that works, and I quite like that, that gives me a sense of you this is real what I'm doing here. [1:3]

Here, Caitlin refers to the importance of self-confidence and across the two interviews, she returns to this theme on several occasions, particularly in relation to notions of professionality. In the first interview, she observes:

> For me it's about me having confidence in what is the role I'm supposed to perform; 'can I perform it, do I feel confident in it, do I feel confident in supporting colleagues to go out and do that role? Yes I do' [1:7]

And for Caitlin now, this has enabled her to be "quite happy with whatever role I've undertaken" [1:7]. At the start of the second interview, we began by exploring the process of learning as core strand of professional formation and immediately she returns to the issue of confidence:

> The process of becoming a professional, going through the training, has given me lots more confidence in acting my work and feeling much more confident about it [2:1]

In the first interview, I asked Caitlin directly if she considers herself to be *a* professional. In answering she links the process of *behaving* professionally with the status of *being* professional:

> I am professional in that I think you act in a certain way when you're in a professional status. That's about remaining 'adult'. It's about keeping focused on what it is you're there to do. There's that kind of professionalism I get [1:7]

However, Caitlin also acknowledges that her sense of professionality "has taken a bit of a wobble" [1:5] more recently as services for young people have become more and more *targeted* and have adopted working methodologies more akin to what Caitlin refers to as a *social care* model:

> I used to question 'oh, where do I sit in youth work?' because I'm not a revolutionary but I can see where I do fit in the youth work value base. But those revolutionaries were so abhorrent about the whole social care model, they took voluntary redundancy and left and there was part of me that felt 'am I selling out?' I kept saying 'it's not a social care model – it's still going to be youth work'. [1:5]

And then:

> Am I a professional at the moment? [...] If you'd asked me that a year ago, maybe two years ago, when I was feeling very confident within the youth service, I'd perhaps qualified say, two years [ago] – actually I'd have said 'yeah I'm a professional youth worker' [1:7]

In her second interview, Caitlin appears more secure in a distributed or diffuse professional identity, perhaps in keeping with her role as a practice manager; supervising social workers, youth service practitioners and others. She does however, appear to return to the issue of identity security:

> I'm sure we all put labels on. Like you were saying [...] 'teacher' will conjure up an image, social worker, teacher, police officer... but that's why to me it's more about

people isn't it? That's why when I sit around a table at a meeting it does very quickly come out where they're from, but it's having that confidence to, 'actually this is what I bring to the table as a person'. But I suppose other professions, professionals, can actually hide behind that label. So being a qualified social worker immediately brings a status, whereas coming to the table with well I'm actually a professionally qualified youth worker but I'm a preventative worker, you know it's quite, 'what am I?' It hasn't got that security attached to it [2:17/18]

As we approached the end of her first interview, Caitlin contemplates feelings of identity security and self-confidence:

I think there's also something about people having trust and faith in me, which helped my professional formation. And that is young people, families, professional colleagues, the community... Once you start to, people know you as Caitlin, 'she's from the youth service and we've worked with her before'. Whoever that is, once you've worked with them before and they know you will effect some kind of change or you do what you say you're going to do, they get what you do and what your service is; that certainly helped with my professional identity [1:15]

Later, Caitlin echoes this point about trust when she reflects "I think I've always had that kind of work ethic that it is important for me that people trust me" [2:8].

6.3.4 Transformative learning and crossing a threshold

Examining Caitlin's analysis of her process of learning and professional development, the experience of being 'challenged' and its associations with comfort and control appear to have been particularly powerful. But this is an experience that Caitlin identifies as key to her professionality:

It's a control thing, I think. I like feeling in control and that kind of comfort of, yeah I can hang that on that and that's why that happens and I think the further I've moved into this kind of world the less clear it is. And I think that's the biggest development I can see in myself and this whole professional... I think being a professional is sitting sometimes with that uncomfortableness [1:5]

Later in the same interview, Caitlin returns to this theme:

> I didn't like those [reflective practice sessions] to start with because it wasn't something I was used to, I found it quite exposing and I found it all just, yeah I didn't like it at all. But then that developed in me that skill to actually give people feedback [...] or seeing something different and challenging that person [1:12]

But Caitlin also acknowledges that this uncertainty is a professional trait in itself – that to embrace the 'not-knowingness' creates an opening of possibilities and the potential for learning.

> Rather than just saying 'I think blah blah blah is really important in life', and now when people go 'why do you think' [...] I think 'yeah why do I think that' and I see that as more of a... I should really explore why I feel that [2:2]

Later, Caitlin makes a link between being open to not-knowing and professional autonomy:

> Autonomy for me is about feeling that confidence to say to staff 'I actually don't know', 'that's really interesting' [...] or 'I'm gonna just check out' or even say to them 'what do you think?' I think I've got much more confidence. Whether that is as a direct result of the course or whether that's having a year in this post and other courses that have come along, I would say I felt autonomous, once I'd finished the course [2:6]

6.3.5   A professional community

In the earlier part of her first interview, Caitlin considers the role of a professional regulatory body, which may confer licence to practice through registration and annual renewal of membership. She refers here to the way other professions, in this case social workers, see the status of youth services practitioners as being diminished by the lack of a professional regulatory body: "We've had all those kind of discussions, and they will say things like 'but you're not a professional, you don't have a professional body'" [1:6]

She also goes on to consider the impact of recognition by the wider, non-professional public:

> In my personal life, you know people know I went to uni. They know I got a lot from it because I would have talked about 'you wouldn't believe what we learnt today'. But they don't go 'oh Julie's a professionally qualified youth worker'. I don't think they even know what my professional qualification really is, which is really interesting. Whereas I'm sure if I qualified as a social worker or a teacher people would say 'oh, you're a teacher' [1:9]

Caitlin acknowledges that it may still be important for people to claim a personal, professional identity. Recently she has been part of a multi-professional management training programme:

> We've been saying actually what do we call ourselves? Cherry says 'actually I'm a qualified nurse' and I say 'I kinda see myself as a youth worker' [2:16]

During the second interview in particular, Caitlin and I explore the way that professional programmes like those at university, support communities of practice through exploration of key themes, issues, policies in a way which is sometimes absent within some service providers:

> I remember Every Child Matters – to be honest it was just something that was there. Once I went to university actually, this is an important piece of.., it really affects what I do. That helped me question CAFs[16] […] at the time people were going 'they're just CAFs'. I kept going 'but this is really important' [and] it actually gave me the confidence to have those debates [2:13]

Caitlin still sees this as being important to maintain a professional depth of understanding:

> It's important to have that depth and richness in what you do rather than it being 'I go out, I see young people, I say this'. You know I go back to the office, 'why do we do that? Ah, there is another interesting piece of research that's come out…' It's something I've tried to get the staff to, cos I know that's what kept me motivated at

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[16] *Common Assessment Framework* – an individualised assessment and support plan

the university, [...] like a debate about a policy. When do we get time to do that? [2:13]

Caitlin here refers to the common feeling amongst many practitioners that such reflection and discussion is something that gets 'squeezed out', away from university and professional training and development. Caitlin describes how she makes this point on the management programme that she is currently undertaking:

We all said that it's a luxury to sit and read and she [trainer] said 'if you think it's a luxury then you're not taking your role very seriously'. And I totally agree with her and we all kind of went, 'no, actually we should be taking it seriously' [2:14]

Consequently, Caitlin has introduced new practices into her regular team meetings with staff in an attempt to maintain a more discursive, process orientated approach, aimed at fostering a professional community of practice in the work place:

I said at caseworkers' meetings 'we're not going to do updates – I can do that through emails; we're gonna use them to read reports and critically analyse each other's assessments' [2:15]

6.3.6   Values and commitment: in search of praxis

Throughout her two interviews, Caitlin is not hesitant to assert that her commitment to young people is at the heart of what her professionality means to her. In her first interview, Caitlin reflects:

One massive thing I learnt right at the beginning, it's about where they're at. Let's start there and then maybe be able to work on things, whatever they want to work on. So it's about young people having a real stake in the work [1:10]

Caitlin and I discuss how this commitment to focusing on young people themselves being at the heart of all provision, provides a 'lens' through which the purpose of the work and practice can be examined:

I think from a youth work perspective and that lens you're talking about, very much mine was always about [being] young person centred. You know it's about putting them at the... it's from their perspective [2:10]

For Caitlin, the course at university chimed with her own values in terms of its 'person-centredness': "people are really important – interactions with everybody you meet; it's very important to me, always has been" [2:4]. She talks also about how this connection to what's important, the driving force or commitment in her everyday work, gets lost sometimes:

Things get in the way, you know, as in the job and sometimes, which is a ridiculous thing to say, but people will start to lose sight of [it] – 'hold on a minute we are meant to be working with young people and families who want to make a change', rather than 'we've got to do this, we've got to do that and we haven't done all our emails'. Sometimes I think you can end up taking your eye off the ball and that's something I will challenge with other staff – that's kind of why we are here [2:5]

Hence, it seems that Caitlin has not only maintained the connection to her own commitment to young people and to making a difference in their lives, but also has a broader commitment to ensuring that this connection is 'centre stage' within the services and practitioners she manages.

6.4   Robert

"It is something I believe absolutely one hundred percent!
It's the most important thing – the young person at the heart of it."

Robert is 52. He worked in the NHS before being employed as a Connexions Intensive Personal Adviser for a local authority youth service, where he was employed until his very recent redundancy. Previously, he has managed a comic bookshop and has published as a writer and cartoonist. He studied on the FdA Working with Young People.

I interviewed Robert twice, initially in June 2012 and then again in January 2013. Between the two interviews we exchanged emails and further reflections.

6.4.1   Coming into the work

Robert's trajectory from youth project 'member' to part-time worker, drawing on a particular skill as a focus for engagement (in Robert's case, cartooning) and then from there on to full-time work and professional recognition, is one that is not uncommon amongst students on the FdA programme and across the wider workforce. And similarly, what is also not uncommon, is the way that skills get left behind as the individual's professionality develops – again Robert's profile follows this development.

Early on, Robert describes how other employment ran in parallel to working with young people:

> I was a plasterer's mate for a time and then started doing the plastering myself and I was also doing youth work. And then I went into the DSS[17] and I was also doing youth work and then I worked as a manager of a comic book shop and I was also doing youth work. So it was always there underneath. [1:1]

Robert does not go into detail, but the significant shift for him career-wise appears to be when he began working within a National Health Service (NHS) funded community health project with African-Caribbean young men. He describes this as "one of those jobs that had been created on the hoof, like Connexions" [1:1]. Here, Robert clearly draws a parallel with his later role, in terms of the focus of the work being less than clearly defined. This highlights two issues; the first being the way that 'para-professional' roles have emerged over the last 15 years or so, as part of reforms to community based services[18] targeted at the 'vulnerable' and 'excluded'; the second relates to the way such community based services and para-professional roles attract

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[17] Department for Social Security – former UK governmental department responsible for welfare and benefits payments

[18] Examples in the UK include *Sure Start* (1998) and *Bridging the Gap* (1999) through to *Troubled Families* (2011) targeting, parents of young children in areas of depravation, 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training and repeating patterns of poor parenting, respectively

or are attractive to practitioners such as Robert – where the potential for professional autonomy is high, but whose structure and ethos and in some cases lack of coherence, can result in confused methodology and according to Robert, over-bureaucratisation and 'micro-management'.

Robert focuses on how difficult this NHS role became and that it had subsequently "been pulled" [1:1]:

> There was a rationalisation process and I was given a post that was just awful, dreadful, just sickening post because it was mainly admin, it wasn't working in outreach, it wasn't doing that one to one interactive work with young people [1:1/2]

He then goes on to refer to the luck or synchronicity, in securing his current role:

> I then began looking for work elsewhere and because we'd moved to [place of current residence] I wanted to find something - and it was absolutely bizarre to land this job as a Connexions Intensive Support Personal Adviser, which was actually spit from my house [1:2]

6.4.2   Relationships and personal interventions

In describing his formative years as a youth project member and then part-time youth worker, Robert refers fondly to his "favourite youth worker", Malcolm – a "brilliant guy" [1:2]. Robert reflects "he was an odd-bod" and then immediately draws the parallel by observing "I always see myself as an odd-bod" [1:3]

If Malcolm was a formative influence, then a more recent 'mentor' for Robert was Guy, Robert's manager and appointed work-place learning supervisor during the two years Robert was a student on the FdA. In his first interview, Robert comment that Guy was:

> hands down, one of the best. He mentored me […] dealt with me on a theoretical basis. He challenged me to write things as a creative process" [1:3]

Later Robert describes Guy's approach to working with him:

He would tick you off but he would give you so much support. He'd ramble off all this stuff, half of which you didn't know. But there was a sense of a humanistic approach to management, where you treat your staff in the way you want your staff to treat young people. So there was a continuum which flowed through. [2:9]

The essence of this observation focuses on Robert's view of the person-centredness of Guy's approach, as a parallel perhaps to the person-centred nature of the work with young people.

In commenting on the tutors on the FdA and the style of their interventions, Robert suggests: "you really consciously know how to communicate – it's like a well written plot" [1:3] and in relation to a particular tutor, he reflects with affection "she'll lie on the ground, she'll shout; she's not easy – but very passionate" [1:3].

Later, in concluding his second interview, Robert returns to the theme of tutors and the role on the FdA:

It's the kind of expertism that I do accept and believe in because you've got that experience and you've proved that effective practice works [2:14]

However, Robert also comments, somewhat ruefully:

you've helped us form a proper identity; now they think they can run with it and the problem is, of course, in running with it they're making all the fucking mistakes […] they actually need you again to refresh and renew some of that learning – to challenge some of the things that we are doing again [2:14]

Here, Robert signals the role tutors on the FdA and HE more generally might play, in relation to supporting development of a *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998 and 2006) (see section 6.4.5).

6.4.3   Reflection and professional learning

Earlier, in reflecting on the nature of his previous role in the NHS, as well as on the Connexions Service more generally, Robert describes the work as being created "on the hoof" [1:1]. Throughout the two interviews, Robert returns consistently to exploring the identity of Connexions as a whole. Very early in the first interview, he observes "We were essentially trouble shooters for young people. We were like junior social workers" [1:2], whilst towards the end of the second interview, he asserts:

> it's more than just mentoring; it's more than just youth work; it's more than just a careers thing; it combines all of those things with advice and guidance [2:10]

These two comments provide useful reference points for the focus of the Connexions PA role generally and Robert's identification with this role more specifically. However, Robert also explores the underpinning methodology and approach of the work:

> We think we're the only group of people that genuinely deliver on that young person centred stuff. Lots of other people talk about it, we're… I think we're the least 'impositional' in terms of our practice as it's grown. We don't say 'you've got to do this'; we might if it's appropriate but that won't be our whole song, our song's made up of different ways. So sometimes it's about saying, 'so what do you wanna do?' It's actually recognising that, you start with where the young person is at and you bring it forward [2:2/3]

Consequentially, for Robert this means that practices will vary considerably between practitioners – "everybody works differently" [1:2]. Robert asserts that as a practitioner, at times the work can be described in "magical terms – intuition; gut-instinct" [1:3] and acknowledges that these perhaps may not be regarded in "professional practitioner terms" [1:3]. He acknowledges the "scuzziness, the fog that was there about what we were" [2:4] but asserts that the FdA was instrumental in helping shape and define the focus and methodology of the profession as it emerged:

> That's an important thing to remember [...] the course was not just about reflective practice. There were all sorts of other things, modules that helped inform; group work,

management, other services; we did lots of various, you know we covered a lot, and what that did was clear away a lot of the smoke and dust [2:4]

Reflecting on more recent developments in the service he is part of and referring directly to a quantitative, outcomes led approach to performance appraisal, Robert comments:

> The bean counters wanted to see that we were doing something sustainable […] 'cos we were recording a lot of stuff and the whole way we're structured in terms of the work we do, you know you could measure it easier. [...] I think that if you're really serious about measuring the work we do, then a client that I work with, and the case is closed, shouldn't come back to me, or shouldn't come back to our service within a year or two. He really should not come back to our service and if you've not heard from that client in a year you can check on them and know that what you've done is sustainable [2:4/5]

More generally, Robert points to a lack of trust placed in his and others' professionalism:

> I still feel a certain level of autonomy but I also feel that I've got to keep looking over my shoulder and checking things out. [2:7]

But whilst Robert clearly has his doubts in relation to the approach taken by management, he does still believe in the fundamental rationale and *raison d'etre* of the service he is part of:

> The concept of PAs should come back hard core – because it does work. There is a huge market out there for young people who, in the maze of emotionalism, they suffer the most. Everything is down to, that's where the energy is spent the most. Having a counselling service, having an intensive support team, across the piece, across the nation really, I think is a really good way to go [2:10]

6.4.4   Transformative learning and crossing a threshold

Compared to others in this study, Robert's discourse throughout focuses more on his engagement with and position in relation to the service and profession of working with young people, rather than presenting a personalised, more self-orientated narrative.

I recall encountering a level of resistance from Robert that he was being required to undertake the Foundation Degree and, early in his first interview, Robert acknowledges this:

> I hated being at university. I have to tell you, I just hated it, I loathed it; I hated it. I thought 'how dare you tell me how to... I've been a youth worker for blah, blah' [1:2]

However, he then readily goes on to reflect on the way his experience at university, shifted the way he began to see his work and the tools and process the work involves:

> I think it's really odd, it's one of those things that sucker-punches you, because after you do it you then find yourself using tools, just unconsciously using tools and you become conscious of the fact that you unconsciously use them and you're thinking where did that come from? [1:2]

As has been previously discussed, the Foundation Degree course ethos and pedagogy is centred substantially on the core concepts of *experiential learning* (Kolb, 1984) and *reflective practice* (Schön, 1983). In his second interview, Robert refers to this latter 'cornerstone':

> it was really useful as an idea, as a model, as a tool for informing practice and for getting us to stop and look at our own. I find myself even now hearing another voice saying 'you're putting yourself too much in this Robert, take yourself out' [2:1]

Towards the end of the second interview, Robert appears to reach a point of reflective integration – a sense of 'knowing' in relation to his own process as a practitioner:

> I'm hoping that in the end, for all of the mistakes that I've made and everything else that I've done and whatever I pursue and stuff like that, that there are things that I can hang my method on, whatever that method is [2:11]

For Robert, retrospectively perhaps, the learning process on the Foundation Degree provided an opportunity for professional self-realisation: "I liked it here because it made me see what the horizons and possibilities were" [2:11].

6.4.5   A professional community

In exploring notions of a professional community, Robert differentiates between a 'conceptual' or 'potential' community – the aspirations of the Connexions service as it developed in its early days – and what feels to be the climate of professionalism and community, as it is manifest within his own service presently.

In his first interview, Robert champions Connexions as being "brilliant – one of the best ever ... beyond youth work". But then, adds a cautionary "... it should not die" [1:3]. In establishing a community of practice for this embryonic profession, the combination of a somewhat confused identity with a rapidly developed procedural framework presented a significant barrier. Robert reflects on the early days of Connexions in the context of his own service employer:

> Every Personal Advisor had a huge, massive file about what we were supposed to be, our conduct, all kinds of issues around practice, models, you know... Stuff that you could read and it still wouldn't tell you what the job was. Fact is no-one knew what the job was, I think it kind of emerged, it evolved, I don't know, over a period of time. Even to this day from one practitioner to another you've only got an umbrella kind of idea of what a PA really does [2:1]

A key element in the support of a community for Robert though, was the part played by HE and the programmes such as the FdA:

> I think if I'm honest, and I hate being honest about this, your course […] actually informed the practice, it brought it in, it tightened up all of those things. It was very

loose, it was very kind of everywhere, I think by the end of your course there was this way of looking at the various models [2:1]

Beyond the FdA, Robert bemoans the reluctance to explore and share practice within his own service:

I think what is interesting is we talk about sharing practice but we never get round to really doing it [...] At the moment one of our line managers is desperate for us to talk about a piece of work – no-one wants to be honest, no-one wants to be up-front [2:2]

Again Robert, sees the culture of managerialism and *performativity* (Ball, 2008) as being to blame:

Management, because they've got a particular attitude towards staff, a very parental way of managing staff, have sucked oxygen out of a genuine debate taking place between staff, between PAs and management [2:2]

Later, Robert continues with this theme, specific in his criticism of management, alluding perhaps to a level of paternalism, which is implicitly controlling and restrictive:

You're locked in, you can get locked into a maze of activities where you're just measuring things for the sake of measuring things and I feel a bit disingenuous [...] Now everything is a ritual, every month, where all of the results, the numbers, are released and we look at how well we've done or how badly we've done and we get a 'well done you lot, well done, well done' [2:8]

For Robert, the impact on professional autonomy is stifling:

Since I came to this university and studied, the number of different tasks that have been added on, the paper tasks that have been added on to the job has been quite, I would say exponential. With different things being done to measure and it's like at the end of the day it just becomes meaningless [2:8]

Perhaps yearning for lost opportunities or highlighting the role of HE in maintaining communities of practice, Robert asserts that "learning should be an on-going thing" [2:14], continuing to suggest "every two years there should be some point at which

people come back and we review what they're doing […] new things and elements of practice" [2:14].

6.4.6   Values and commitment: in search of praxis

The sense of managerial oppression experienced and described by Robert feels overwhelming but he is still able to identify for him what continues to be at the core of his work:

> I love the fact that I can engage with young people, I love the fact that I can support them and give them something to come out with. I mean you know it's something within myself that's tickled because I can do that. It is something I believe in absolutely one hundred percent. It's the most important thing – the young person at the heart of it. [2:6]

A final reflection from Robert reveals his commitment to the work and young people remains intact:

> We did help form the identity of this – we should be going out to do this again. We shouldn't be asking people if they want us to do this we should be telling people that we can do this. We should be proactive about that. [2:13]

6.5   Kathy

> *"I feel exactly the same as I did when I first started - if not, more passionate*
> *–   thumping my fist on the table! That hasn't left me at all."*

Kathy is 43 and was the co-ordinator for a part-time programme for people with learning disabilities at an FE college when I first interviewed her. Prior to this she worked as holistic health practitioner, using massage, reflexology and Reiki. She is now co-director of an independent community arts projects for people with learning disabilities.

Kathy graduated with honours from the BA PSLD, having previously completed the Certificate in Education (Post Compulsory Education). She was interviewed twice – initially in January 2012 and then for a second time in October 2012. Both between the two interviews and after the second interview, Kathy and I exchanged a number of emails, reflecting on the interview material, transcripts and emerging themes.

6.5.1   Coming into the work

Kathy describes her work evolving and then shifting through a series of experiences, encounters, events and decisions. Initially, she describes some dissatisfaction with her working identity and where her work had taken her to that point:

> when I was thirty I did an holistics[19] course […] and when I finished doing that course I set up my own business doing treatments and I found working with I suppose, 'mainstream' people [...] quite difficult because a lot of people can be quite negative when they come for a treatment, and I found I was becoming a bit of a counsellor and I didn't really like that role. [1:1]

Kathy then goes on to describe a significant shift or turning point in her professional formation process:

> A friend said to me 'would you come in and do a treatment with a client that I work with that has a learning disability that wants to have a massage?' And I'd never done anything like that before. So I did - I went into the care home and I met this lady called Lynn and it was like someone switched a light on for me. It was just the most brilliant experience that I'd ever had. She was so excited about having a massage treatment, she actually threw her clothes off and ran into her room and lay down on her bed and was so excited about having this experience. That for me, that was it – that was the big life changing moment. [1:1]

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[19] A range of complementary therapeutic approaches which aim to treat the whole person, rather the specific illness

Kathy's metaphorical imagery acknowledges the 'enlightenment' she experiences through this encounter, which is also transformational in terms of her working practice:

> I didn't want to work with mainstream people anymore and hear about all of their problems. I wanted to work with somebody that was just very excited about having a treatment [1:1]

Following this first experience of working with someone with a learning disability, Kathy reflects on how she built on this:

> it expanded really quickly so that all my clients were people with learning disabilities [...] I was getting phone calls saying can you come here can you come and meet Martin? Can you come and meet Kevin? [1:1]

This in turn led to a further development of her work: "somebody heard about that through the college and asked me to … start working and doing classes" [1:1]

From here, a series of specific encounters led to a change of both the focus of Kathy's role and the context in which she was working. At the college, the change process for Kathy continued as her role developed from being a learning assistant to being a tutor, almost 'overnight'. Kathy explains the college's approach:

> 'we'll put you on a Cert Ed course to give you the experience of maybe supporting in some classes, but could you actually just teach?' I was very much thrown into that. [It] was a big step for me [–] I'd never worked in education before [1:2]

This was the start of Kathy's professional development as a college tutor and learning disabilities practitioner.

Throughout both interviews and the email exchange we shared, Kathy made explicit connections between her own experiences as a teenager and her emerging professionality:

I loved school and I was captain of everything and really good and then a really serious incident occurred for me when I was fourteen and it was catastrophic for me and everything changed. I became agoraphobic, I didn't leave the house and I was quite heavily medicated and everything changed for me, when I went from doing ten 'O' levels and I had hopes and dreams, I was gonna go to university and everything changed […] everything for me goes back to that, where everything changed […] how I felt about myself, my plans for the future, educationally, everything [1:3]

This traumatic incident and its ensuing 'aftershock', impacted hugely on Kathy's remaining time at school, which in turn provided a motivation for coming into the work:

I'd gone from being in top groups to being put in 'remedial' classes […] being with the kids that were outsiders – that were considered the lower end of the school. Being put with them, that gives you an insight that you don't have otherwise […] even if I think I didn't think about that all through my twenties, when I met Lynn and I started working with people that had mental health problems and had disabilities and all sorts it was like, 'that's where I'm comfortable', because I'd been on the receiving end [1:3/4]

Early on, Kathy comments "I knew that I wanted to do something that was healing or working with people, that could make someone feel better" [1:3]. In her second interview, she returns once more to this experience providing the source of her motivation:

My mum had a nervous breakdown then so she was completely not able to cope with any of this. So she was in bed quite a lot of the time, […] so it was just me at home […] but what came out of that for me, and that's what I've completely focused on, is this enormous empathy for the kids or the people that do not fit the system, or you know, who're considered the outsiders [2:2]

6.5.2   Relationships and personal interventions

Early on in her role at the college, Kathy experienced the positive impact of a significant, sustained mentoring relationship on her professional development:

The sensory programme had been very much about taking people with learning disabilities for a cup of tea and a piece of cake at the local café and then sitting in a room listening to some music and Terry wanted it to be more than that… so he said 'look, do what you're doing but bring it here' [1:2]

Kathy describes her mentor Terry's qualities and approach in more detail:

I'd never experienced before someone having complete unwavering faith in me. That was [...] a completely new experience for me, someone just saying 'of course you can do it, that's fine, that's brilliant.' Whenever I'd have a bit of a wobble and think 'I don't think I'm cut out for this', he would always make time. There was never an issue of not being able to fit me in if I was having a lack of faith in what I was doing... he'd make time and just gave constant, constant encouragement [1:2]

Kathy goes on to outline the impact this relationship:

It was so empowering and it really was a bit of a springboard for me. It was a feeling that I was capable of doing something that was my own, that I didn't have to be in the shadow helping others fulfil something. That I could actually create something myself [1:2]

Later she reflects further on her first steps in training and the affirmation of her emerging professional autonomy:

I knew that I wanted to do it and I started it and I could see that it was something, it was almost a little bit out of my reach [...] But again, instead of someone going 'oh well that's it then' he was like 'no that's fine, just stick with it, you'll be fine'. [1:4]

After being mentored by Terry, whilst studying on the Certificate in Education programme, Kathy was mentored by Lou:

Kathy: The mentoring of me got handed to Lou and she was just amazing because she was very creative. Terry wasn't very creative. Academically, Terry was amazing and I could speak to him about all the 'ins' and 'outs' of how education worked and the writing. And then it was balanced with meeting Lou who was just an art teacher who was very creative and so I was incredibly lucky just to have these two people in my life [...] You know and they were older than me and I just had an enormous amount of respect for their experience because they had been working in education for twenty years and so I felt very lucky.

MP: What did they actually do?

Kathy: I think it was that they would challenge me. We would sit and I would talk about ideas and they would challenge them or try and extend them. They would come and observe my classes, I'd ask them to come and observe them informally [...] Any feedback they gave to me was useful because I was just starting out and I felt that I didn't know anything, other than what was instinctive. [1:4]

For Kathy, the encouragement her mentors gave her appears to be empowering and liberating, paralleling the relationship she had to her own learners and stands, perhaps in direct response to the lack of faith the education system generally had in her as a teenager:

I wanted to do all these big, amazing things and so I really pushed the boundaries for the people with learning disabilities. Again, that probably went back to school, 'cos I was put in with groups of people that to me shouldn't have been in a remedial. So I was working with people that I felt could have achieved so much more than they were given credit for and so I wanted them to do more, do better. [1:6]

Towards the end of the first interview, Kathy reflects on her overall experience of her college mentors:

It was that initial kick start, someone having faith in me [...] I would have struggled to have found that in myself. I might have done further down the line as I got older, but I would have been a bit lost I think, cos they guided me as well. It was recognition of something in me that I probably hadn't at that point, or had a lot of faith in. [1:9]

Between interviews, Kathy returns again to the key issue of others' faith as part of a mentoring or 'significant other' relationship: "I think most of us need a mentor or significant person in our lives that encourages us and repeatedly tells us 'you can'. I did and probably always will [email: 14/1/12].

6.5.3 Reflection on professional learning and identity

In the first interview, Kathy and I explored the link between others' faith and professional selfhood:

> Kathy: I felt like if they had that faith in me and they respected me and they were encouraging me, at that point that was enough for me. I could cope with all the background noise. That didn't bother me too much as long as the people that I respected were encouraging me to keep going.
>
> MP: So having their faith in you and their.., well it's not exactly approval, but recognition that what you're doing is of value, was a sort of benchmark in terms of you proving to yourself in some way.
>
> Kathy: Yes and they were running the programme as well. I had ideas for changing things and they would take them on board… that was a big turning point, cos I felt like I was more official. I wasn't just a little part-timer flitting about with big ideas. I had a proper job. [1:6/7]

The reference to her role being a 'proper job' may also be part of Kathy's developing professional self-concept:

> MP: Tell me about being 'official'. What's that mean?
>
> Kathy: After I finished the Cert Ed, I was still doing lots of different things. I had my own business still in the care homes, so I was doing treatments in the homes, I was working in the evening. So I'd just been doing little bits of everything, so I needed to focus on something and that's what made me feel more 'official'. I actually was putting my energy into... being at the college and working on the programme. Because I found it quite difficult having my head doing one thing and another thing and another thing, so it was like 'right, I can focus on this. This is where my heart is now, this is what I want to do'. [1:7]

Kathy makes reference to needing to 'focus', putting her 'energy into', finding it difficult holding different activities in her 'head'. But the emotional identification with the work is key – 'this is where my heart is'.

In the same interview, Kathy goes on to explain how she experienced this sense of 'arrival':

From being fourteen and having this catastrophic event that changed my educational path from university to nothing at all, to being thirty four, I think, to having my parents see me graduate, that was it! I really, really felt very, very proud. [1:8]

Early in her second interview, Kathy returns to her own professionality:

The first time I actually felt that [was] when they knew I'd been doing some sensory massage work in the community and they asked me to come in and deliver some sessions at the college. So I went in and looked at what they had been delivering in these two hour sessions and I was really appalled cos they were going out for cups of tea or they went to the airport for tea. They would literally get in the minibus and drive around for two hours. And so for me that wasn't good quality, that wasn't making the best use of two hours with the group of people with learning disabilities […] So it was like 'right – if you're gonna give me this then we're gonna make it very professional'. [2:4]

For Kathy then, professionality relates to expectations, in this case, of learners with disabilities, and the difference educators can make. She also alludes to issues of responsibility and accountability – not necessarily to her employer but to the learners themselves.

6.5.4   Transformative learning and crossing a threshold

For Kathy, there seems to have been two significant points of transition; shifts in her professional role, accompanied by perceptual shifts in her self-identification in relation to her work. Both points seem also to embrace issues of 'commitment' – the point at which the threshold crossed is less a conceptual or intellectual threshold, but rather a felt sense of her alignment to a course of action and practice.

The first of these shifts relates to Kathy's entry into the work. In her second interview she reflects on her experience of working with someone with a learning disability for the first time:

I can just remember it really clearly and it was a moment like that, that this was what it was meant to be like. I came away feeling really uplifted by it and knowing that she had been really uplifted by it. So that was it really, that was a turning point. [2:3]

Taking this work into a college setting and being asked to embark on a professional development training programme, required Kathy to commit fully to her new emerging role:

Kathy: I could see that it was actually something that could be really, really good and I felt like…, and this is how I still feel now. I didn't want to do it unless I could do it really well and that was a real 'core' feeling. I didn't want to start something and then do it a bit half-arsed until the end.

MP: Why not?

Kathy: I'd be crushed by that. I just can't imagine… I would be humiliated by it and I think that goes back to feelings of humiliation, of being very good at something and then someone going 'oh well, you've done your best, never mind'.

MP: That sounds quite strong…, quite significant.

Kathy: Yeah I couldn't bear it. If I knew I was going to do it, it had to be a complete commitment, doing it the best I could possibly do. I couldn't do it without that feeling. [1:5]

Later in her career, the increasing managerialism Kathy experiences at college appears to challenge or even erode her professional autonomy. Having formed an independent community arts project in recent years, during the second interview Kathy begins to question the future of her role in the college:

I think that professionally…, I think my programme area is on borrowed time within an FE college. I think it's being scaled down... that's happening, I can see already [2:10]

In the same interview, Kathy sets out clearly what it is that makes her community arts work resonate so fully, in terms of professionality:

It's doing something that we have autonomy over, it's completely ours. There isn't anyone looking over our shoulder checking that we've ticked a box. It's completely

about the group of people and what they want to get out of it and gearing it to individual needs [2.7]

Since undertaking the second interview, Kathy's commitment to her developing professionality and more importantly for her, her commitment to the integrity of her work, has been cemented through leaving her college role and devoting herself completely to the independent community arts project she co-founded.

6.5.5   A professional community

Whilst Kathy doesn't refer explicitly to belonging to a wider professional community, either in the context of working within the college or in terms of being a disabilities practitioner, she does make reference to the way that she engages with and contributes to a learning community:

> I feel privileged to be part of a chain of events where I have learnt from people I admire and respect and who have taken the time to believe in me and encourage me (including yourself); and in turn I can do this for my learners, and the people I work with including new tutors and learning assistants [email: 14/1/12]

Kathy points specifically to how studying at university has supported this process of engaging with and learning from other practitioners:

> I was starting to work in a bit of a bubble at the college and I was finding that quite frustrating. Because also, it was the only teaching post that I've ever had [...] I had no perspective on anything. When I started to get some perspective I think was when I came to uni, and that was the first time I'd kind of stepped outside of my own practice and actually you start to look at what's going on around you. And that also gave me the confidence with *[independent arts organisation]*, because it was set up whilst I was doing my degree and I think it was because I felt like I was looking at other stuff that was going on. [2:9]

Kathy goes further, citing engaging her final year dissertation as being especially supportive in terms of fostering this sense of a broader community of practice:

The research […] was a huge eye opening thing for me. I think because I'd spent so long working in an area that had really low expectations and everything had been, I couldn't really understand why it was working as it was […] And it wasn't until coming to the university and starting to do the reading and the research that a whole other world opens up [2:9/10]

In turn, Kathy connects her own direct experiences with those of others in working in parallel contexts:

I started working a year or so ago with [*another community arts organisation*] […] and so it's been really good being involved with their organisation and they do things quite differently to how I've done things. So I've learnt an enormous amount from them, 'cos they're very much participant led, you're not allowed to have much input at all, which is like 'whoa, that's quite difficult' when you've been in a classroom and you've been leading a group. [2:10]

6.5.6   Values and commitment: in search of praxis

Throughout the interview process, Kathy continually links her own learning experiences, her practice as an educator and her values – in particular her sense of justice and commitment to providing high quality learning experiences for people with disabilities. This clear sense of values and commitment manifests itself in the obvious passion that Kathy brings to her work:

I feel exactly the same as I did when I first started, if not I'm more passionate, thumping my first on the table. That hasn't left me at all [1:8]

In exploring this commitment, Kathy emphasises the place of *faith* in her professional value base:

I can't imagine defending my corner on anything that I didn't really have complete faith or belief in. I just wouldn't want that, that's just part of me. I don't get angry enough, it has to be something that I feel very strongly about [1:9]

More specifically, Kathy traces the importance she places on faith to her own experience:

> I think what happened at school, I hadn't really realised quite what a huge impact that had probably had. And it wasn't until I was probably an adult, or even perhaps in my twenties that I started to reflect back on my experience of school, and even college, and it started to become a bit of a mission to..., cos the people that I was meeting that were having a bad time, or had had bad experiences at school or college. I just thought it doesn't have to be like that. Because all you need is somebody to have faith in you I think. Or just to feel like you've got somebody watching out for you. [2:1]

This has given what Kathy describes as her *vocation*:

> I have been thinking about the 'vocation' aspect of what I do and where that began for me. And I do think it is rooted in me first having a very good experience in education up to age 14, where I was a grade 'A', extremely conscientious student who was well liked by teachers and peers. I experienced a traumatic event when I was 14 which led to [*describes traumatic experience and subsequent physical and mental illness*] [When I returned to school] I was relentlessly bullied and started failing all my subjects (except art!) […] I was no longer popular and teachers no longer bothered about me as a student that was going to do well. I became one of the kids on the periphery of everything – not included … not cool … different … weird [email: 11/9/12]

In an earlier email exchange, Kathy refers to the professional commitment she brings to her work and the connection this has to learning as empowerment:

> I think I have been professionally driven by the desire to ensure my learners [...] have a positive experience of education, where they feel valued, and there is real recognition of their achievements. Supporting aspirations rather than shooting them down, encouraging not belittling [email: 14/1/12]

It is this commitment to empowerment and social justice, which reflects the 'praxis' within Kathy's professionality.

6.6   Chloe

"I hate all the red tape nonsense and the bureaucracy that goes with it

but my work with young people, I love it. I get real satisfaction from that

and ultimately that's what matters,

how they come out of it and how we work together"

Chloe is 35. She came into working with young people through pastoral support work in schools before securing a post as local authority Connexions Intensive Personal Advisor, a role that has subsequently been refocused and broadened within a Targeted Youth Support Service. Chloe was funded directly by her employer to undertake the FdA Working with Young People.

I interview Chloe twice, initially in September 2012 and then again in March 2013.

6.6.1   Coming into the work

Chloe's own transition into adulthood and her early working life was influenced significantly by the birth of her son Luke when she was 18. She describes this period of her life in what would appear to be very straightforward terms:

> I did my GCSEs – did pretty well in those. Started sixth form, met Luke's dad, fell in love, had a baby – and that was that. [2:1]

Chloe's education "went by the wayside" [2:1] and work became a process of "monotonous, dull jobs really – retail and bits and pieces" [2:1]. Looking back though, Chloe is philosophical and pragmatic about the nature of her work at this time, "[it's what] you do when you've got little ones and you need money" [2:1].

Chloe then describes how "completely by accident really" [1:1] she saw a job advertised in the local paper at Luke's school for a pastoral support worker. After

checking with Luke first, Chloe applied for the post and was successful. She recalls her first week at the school:

> I remember it was an absolute shock going and working in a secondary school. I spent the first week with my jaw on the floor because I couldn't believe the way that some of the children spoke to members of staff [1:1]

It took a while for Chloe to adjust to her new role, especially as she experienced much of the young people's behaviour as being particularly challenging:

> I locked myself in the disabled toilet and cried because it was just a shock to the system. This lad was put in my office and he'd done something or other, I can't remember, and he just looked at me and went, 'who the hell are you anyway?' [1:1]

Gradually though over the course of three years or so, Chloe began to enjoy the work. She recalls hearing about Connexions from a friend and remembers feeling that the work "sounded a bit more interesting, a bit more varied I suppose … because you are quite limited within a school" [1:3] and also "it was ultimately a case of, 'I need to earn more money, I'm getting a bit bored of listening to the girly spats'" [1:3].

Just as working in the school was an initial shock for Chloe, when she applied for and was appointed to the post of Connexions Intensive Personal Advisor (PA), the shift to this new broader arena of work was:

> quite eye-opening really ..., you know within a school you're quite cocooned and something might seem really major and actually when you go out and work in a different environment, you realise that actually that major event that was happening in school was actually quite insignificant in comparison to what's going on for this young person [1:3]

The changes for Chloe in her working practices and client focus have been substantial. Now, a regular part of her work involves contact with older, looked-after children (OLACs), and those with multiple issues, including at times, those presenting suicidal intent. Looking back, Chloe observes that:

> If you'd probably asked me at fourteen, fifteen years old, 'do you want to work with teenagers when you're older?' I'd have probably turned my nose up and said 'for god's sake, no way'. [2:1]

Laughing, she remembers as a little girl, wanting to be a fighter pilot, "which is really bizarre because now I'm terrible at flying!" [2:1]. Thinking more generally about the notion of a 'career', Chloe notes that both her and her sister have "both gone down the routes of working with young people" [2:1]. Recalling hers and her sister's adolescence she reflects:

> Both of us really did have the ability to follow the academic route, 'A'-levels, university... but it was never discussed with us as children. It was pretty much GCSEs and then it's like, 'right that's it, we've done our part; we've put you through your GCSEs'. And that's not detrimental to our parents, it just wasn't you know..., nobody in our family did uni and all of that malarkey. So it was just never discussed [...] we came from a working class background, very low income family, not skilled or anything, so that was kind of how we were brought up and there wasn't that much expected of you, I suppose. [2:2]

Hence, Chloe presents her journey and point of arrival as a practitioner working with young people, as a process of immersion and evolution – she takes on new roles which initially she finds unfamiliar and challenging in terms of the context, actions and needs of young people but through continued engagement she adapts and the 'shocking' becomes 'everyday'. This has been accompanied by a process of academic realisation, contrary perhaps to socio-cultural expectations and her narrative here reflects this ongoing realignment of professionality.

6.6.2   Relationships and personal interventions

For Chloe, relationships appear to have shaped or supported her professional development, rather than having a more significant or substantial impact. Her entry into Connexions for example, was influenced by her contact with Lesley, a PA whom Chloe first met through her role at school and who she subsequently got to know socially. Chloe recalls that before applying for the Connexions post, she "did quite a lot

of talking [it] through with her, through the whole process as well, so I had a bit of an inside agent as such" [1:3].

Once on the Foundation Degree, Chloe was given Pearl, another PA, as her mentor. Chloe's relationship with Pearl was a positive one and is the one relationship Chloe identifies that clearly contributed to her development:

> Pearl was my mentor and she was fab and really got me […] thinking about things in a slightly different way […] I think as well, because I was so fresh to the role, it was helpful that I wasn't kind of already a bit stuck in my ways [1:5]

Here, Chloe refers to the fact that she experienced Pearl's supportive influence and interventions at an early stage in her professional formation. Reflecting on her more recent and current experience of professional supervision, Chloe is critical of her manager who she describes as "very procedural" [1:12] and contemplates ruefully:

> I wish Pearl did my supervision because she would give you that whole rounded… you know that's what you need for your supervision which we don't get. She's just very knowledgeable as well. She could frame everything perfectly and get me thinking [1:6]

In exploring where such supportive relationships might now exist for Chloe, she tells me:

> Well NMS[20] is gone. That's gone. So me, Pearl and Lesley went and had a peer support session in Café Nero the other day because everyone's 'here, there and everywhere' [1:13]

Chloe appears almost nostalgic about the loss of her mentoring relationship with Pearl:

> I just think I was very lucky to get her. But she's very good as well, you know it never really occurred to me about the role that she was doing because she made those sessions completely about me and my own personal development [1:6]

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[20] NMS or 'non-managerial supervision' in the past was offered by most local authorities to 'front line' youth service practitioners, especially those working with challenging, vulnerable or hard to engage young people. It tended to be a confidential, person-centred relationship which enabled practitioners to explore their own emotional process, providing 'restorative' and professional development functions, complementary to 'line-management' supervision

Hence, Chloe's professional career has developed and arguably she has taken on an increasingly 'intensive' case load, so the provision of professional support provided has declined.

6.6.3   Reflection on professional learning and identity

Throughout the two interviews, Chloe appeared to embody the contradiction between articulating clearly the process and practice of being *professional* and acting *professionally*, whilst at the same time expressing a sense of not identifying or recognising herself as *a professional*. The following extended extract from her first interview illustrates this:

> MP: A few minutes ago you said you still don't feel yourself to be professionally… I mean you've got a qualification which says 'yes you are a qualified intensive personal advisor' and is recognised by the Children's Workforce Development Council and all that stuff, but you don't feel…

> Chloe: No, not particularly. I feel more than capable of doing the job and sometimes when you might be with other professionals and you might think, 'I'm more capable than you at doing the job.' I don't know whether it's just because of the nature of the work and it's all, you know… I get to have a bit of fun sometimes in my work and you know you're working with young people and sometimes it's hard but sometimes it is also quite a good giggle and you get some good positive outcomes. But it's all quite… you know I get to go in in my jeans and t-shirt and not a suit or anything like that.

> MP: So that sounds like you've got an idea about being a professional which is you wear certain clothes and you don't have fun!

> Chloe: Well I suppose to an element but then I look at social workers and they're the same and I class them as professionals. I think some of it as well does come around the obscurity around our job and job description. I struggle sometimes to tell people what I do because it is changing all the time and they're constantly swapping bits and pieces. If I struggle telling people what I do, how are other people supposed to know what we do? I do get that a lot from other agencies. 'What is it you do again, how can you help?' Whereas a social worker wouldn't get that, would they? [1:7/8]

Hence, perhaps for Chloe (and for others in similar roles), part of the 'problem' with professional identification is the absence of an externally recognised collective, professional identity. Pragmatically, Chloe shares how she circumnavigates this in particular contexts:

> I have to put myself down as *youth worker* on driving insurance things because when they say, 'what's your profession?' I'm like, 'you're never going to find it on your list so just put me down as youth worker' [1:10]

Aside from the issue of identification, Chloe does recognise the importance of the process of professional training and development. When asked about her experience of the FdA, Chloe is a little ambivalent at first:

> Some parts of the course were more interesting than others, that's for sure. It's a compulsory part of our training though; it's our qualification to give us our professional qualification [1:5]

But she goes on to consider what she regards as being a specific, overall positive and influential aspect of her studies:

> I think as much as I absolutely begrudged doing the reflective practice recordings, I think it just gets you questioning your professionalism. Well I wouldn't have really thought of myself, you know… I still don't think of myself as a professional; I know I am but it's not part of my everyday thinking [1:5]

Here again, Chloe both recognises that she *is* professional but perhaps doesn't *feel* professional. During both interviews, this was a theme we returned to several times and throughout I recall being struck by her confidence in the way she spoke about her practice, alongside the reticence she appeared to acknowledge this. At one point, I pushed her to explore her self-perception, in terms of her practice, rather than her identity:

MP: Do you feel that you know what you're doing?

Chloe: Yeah. I've got perfectly capable at doing what needs to be done and very confident at doing that. I just don't attribute the professional label to myself.

MP: How do other people see you, do you think?

Chloe: Yeah, I think I'm seen as a professional and I don't think that's in doubt. It's me isn't it? I said to somebody that you were coming to interview me about professionalism and I giggled... *[Laughs]*...'he wants to talk to *me* about being professional!' [1:8]

This theme is continued in the second interview, when we explore the challenging nature and level of responsibility in Chloe's work:

Chloe: You're dealing with an awful lot of negativity; we do have a lot of positives as well, but that is why you have to be quite matter of fact and quite grounded about things because I think otherwise you'd give yourself a nervous breakdown if you are not letting go of that.

MP: You have to be quite *professional* about it then?

Chloe: *[Laughs]* I *do* have to be quite professional about it! [2:9]

Chloe acknowledges her own self-deprecation and whilst this was not explored explicitly in our discussions, it may relate to her early sense of there being no family expectations of studying at university or becoming professionally qualified. At the end of the second interview however, Chloe widens her analysis to consider the place of professional training and qualification in what has become her own, specialist field:

I think it's paramount really. You know you wouldn't become a social worker without a social work degree. You know... and really in a lot of respects we're working with the same complexities that social workers are working with and we need the same qualification and understanding to be able to deliver that [2:14]

6.6.4 Transformative learning and crossing a threshold

In terms of any acknowledged transformative shift in her professionalisation or learning process, Chloe is most vocal in terms of the position and regard she feels her employer, a large local authority, has towards her and her colleagues. At the end of her first interview, she begins to explore this issue, describing the frustration she and her colleagues feel in relation to the management style she experiences from those in more senior roles and the subsequent impact this has on motivation:

> It's like they don't really value your professionalism because they will micro-manage to some degree but then on the other hand when you do need that management stepping in and supporting you, they're nowhere to be seen. So as long as targets are being hit, that's their priority [1:14]

In practical terms, this management style has been accompanied by what Chloe and others perceive as a down-grading of conditions of service:

> We lose eight days holiday through our new terms and conditions, which is a lot to lose but you know, from their own mouth, 'we're going to be so much more productive though.' They'll get eight more days productivity out of us and it just makes you think 'you really don't appreciate the work that we do and actually what is entailed in that' because we lose that, we lose our NMS; everything around supporting us as workers is going [1:15]

She goes further, identifying the consequences of such processes and practices:

> to get all the little worker ants you know, doing what they need to do in order to hit those targets – and people will just burn out, people will just flake out and they won't be delivering the service that they want to deliver and the service that young people coming to us deserve [1:15]

Six months later, when interviewed again, Chloe returns to this issue and focuses here on the intensity of the workload she is required to manage:

> It's just more and more and like today I've been to the CYPPF[21] meeting this morning – there's three of us that rotate that and sit on that. What else do we do? Substance misuse meeting tomorrow, you know and all the different bits and pieces they want you to sit on and be part of, the OLACs, everything. All we get back is 'well, when I was a PA it was all perfectly manageable' but actually back then they had a case load of fifteen and that was it.

For Chloe, this shift and intensification of focus, amounts to a movement of professional boundaries:

> I was speaking to a social worker the other day and she's got to review a Pathway Plan, you know, but she's saying 'maybe we could do that together'. So there's more and more pressure and actually we're working alongside the social workers to do a legal document that is a *social work* document [2:7]

At the end of the interview, Chloe becomes more reflective on her overall experience, both in her own right and as a practitioner working with other young people in an increasing level of professional intensification:

> I don't think if I had gone into this line of work at eighteen, nineteen, in my early twenties, that I would be anywhere near the same practitioner that I am, going into the work in my thirties, because I had a whole host of experience – I brought up my own child you know; I had all that life experience [2:14]

Here, Chloe's narrative acknowledges how the shifts in intensity in her professional role have increased over time, alongside how her own life experiences have developed her personal and professional resilience.

6.6.5   A professional community

Notions of belonging to a professional community for Chloe appear to relate particularly to the immediate work context she is engaged with – firstly within her pastoral support role in a secondary school and then more latterly within her local

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[21] Children and Young People's Planning Forum

authority intensive support role. In her first interview, when asked to consider to what extent she feels part of a professional community, she observes that:

> Our team are quite close-knit so we have that certainly within our team but I know that, I mean it was before my time, the whole of IST[22] county-wide would come together as a team and they don't have that anymore. I know a lot of people have sort of said that's a shame because now your teams are split differently and [...] they're all different disciplines [1:12]

This led us to explore whether these roles share a commonality of professionality and professional identity. For Chloe though, she asserts:

> I wouldn't presume to think that I can just go off and now be a youth worker because that's not what my speciality is in you know and likewise there's plenty of youth workers who wouldn't be able to sit straight into the role of doing the one-to-one intensive stuff [1:12]

Hence, for Chloe, the focus is on a community defined by specific role focus and context, rather than a more generalised professional identity. However, even within the specificity of her own immediate 'team', Chloe experiences limitations for exploring and exploiting a shared sense of community:

> It is difficult to look after yourself sometimes and we had this conversation in the office today because I was feeling absolutely shattered, like proper dog tired and Pearl was chatting and she said, 'you've got to look after yourself' and it is true. We all know that – we know that we have to look after ourselves in order to be able to look after and support other people around us [1:13]

It seems then for Chloe, the unifying elements of membership of and participation within a community of practice relate more to what might be considered to be a suppression of professionality, through increased work load, micro-management and undermining of professional autonomy.

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[22] Intensive Support Team

6.6.6 Values and commitment: in search of praxis

Chloe is clearly aware that within the two interviews she has focused to some extent on the frustrations she experiences in terms of managerial processes. However, she is also keen to balance this with an emphasis on her commitment to young people, the reward she gets from the work itself and the difference she can make:

> It does sound like I've been moaning about my job but I do love my job. I think that's why we all stick with it because ultimately we all love our job. I hate all the red tape nonsense and the bureaucracy that goes with it but my work with young people – I love it. I get real satisfaction from that and ultimately that's what matters [1:17]

During the second interview, we begin to explore the fundamental nature of the work and the social responsibility embodied within it:

> Chloe: When you look at the nature of the young people we work with, a lot of them, the majority of them, simply don't have the parenting to be able to encourage them to follow those routes.
>
> MP: And whether on some level, it's not a phrase I ever use really, but whether what we are doing is 'parenting' at some level, young people. It might be a different type of parenting…
>
> Chloe: Because that's it really – they're not getting those needs met from their own parents' [2: 3]

Chloe amplifies this further, again aware perhaps of how she might previously have been focusing on more managerially restrictive factors in her work:

> I love my job and I know I moan but I do. I get to see my clients and you can see them really working to make change and if you get a positive outcome, cos it's not always…, sometimes at the end of a session something might have moved but there still might be other stuff that is not quite there or you have to put in touch with somebody else and they've still got some work to do [2:8]

The emphasis Chloe places on her love for the 'job' and the process and outcomes of supporting young people is brought sharply in focus here and echoes that of other youth practitioners.

7. Affordances of narrative capital in times of change

7.1 Introduction

The six portrayals in chapter 6 are presented as individual narratives, co-constructed through the extended enquiry focused relationship between each of the practitioners and myself, refracted through particular lenses of analysis. Whilst providing insight and illumination into different practitioners' professionalities, these portrayals also provide examples of *narrativity.*

Goodson (2013) identifies two dimensions of narrativity: a practitioner's *narrative intensity* and the extent to which her or his narrative embodies *course(s) of action*. Within the six portrayals, representations of Goodson's (ibid) associated typology or four forms of narrativity may be identified:

- *armchair elaborators* who combine high level narrative intensity with lower level courses of action: represented here by Robert;
- *focused elaborators* who combine both high level courses of action and narrative intensity: Mia, Jackie and Kathy might be seen as examples here;
- *multiple describers* whose work-life stories are both low in intensity and lower level courses of action: represented here by Chloe;
- *scripted describers* whose work-life stories reflect a low level of narrative intensity but higher level courses of action – represented here by Caitlin.

What are developed now are the affordances these narratives offer each participant as a personalised, professional resource or *narrative capital* in the context of uncertain professionality and a changing (and at times hostile) policy framework. The six portrayals provide examples of connected narrative themes, which draw on threads of interwoven fabrics of past, present and future professional identities.

The temporal context of this enquiry spans practitioner experiences of entering the professional field of youth services, for the most part under the period of New

Labour's 'social inclusion' policy agenda (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004) and related reforms to public services, engaging in HE within the foundation degree and widening participation projects (DfEE, 2000b; DfES, 2003) of the early noughties. These participants are then interviewed in the period straddling the transition from New Labour to the Conservative-Liberal Democratic coalition and associated discourses of the 'Big Society' (Cabinet Office, 2010) and austerity measures (HM Treasury, 2010; 2014). Through the process of recounting and creating their stories, the participants reflect on both current and former times, largely from positions of reaction, resilience and resolve, and through doing so, position themselves for and in their futures.

Taking in the sweep of the six, contrasting portrayals, an overarching narrative emerges of a fragmented profession, lacking a coherent community or communities of practice but nevertheless maintained through individualised praxis – articulated through a commitment to ethical practice and concepts of social justice. The central thesis of this study focuses on the power of the individual practitioner's narrative capital as a resource for their personalised professionalism, their engagement in 'the work' and for their respective future professional development. Three broad functions or affordances of narrative capital are proposed:

Narrative capital as 'affirmation of integrity'
Here, the affordance of the practitioner's narrative is considered in terms of how it supports an integrated sense of self, developed through a dynamic relationship between the practitioners' entry into the work, an internalised professional 'selfhood' and a connected sense of the practitioner's values in action, developed over time. Three dimensions are explored:

- *finding myself*
- *feeling professional*
- *values and ethics*

Narrative capital as 'fuel for self-belief'

Participants identify that the most significant area of impact of the HE programme is the raised level of confidence they experience, particularly in relation to feelings of self-worth, agency and autonomy. This sense of *being* professional is supported by significant, professional relationships, the faith that 'significant others' have in them as practitioners and their heightened experiences of effective, professional practice. Through, telling their story, the practitioners are able to assert their identity and claim a personalised, professional *topography*. The three dimensions explored here are:

- *role models and inspiration*
- *others' faith*
- *flow*

Narrative capital as 'future readiness'

Not only is it important that the practitioner's narrative affords a sense of integration and self-belief, but given the volatility of the professional field and the broader neo-liberalist landscape, practitioners tell their professional life stories as a way of positioning themselves for and in the future. Sometimes this takes on an exploration of possible hopes, fears and expectations; at other times, and more pragmatically, the narrative functions to examine and affirm current strategies adopted in response to changing times. The themes explored in this section, once more drawing on the six narratives as illustrations, are:

- *responses to performativity*
- *layered identities and accommodating dissonance*
- *professional transformation*

7.2   Narrative capital as 'affirmation of integrity' – *in telling my story, I connect with, make sense of and make connections between the core elements and experiences of what makes me who I am*

7.2.1 Finding myself

Five of the six participants recount specific details of their childhood as contributing factors in their professional formation, with only Robert not referring to any aspects of his early life. In particular, these practitioners refer directly to their own adolescence in relation to its influence on their early motivation and development of their working life. These issues re-occur through the interviews as the participants develop their narratives.

Jackie articulates her intention to 'do good', when she says as a teenager "I wanted to be kind to people and I wanted to make it better" [2:1]. Whilst Jackie doesn't go into detail regarding the source or what influenced or stimulated this altruistic drive, Caitlin is clearer in describing the home environment she grew up in and its possible influence on later career choices: "we used to have children in our back garden and I'd be teaching" [1:1]. In recounting her life story, Kathy describes the significantly more personal and powerful experience of an undefined trauma and the physical and mental ill health she experienced as her body's response to this trauma. For Kathy, a positive aspect of this experience is how she has subsequently been able to feel a heightened sense of "empathy for the kids or the people that do not fit the system" [2:2].

Hence for Jackie and Caitlin the call to 'service' was strong, whilst for Kathy, engagement in working with those who don't 'fit the system', reflected possibly an aspect of projected, 'self-therapy'. This aspect of motivation is not uncommon for youth practitioners who often desire to provide the type of support they received themselves as a teenager from a significant adult (see my own narrative – chapter 8), or perhaps whose motivation is to offer the type of support to others, they wish they had been in receipt of themselves.

In comparison, Chloe comments that she would have "probably turned my nose up" at a career in youth services, adding "nobody in our family did uni and all of that malarkey" [2:2], although later she notes that both her and her sister have developed careers in working with young people. Here, Chloe explicitly refers to issues of social

class and that working in a skilled or professional role was not expected of her. This perhaps points to a broader issue of a social class based analysis of professional socialisation (Adams et al, 2006; Sturm and Gibson, 2012).

Moving on to consider the way the practitioners' narratives embody their respective entry points into the professional field, a key feature of the Foundation Degree and other related HE programmes at the UoB and elsewhere, is that they are *work-based* programmes – students are required to be in employment (paid or unpaid) at the point of application and throughout the programme of study. For this reason, students on such programmes are likely to be in their mid-20s at least and more generally are usually in their 30s, 40s or occasionally in their 50s; those interviewed here reflect this age span. As such, all brought previous experiences, roles and identities into their work with young people.

For Robert and Chloe, their earlier working positions (part-time youth worker and teaching assistant respectively) were in what might be described as less professional or career orientated roles in working with young people. Hence their respective transitions then took the form of a *progression* into more fully developed, professionally focused roles. Kathy (holistic health practitioner) and Jackie (nurse) share the experience of an *evolutionary* transition from health care related roles, through tutoring in FE to intensive support work with vulnerable young people. This transitional process reflects a re-focusing or re-aligning of roles, rather than the more substantive or *revolutionary* shifts for Mia (from the retail trade) and Caitlin (from banking).

Looking at these experiences, these three trajectories can be summarised as follows:

- Progression – *I'm roughly in the right area but I just need to develop more*
- Evolution – *what I'm doing isn't quite right and I need to shift my focus*
- Revolution – *what I'm doing isn't what I want to be doing and I need to change my focus completely*

For some then, the motivation for change came for a specific, articulated sense of being in the wrong place or role. Caitlin describes her work in banking as "soulless" [1:1] and Jackie recalls that her career was "stagnating" [1:2] as a 'bank' or agency nurse, on short-term contract work. Mia acknowledges that her work as retail manager with a considerable level of both responsibility and financial reward had meant that she "wasn't a very nice person [–] I was horrible" [2:13]. For some then, this sense of existential disorientation contributes significantly in terms of a motivation for change. In such situations, it is not uncommon for us to reject identification with such experiences within our overall narrative – we say of a role or an experience, 'it just wasn't *me*'. For some practitioners then, their narratives function to define the choices made, including rejection of specific roles and identities, in developing narrative capital that supports their chosen identity and generalised role.

In the context of professional development and public service reform, it is interesting to note then that New Labour's articulation of an overarching or holistic model of a children and young people's workforce (HM Treasury, 2003), with an associated *common core* of professional knowledge and skills (DfES, 2005), facilitated the professional *progression* and *evolution* of a significant proportion of those working in young people's services at this time. Entry into and subsequent location within the professional field of working with young people for all six of the participants reflects this professional migration within an holistic model of the children and young people's workforce (HM Treasury, 2003; DfES 2005). Jackie and Mia's subsequent exit from the professional field in order to re-train in different but related fields, further exemplifies this.

On entering the work for the first time, the practitioners' narratives reflect very personal responses. For both Kathy and Caitlin, the metaphorical language they use is that of 'enlightenment'. Kathy's was "just the most brilliant experience" – "it was like someone switched a light on for me" [1:1], whilst Caitlin observes perhaps less dramatically but equally powerfully, that her first experiences of working with young people "ignited" something which "lit a fire in me" [1:1].

Mia's language doesn't draw on the same imagery but she too recalls her delight in starting to work as a teaching assistant in a school after leaving her successful career in retail: "I loved it […] I really, really enjoyed it". Chloe however, describes a slower adjustment process, finding her initial experiences of undertaking a similar role to Mia's as being a painful "shock to the system", reflecting that she "spent the first week with my jaw on the floor" [1:1].

Returning to Kathy's story, she recounts that she was "looking for thing that I was going to wake up and feel good about going to do" [2:3] and this experience seems to underpin most practitioners' experience of the work, particularly when first encountered. For some, this experience stays with them, or they are able to adjust their career paths to stay connected or reconnect with this sense of 'resonance'.

Across the six portrayals, we see that practitioners develop narratives of professional selfhood that embrace elements of their adolescence (e.g. family values, experiences and culture) and which anticipate or provide a 'pre-echo' to their transition or route into the work – progression, evolution or revolution; and give a sense of their experience of this transition at an emotional level. Hence what is common to the individual narratives is that the experience of entering the professional field for the first time is often a powerful one. Whilst some may experience an initial disorientation or dislocation, it is also common for the practitioner to experience a heightened level of personal connection – as if meeting themselves for the first time.

7.2.2   Feeling professional

For the practitioners interviewed, the concept of professionalism and feeling professional has different dimensions. Kathy identifies her point of professional arrival as her sense of realising "it was like 'right – I can focus on this! This is where my heart is now!" [1:7]. Kathy also acknowledges that her sense of professionalism also relates to a broader recognition:

It's having an identity – it's a status thing, isn't it? I actually started to feel like I knew what I was talking about and I felt that I could be put in a room of people, that I would have normally considered beyond me in terms of their status, and that I could hold my own. I remember saying that a lot actually, that I felt like I could hold my own. I had something to say and it would be listened to and recognised. It was huge! [1:8]

Kathy's personal response to this sense of achieved identity is significant and she observes fondly:

I was very happy. […] Just to be able to actually be professional, 'oh my goodness' – I was just so proud and I think my parents were really proud. I know a lot of people don't go to their graduation [but] it was one of the best days for me! [1:8]

In comparison, Chloe's sense of 'arrival' and identification with being professional is more diffuse. She acknowledges her experience, knowledge and skill as a practitioner, but the 'status' of or being professional is not one she readily identifies with. One aspect of this is the lack of public understanding and acknowledgement of the professional identity of youth service professionals – "you're never going to find it on your list" [1:10], Chloe remarks.

But for Chloe, the diffusion of identification is also internalised, perhaps reflecting the external or public lack of acknowledgement:

I've got perfectly capable at doing what needs to be done and very confident at doing that. I just don't attribute the professional label to myself [1:8]

Mia's narrative points towards a more integrated perspective and to her studies at university as being central to this consciously professional identification:

I don't think I'd consider myself as a professional if I hadn't have done the course – [it] opened my mind to what I didn't know and then helped me to develop what I do know [1:8]

Mia goes on to extend this self-awareness in relation to what Casement (1991) refers to a practitioner's *internal supervisor*, where she observes of her sense of professionalism: "it's about kind of developing that innately in yourself" [2:7].

This sense of professional integration is echoed by Jackie, Caitlin and Robert. Robert observes "we bring ourselves – our personal selves" [1:2] in to the work, whilst Caitlin reflects on how her professional preparation "put me in challenging positions […] where my thoughts, my values, 'why do I think like that', made me actually question a lot of those things" [2:1]. Caitlin concludes that professionalism is "about remaining 'adult'. It's about keeping focused on what it is you're there to do – that's the kind of professionalism I get" [1:7].

If there is a connecting thread to the individualised narratives in terms feeling professional, it is the sense or awareness of 'self' in the role – which reflects Broadwell's (1969) state of 'conscious competence' or Kincheloe's (2003) 'critical ontology'. In particular, when Jackie refers to the "spaciousness" [1:6] of the University's approach to reflective practice in the FdA and BA programmes, she acknowledges the role of HE in supporting development of an individualised, professional selfhood. Through encouragement of the sharing of reflective writing, narrativity is developed which supports the individual's 'authenticity' (Rogers, 1961) and promotes malleability or permeability of the personal-professional selfhood boundary (Cooper, 1999). Through this process, the development of narrative capital affords the practitioner the capacity and capability to re-enact personal/professional border (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999) or boundary crossing (Kerosuo and Engeström, 2003) – the elements of selfhood become re-connected and re-integrated in response to external pressures and internal tensions.

7.2.3   Values and ethics

The participants' sense of professional selfhood – of feeling professional – is also an ethical position. Earlier (section 2.9), the place of praxis and a commitment to social

justice were explored in relation to what might be regarded as a shared 'value-base' for youth practitioners. The implication is that praxis is dependent and centres on issues of agency and ethical practice and hence requires a level of professionalism, fostered through a process of engaging what Barnett (1997, p.12) refers to as "critical interrogation of practice", the purpose of which is "to critique action so as to produce more enlightened forms of action" (ibid). This involves a furthering of the previously described process (see 7.2.2) of becoming authentic or consciously competent through development of a critically, reflective narrative.

The sense of commitment to professional values and integrity is emphasised by Jackie:

> I think there are formal professional values and codes of behaviour which can be taught and have contributed to my professional identity but these have been brought to life or enhanced by my own personal values and the values developed through doing the job over time and by having good role models. It is difficult to separate these as much of it is an inter-related organic process. [Email: 10.6.12]

Robert concurs:

> I think one of the things that is quite interesting [is that] it's evolved that way. We're doing the same job, we're doing it in such different ways; we bring ourselves, our personal selves into that, so that's what was brilliant about it. You got all the skills but you were doing it through you, you're not aware of negotiating; you're using a lot of wisdom. [1:2]

Later, Robert continues with this theme, placing young person-centredness at the core of praxis:

> It's a crude way of putting it, but we are essentially looking at the *emotional geography* of […] young people. We're looking at their needs and we're feeding that in a way with a kind of practice, an informed practice, which is … young person centred. [2:2]

This commitment to being young person centred features in the narratives of all six interviewed and echoes for many the drive to enter the work in the first place (see 7.2.1). Kathy's commitment to empowerment and social justice ("the desire to ensure

my learners [...] have a positive experience of education and there is real recognition of their achievements" [email: 14/1/12]) exemplifies this. It is also perhaps why many practitioners are so emotionally connected to their work.

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To conclude, the affordance of narrative capital as integration of selfhood is developed and presented through examination of the practitioner's wider identity development (particularly through adolescence), their socio-emotional route through an individualised transition into the work and their resonance of personal values and ethical codes with professional values experienced in the work. In this way, elements of Cooper's (1999) multiple self-hood is challenged in terms of the narrator's ability to develop a flexible but permeable internalised self-boundary – the affordance offered here is one of resolving tensions in relation to a developed professionality.

7.3 Narrative capital as 'fuel for self-belief' – *by telling my story, I develop confidence in who I am and my agency and self-worth as a professional*

7.3.1 Role models and inspiration

In thinking about the place of *relationship* in its contribution to narrative capital, the focus is on how professional formation and integration is shaped by the influence of others. The significant others and associated relationships referred to by the practitioners relate largely to those in 'mentoring' roles, either formalised or more informal; to family and friends beyond the professional sphere; and to academic tutors. Key dimensions explored and considered here relate to role modelling, affirmation, challenge, support and 'being there for me'.

For those participating on professional work-based learning programmes such as the Foundation and Honours Degrees (studied by the ex-students I interviewed), a named professional mentor or work-based supervisor is a required element. Within each of

the six practitioners' portrayals, the influence of and the relationship with professional mentors was explicitly considered and the impact of such relationships on the individual narratives and professional identities is clearly significant. In particular, the extent to which 'role modelling' (Pawson, 2004) by mentors and how interactions reflect elements of professional 'supervision' (Proctor, 1988; Kadushin and Harkness, 2002) was explored.

For Mia, her initial contact with someone in a mentoring role was with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) in the school where she was first based. Mia comments on this person as being "really passionate" [1:4] and describes how she spent more time with the SENCo than the other teaching assistants did: "I'd do things and go and discuss it with her" [1:5]. Similarly, Kathy speaks of her first mentor Terry as being "amazing" [1:2] and in particular how "he'd make time and just gave me constant, constant encouragement" [1:2]. Kathy was fortunate in having two mentors who she felt provided a positive learning experience for her early on in her professional formation – in speaking of both her mentors, she observes that "I just had an enormous amount of respect for their experience" [1:4]. Similarly, Jackie describes her mentor Joanne, as striking "this incredible balance between being a headmistress character [and] being an incredibly caring friend [–] it was years of experience and the quality of the woman" [2:12]. Jackie is also specific about how Joanne acted as a role model for her:

> she modelled behaviour - how to manage yourself in certain situations that are perhaps a bit chaotic and you don't know where you're going. And she really demonstrated and modelled to me how you need to hold on to really simple principles [1:12]

Jackie concludes "I would just sit and work with her [–] I was in awe of her really" [2:12].

Here then, the practitioners identify both the *role* that the mentor provides, in terms of providing an embodiment of a professionalised identity – what the practitioner might aspire to become; and the simple process of spending time with the mentor,

engaged in professional discourse – which offers opportunities for professional learning through association or *legitimate professional participation* (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Jackie again effuses of Joanne "she had integrated it and was embodying it ... I saw what I could become" [2:13]

Caitlin describes contrasting relationships with two influential managers. Jane is described first, whose directive approach Caitlin found to be "pushy" [1:1] and sometimes "harsh" [2:2], particularly in terms of how she questioned Caitlin. Although Caitlin recalls at times feeling "bamboozled" [1:1] by Jane, she also reflects that this confrontative challenge comes from a place of supporting professional growth and development (Heron, 1975 and 2001). The key issue for Caitlin is one of trust – both the trust she experienced her managers having in her and reciprocally, the trust she had and has in them. Jeremy was Caitlin's work-based mentor during her professional studies at University and then later her manager. She contrasts Jeremy's approach as less "revolutionary" [1:11] and more "measured" [1:11], describing him as someone she trusted from the outset of their relationship. Again, for Caitlin, her two mentors provide elements of affirmation, particularly through trust, but also via comparative identities or approaches for her use as reference points in developing her own internal sense of professional selfhood, as well as her professional narrative.

In Robert's early entry into the field of working with young people, he was 'under the wing' of Malcolm, who he describes as his "favourite youth worker" [1:1]. Robert observes that Malcolm was an "odd-bod" [1:1], and he later aligns himself to him when he observes "I always see myself as an odd-bod" [1:4]. In more recent times, whilst on the FdA, Robert was mentored by Guy, whose person-centred approach Robert valued highly, describing Guy as "one of the best" [1:3]. In particular, Guy embodied a creative but authentic approach to working with young people, drawing too on a sound theoretical platform, challenging Robert to develop his own professionalism. It seems therefore, that Guy provided a validation for Robert's 'odd-ball' nature, but set within a professional context.

Pearl's influence on Chloe parallels Guy's relationship with Robert in some respects. Chloe's analysis of her relationship with Pearl and how this influenced her, initially focuses on being able to discuss practice [1:3] but then moves on to Pearl's gentle but challenging way of working with practice alongside providing a theoretical perspective too: "she would give you that whole rounded...and get me thinking" [1:6]. For both Robert and Chloe, these early positive mentoring relationships contrast markedly with their relationships with current managers and their more managerialistic approaches (see section 7.4.1); hence Guy and Pearl both present professional role models (Pawson, 2004) *and* offer professional supervision (Proctor, 1988; Kadushin and Harkness, 2002).

Each of the participant practitioners' narratives can be seen to reflect aspects of the common processes or functions of supervision within mentoring. These influences then result in uniquely woven accounts of what Proctor (1988) refers to as *normative*, *formative* and *restorative* processes and what Kadushin and Harkness (2002) identify as *administrative*, *educative* and *supportive* functions. The *normative/administrative* elements can be seen in Mia's relationship with her SENCo in terms of how Mia was able to talk about her practice and understand the focus and limits of her work; Joanne's influence was significant in terms of its *formative/educative* influence on Jackie as she learned what is was to become a youth practitioner; whilst for Kathy, her relationship with Terry was primarily *restorative/supportive* – a point of encouragement and affirmation.

In summarising how individuals construe the role modelling process, Gibson (2003) refers to the selection of behaviours and activities inhabited within a particular role or status (Katz and Kahn, 1978), alongside the process of modelling or matching of the use and embodiment of these behaviours and activities as an exemplar (Bandura, 1986) for the individual. However Gibson goes further, exploring the process of selection of and alignment with the role modeller by the recipient or observer and considering influencing factors of the agency or choice of the recipient in identification of the 'role modeller' as a role model (see also Pawson, 2004).

In this way the role modelling process and relationship provides an opportunity for the practitioner to witness and engage with the embodiment of a professional identity *in context* (in a particular role and setting) and *in action* (through undertaking specific tasks and use of specific tools). This aspect of role modelling (and the later recounting of this relationship and processes) contributes to the development of the practitioner's professional narrative, in that it enables the narrator to connect previous experiences with a current 'way of being' and an imagined, possible future of professional integration. This is of significance, when the future, particularly that of professional role and employment, is unclear. In such circumstances, a well-formed professional self-concept or internalised sense of identity, which facilitates flexibility in adapting to a changing role function, is a valuable asset. Recounting one's professional life story, connects with, affirms and strengthens this identification.

During seminars and in individual tutorials at University, it is not uncommon for students on the FdA and related programmes to refer to partners and family, often in the context of juggling responsibilities and competing and sometimes conflicting commitments. Those students who are parents, particularly of teenagers, may also refer to or draw upon this experience when exploring issues for young people and their learning and development. It was anticipated therefore that those interviewed would refer to relationships at home as being significant, influencing elements within their respective narratives. However this did not emerge strongly. Rather, families were referred to as historical or contextual elements. For example, Jackie refers to the fact that she had "raised my daughter from twelve weeks pregnant alone [...] I've always been on my own with her" [1:3] whilst Kathy makes reference to her mother's nervous breakdown when she experienced her own traumatic experiences during adolescence. Chloe too refers to her family, particularly in the contextual of cultural expectations of further and higher education and employment. Only Kathy and Chloe refer specifically to their respective families in the present context – Kathy when she refers to her delight and pride in her parents attending her award ceremony and Chloe in reference to involving her son Luke in her career decisions.

It appears then, that whilst practitioners' home experiences may contribute to a general level of personal resilience, the practitioners' professional narratives are influenced more significantly by those relationships beyond the home. This supports the sense of a professional identity being developed in specific academic and practice based contexts, rather than in the broader personal arena.

The more informal influential friendships that practitioners did refer to specifically were those relationships developed with other students on the course at university. For Caitlin, Ritchie was:

> someone that to be honest I'd never have developed a friendship with [...] he's very different [...] and because we were so different we really challenged each other and I learnt a lot from him and he's said he learnt a lot from me [...] but if I'd chosen to come over with someone that I actually had an affinity with, we'd probably not have challenged each other so much so that was really useful. [1:11/12]

Similarly, when Jackie refers to Eve, a co-student on the FdA, she observes "we were different" [1:7]. But she goes on to reflect that Eve was "a true friend" [1:7] and "one of the most important things in friendship or relationships is respect and I think I've just always really respected Eve." [1:7]

Like Ritchie for Caitlin, Jackie identities Eve's oppositional point of challenge in her narrative:

> If I'd said 'I was painting the students' faces blue', Eve would have said well, she was doing it as well. She might [also] have taken me aside and said 'what the hell do you think you're doing?!' [1:7]

The combination of reciprocal personal trust and professional challenge are the common elements here. What is also interesting is the acknowledgement of difference and diversity. Within an individual's narrative, the sense that the practitioner both shares common elements with peers but is significantly different from them potentially supports an individualised sense of agency and autonomy.

The third set of relationships that was represented within the practitioners' narratives were those with university tutors. This was inevitable perhaps, given my own role and original relationship with each of those interviewed. What is significant here is the quality of the tutor-student relationship, its point of influence and its position within the narratives. Two key dimensions emerge: firstly relating to the tutors' commitment to the youth support services as a profession; and secondly how this then creates a context in which practitioners are able to develop their individual practice and identity.

Jackie reflects this second dimension of individual affirmation and validation when she speaks directly to me as her former tutor:

> you were genuinely interested in what we were bringing and what our abilities were and were very nurturing of that and encouraging us to open out and there was very much that belief that we were in there even if we didn't know it [1:8]

The intent or value base of the FdA was one of nurturing self-belief – or providing a context for practitioners to become themselves. On returning to this theme later, Jackie expands on this:

> I know that that bedrock I had in the foundation degree and the honours degree was actually about ethics. It was there and it was also respecting me and that spark [1:11]

Robert's analysis may reflect the broader issue of tutors supporting professionalism and professionalisation at a collective level but he identifies an individual experience of this when he makes the initial assertion that the tutors "strip people down" and "you hold the sword to a standard where they can go through to a professional qualification" [1:3]. Later, Robert is more reflective, recalling "the sort of trust you gave us [...] there was that way of working where support was real" [2:9].

Hence, within practitioner narratives, relationships with tutors are both focused on individual identity formation, as well as creating an environment which fosters a professional community; by integrating reference to relationships with tutors within his or her narrative, the individual arguably re-establishes a connection to an

environment where professional values, including validation of agency and autonomy, are affirmed. Interestingly, this is one area where connection to a shared, professional community of practice was touched on across all of the narratives. Youth work has long been regarded (not least by youth workers' themselves: e.g. Bessant, 2004) as experiencing problems with a shared sense of self-identity, let alone acknowledgement beyond the profession. In the post-New Labour terrain of Sugrue and Solbrekke's (2011, p.3) "altered, fractured and contested terrain", it is hardly surprising that these practitioners' narratives are in the main individualised, revealing little in the nature of connection to a professional community, other than through an historical link to the University as a place of professional 'championing' and through a shared experience of being subjugated to increasing managerialism and a climate of performativity (see section 7.4.1).

7.3.2   Others' faith

Another key element in a practitioner's narrative in terms of development of self-belief relates to the faith that others place in them – and the way this fosters faith in self. Caitlin reflects that her managers "obviously saw something in me" [1:3] and makes explicit reference to this, suggesting "there's also something about people having trust and faith in me, which helped my professional formation" [1:15]. Later, Caitlin echoes this point about trust when she reflects "I think I've always had that kind of work ethic that it is important for me that people trust me" [2:8].

Similarly, Kathy experiences the impact her mentor, Terry's "absolute, utter complete faith in me" [1:2] has on her self-confidence, particularly at times when her own faith in herself was having "a bit of a wobble" [1:2]. For Kathy, her mentor's faith gave her an anchor, a reference point or place of reassurance, particularly in the early stages of developing her professional identity. In terms of a narrative capital then, the key issue perhaps is that the participant is able to articulate an externalised reference point of authority – a source of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1961). Kathy uses this as a stepping-stone to feeling "official" [1:7] – developing an internalised self-concept

and associated self-confidence. Her narrative, like those of others, draws on the experience of others' faith as reinforcement of claimed professionality.

For Jackie, this sense of others having faith in her, came from her experience on the HE programme. She observes:

> people like yourself were very key, because you were saying 'yes - you are the people that are going to pick this up and you're going to make it what it is' [and] I developed a lot more confidence in myself during those years [1:5]

The sense that these practitioners feel validated and affirmed by others is a powerful element in their respective narratives, both in terms of developing early career self-confidence but also in relation to sustaining their on-going sense of agency and autonomy. Kathy summarises this well when she comments "all you need is somebody to have faith in you" [2:1], concluding "most of us need a mentor or significant person in our lives that encourages us and repeatedly tells us 'you can'. I did and probably always will" [email 14/1/12].

Within an individual's developed narrative capital, the experience of others having faith in oneself, encompasses both the sense of anticipated potential, prior to attaining or developing a sense of professional identity, as well as an eternalised validation or 'vote of confidence'. The experience of being invited to participate in this research itself was acknowledged by three of the participants (Kathy, Mia and Chloe) as affirming their professionality. That it is those in mentoring or tutoring roles particularly (rather than others in non-authoritative positions) that have faith in the potential and identity of the practitioners is also significant. The relationship and intervention processes referred to directly or inferred by the subjects, reflect broadly the *coaching* mechanisms described by Pawson (2004) and Heron's (1975; 2001) *supportive* interventions. And yet, the notion of 'faith' seems to go further than the perhaps more instrumental mentoring and tutoring relationships and interventions and involves identification of potential and a belief that achieving this potential is within the practitioners' grasp. The function of integrating this element into a narrative

may be to act as an emotional counter to self-doubt – within the affordance of self-confidence is a process of 'credit balancing' faith with doubt.

7.3.3   Flow and integration

Perhaps the most powerful sense of professional self-affirmation and self-belief occurs where practitioners are able to experience what Kathy describes when she first began working with people with learning difficulties – "something that had huge resonance with me that felt right" [1:8] – a kind of amplification of professional selfhood, experienced as a form of enhanced affirmative feedback or what might be referred to as being 'in the zone' in terms of one's work. This process of 'amplification' has echoes of what Wellings and McCormick, (2000, p.21) describe as being "composed of moments of reflection, an awareness of what we feel and think … a deepening of understanding by way of a 'felt sense' leading to a 'felt shift'".

Mia describes the *felt shift* she experiences on occasions in her work:

> It sounds really weird but it's kind of like I enjoy the… when it's kind of like… I can only describe it as like a 'bam bam bam' […] Like one minute I'm kind of instructing like volunteers of where they need to be, kind of what we're doing for the night, doing kind of the brief. Then you're getting the young people in and checking in with them all. And then it's kind of like making sure that the workshops started on time or that you're actually running […] so it's kind of like a constant flow […] And even if kind of things are not going right, so you might have something kick off with a couple of young people, or it might just be a really fun night and kind of things are going really well […] and it's kind of like I know what I'm doing, I know how to get it all done and […] I really enjoy it. [2:14-15]

Mia's energy and enthusiasm is evident here – and her sense of clarity and being 'in the moment' of professional knowing evidenced as 'reflection in action' (Schön, 1983).

Whilst not necessarily an everyday experience, the combination of the nature of the work itself, the rewards when the work goes well, the opportunities for alignment of personal life experiences, motivation and values with professional effectiveness,

means that this heightened sense of self-worth and validity is not uncommon for many practitioners who work with young people.

Jackie is actually talking about her previous experiences as a nurse when she recounts sitting with an elderly patient, acknowledging "that substance that you can't get hold of is what was in the room" [1:14]. This exemplifies the resonance and immersion which results in a heightened sense of self as a professional practitioner. For Mia and others, this has echoes of what Csikszentmihalyi (1996) refers to as 'flow' and a connection to this experience acts as an enriching and sustaining force in the practitioner's narrative.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The affordance considered in this section hinges on the way the narrators position themselves in their current practice in relation to issues of a claimed authenticity within the professional community and in particular, in relationship to others as reference points. The quality of self-confidence and self-belief supports the narrator to align themselves with their practice, resulting at times in a heightened sense of professional selfhood. Once experienced, such amplification or resonance in practice becomes a sustaining element of the narrative capital – a form of experiential, professional 'knowing'.

7.4 Narrative capital as 'future readiness' – *through telling my story, I create possibilities for a future self, what the focus of my work might be and what I might become*

7.4.1 Responses to performativity

In the latter part of their narratives, the participants focus increasingly on their experience of how professionals are required to reinvent themselves as "units of resource" (Shore and Wright, 1999, p.559) in terms of performance and productivity.

Robert views his managers pejoratively as "a bunch of bean counters" [2:1], continuing to suggest that the process of professional accountability has been reduced to

> a quantifiable thing – it's just about quantities [...] And the service and the quality and the whole possibilities of exploring different ways you know – engagement, practice, deliberate things – disappears and it all becomes a paperwork exercise [2:2]

Robert's narrative here has developed into what might be regarded as a defensive or resistant strategy. He is both angry at the erosion of services but at the same time protective of his own professionalism:

> So what's getting lost is that 'oh you've got to have twelve interventions and then move on. You've gotta close this case because we've got lots of other cases; we wanna have a turnover of so many clients a year'. It's fucking bollocks. It's becoming … we're serving the service. [2:3]

This reflects the climate of 'performativity' (Ball, 2001) that has become increasingly evident in public services. Ball's (2012, p.29) suggestion that a product of performativity is that "we are required to spend increasing amounts of our time reporting on what we do rather than doing it" clearly reflects Robert's experience and the way that this is embedded in a narrative of resolve and resilience.

Kathy is similarly critical of her managers:

> we have a new head of department and [...] we are being really micro-managed at the moment and that's very frustrating [...] it's quite undermining if you're having everything put under a microscope [...] and if suddenly a lot of your time is taken up with having to explain things or evidence other things [2:6]

However, Kathy positions her opposition to this in terms of adopting a strategy of withdrawal and reclamation of identity on her own terms. Initially, she was invited to apply for a newly created management post, partly as a result of completing her degree at university and gaining wider recognition:

> a job came up at work - a learning development manager [...] and so I'd had a couple of calls saying 'you'll be applying' because I'd finished the degree. And I thought, 'yeah I should apply for that then, I should apply for the management post because that's the next step for me'. And it just filled me with horror and I spent three days really anxious about it, couldn't sleep, worrying about it. [2:4]

This represented a turning point for Kathy who subsequently resigned from her post working in the learning disabilities team and set up her own Community Interest Company[23], working in the same field but on her own terms. At this point Kathy's narrative reflects her personal transformation:

> once I actually made the decision that I wasn't going to apply for [the management position], it was an enormous relief. It was like 'I can just do what I feel like' [2:4]

Robert's narrative reflects a response which can be summarised as *get real*, where practitioners 'batten down the hatches' and steel themselves to the storms of neo-liberalism, whilst hanging on to the sense of purpose (and reward) they felt they had when they originally came into the work. Chloe's narrative also reflects this position as both she and Robert continue to work in roles they were in whilst on the FdA.

In contrast, Kathy's response and her associated narrative, along with that of Jackie and perhaps to a lesser extent Mia, is one of *get out*, with all three moving on to new roles and different but related professional identities. For this group, their experience of professional formation and development in youth services is presented clearly within their respective changing or developing professional narratives.

Caitlin's response is different again and her narrative is one that presents a third position (and one which Kathy also considers), that of *get promoted*, where practitioners leave the 'front line' and become managers.

In each case, the practitioner recounts experiences of responding to recent and current challenges in their work and asserts a narrative anchor point to the immediate

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[23] CICs were introduced in the UK in 2005 as businesses designed for social enterprise, whose surpluses are reinvested in order to further their primary social objectives

future. Here, their narratives are *current* in terms in terms of their present professional role and function but more importantly they assert and reflect the sense of narrative capital accrued and developed over time. This capital enables to the practitioner to continue to practice in the here and now but also affords a sense of resilience in response to as yet to be encountered future challenges.

What emerges then are narratives as *refractions* (Goodson and Rudd, 2012) – recounted reflections and recollections through each individual participant's personal and professional prismatic lens – with the emerging narratives reflecting three broad strategies adopted in response to the emphasis on performativity in the changing professional and political landscape: *'get real'*, *'get promoted'* and *'get out'*, echoing in some respects Goodson and Rudd's (ibid) *reconstructed, contested, resistant* and *decoupled* work-life professional narratives.

7.4.2   Layered identities and accommodating dissonance

Earlier, it was acknowledged that the initial threads of the professional formation and development process are woven into the practitioner's narrative as a process of personal professional alignment. As careers and professional roles develop and personal circumstances change, so the practitioner's narrative explores shifts and tensions created through competing pressures, discourses and identities.

Mia describes the process of developing identities and associated skills and perspectives as her career shifts and unfolds, as "layering up" [1:13]. Not long after starting the interview process with Mia, she revealed that she was contemplating leaving young people's services and re-training as a mental health nurse: "I can see a pattern of doing this, changing, doing this, changing. I don't think that's a bad thing; I think that's how we continue to learn" [1:13]. Mia describes how she has "been looking at other jobs but they all seem to be side steps and to less salary, which I don't really want - I want a challenge" [1:11] observing she "never saw myself as being someone who'd be in the same job for forty years" [1:13]. Part of a practitioner's

narrative then, particularly those who see their roles and/or identities as evolving or shifting, relates to the extent to which they are able to carry forward or build on elements of one identity or role into the next. In such circumstances, their unfolding professional life story becomes a vehicle for managing and incorporating the change process into a broader professional narrative.

For some, the change process involves developing a new role or identity alongside an existing one. Robert's reference to his developing youth work practice being "always there underneath" [1:1] exemplifies a process of entering a role initially on the periphery (Lave and Wenger, 1991), before making a firmer commitment in the future[24].

This evolving narrative inevitably is more obvious in practitioners whose career changes have become contextualised into a coherent life story – a kind of internalised personal/professional congruence and resolution of dissonance. Jackie's story exemplifies this. Her early professional identity was as a nurse. From there she undertook some training in counselling skills before gaining employment as one of the earlier Connexions Personal Advisers. After widespread cuts to Connexions, locally and nationally, Jackie is now re-training as a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist. In her first interview, she recounts how what she identifies as her nurse identity as evolved, but still forms a significant part of her:

> I love my nurse! I think there were times when I didn't like it. I think my identity as a nurse is something that […] I've wrestled with a lot but now I feel I've integrated her. She is a part of me and she is a part of me as a psychotherapist and I think she is a part of me – if I went back to youth work, she is a part of that. [1:3/4]

More broadly, Jackie is astute in her observation:

> I do think we are all in a state of becoming. I do think that. I've arrived so many times in my life I don't think I'm just not going to do it anymore because I just think there are

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[24] This echoes my own experience of running a local youth club one night a week, in parallel to, at the time, my full-time career as a secondary school teacher. Later I would work one day a week as a counsellor/psychotherapist, alongside my more substantive role as an HE lecturer (see chapter 8)

platforms and you move on [...] what I think is beginning to happen is that I'm beginning to not care so maybe I'm near to arriving! [1:8]

For some, the practical elements or everyday behaviours associated with professional selfhood become out of alignment with other personal identities and core values. The narrator begins to feel that the role and identity is no longer theirs, in the way that Mia and Caitlin both felt about themselves working in retail and in banking prior to moving into youth services.

In his response to a professional climate of managerialism and performativity (see section 7.4.1), Robert's narrative evidences the tension he (and Chloe too perhaps) experiences his previously valued professionality being now diminished. In such circumstances it is understandable that the narrator can feel frustrated and disempowered in terms of agency and autonomy.

This can provide impetus for a shift in perspective or paradigm (Mezirow, 1991), which in turn can act as a motivation for change and transformation. Unfortunately though, examination of professional selfhood or identity is unlikely to be fostered by employers in a culture of performativity and control and in such circumstances, the narrator is forced to accommodate this lack of alignment into their narrative, potentially at personal, psychological cost.

7.4.3   Professional transformation

In exploring and re-conceptualising the future professional self through a developed narrative, the process of metaphor adoption and utilisation is central to the process. Boone and Bowman (1996) consider the way that counselling positions the focus for exploration on the client's chosen metaphor for his/her search for meaning. They illustrate this process with reference to the way a hermit crab several times during a lifetime needs to find a discarded whelk shell to adopt as a new 'home' – to give space to grow and develop and to provide protection from predators. The process of

transformation, of making the shift or finding a new home, is one of both opportunity and vulnerability. As the hermit crab positions itself next to its new found future home, it has to then extract its fleshy, exposed body from its old, outgrown home before enjoying the protection of its new shell, making it a prime target for seagulls and other dangers. But to not move on, results in constriction, lack of growth and potentially a lack of future.

Kathy's new home, her self-formed Community Interest Company, creates an opportunity for personal-professional transformation. Her narrative becomes expansive and she literally, re-creates the future in its telling. As she relates the experiences – her thoughts and feelings – prior to her choosing not to apply for the manager's post (rejecting the *get promoted* strategy) and then of her refocused intensity and her new role, a new energy is evident, reflecting perhaps an experience of 'transformative' (Mezirow, 1991) or 'double looped' (Argyris and Schön, 1974) professional learning.

Less dramatic perhaps, but equally personally significant are the new professional homes and identities Jackie and Mia move to and adopt. There is potentially some space for doubt or even regret but through the process of change, Mia's narrative reflects the potential for transformation and associated release of emotional energy:

> The week before I left work, because of finances and things, I had to work right up until the last moment so I left work on the Friday and started the new degree on the Monday – there was no kind of breathing space. That last week at work my constant thought was, 'this was such a good idea at the time' and 'shit! - what am I doing?!' So yeah, it was really scary. But now I'm here and I started [the new course], I'm really excited by it again. [2:3/4]

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At the conclusion of the six narratives, three of the practitioners (Kathy, Mia and Jackie) have 'changed tack', creating new futures for themselves in roles which are related to but beyond the former 'working with young people' identity and associated

services footprint (CWDC, 2009). In these contexts the narratives encompass a new, created future. These both reflect the professional resilience of these practitioners but also the flux and fragmentation and the professional field. Of the remaining three, the narrative of one encompasses a career progression into management (Caitlin), leaving only two (Robert[25] and Chloe) as 'front line' youth services practitioners – for both, their narratives are defined to some extent to by their resolution to maintain professionality in the face of performativity.

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[25] Robert has been subsequently made redundant as part of continued cuts to local authority children and young people's services

8.   My own narrative

"But suppose your dæmon settles in a shape you don't like?"

"Well, then, you're discontented, en't you? There's plenty of folk as'd like to have a lion as a dæmon and they end up with a poodle. And till they learn to be satisfied with what they are, they're going to be fretful about it. Waste of feeling, that is."

Philip Pullman (1995)

8.1   Introduction

This personal narrative is written as process of reflecting on my own professional formation and reformation over the past 35 years or so and whose roots inevitably lie in my early childhood, and have been shaped through my adolescence and subsequent twists and turns in my career. This process includes reference to early beginnings, journeying and key relationships, shifts of focus and boundary crossing and most recently, my hesitations and stumblings through the process of approaching the doctoral threshold. It includes reference to roles and identities as a teacher, youth worker, counsellor and higher education lecturer – of specific relevance to this enquiry in the way that the practitioners interviewed construct their own narratives through a co-journeying experience and process, intersecting with my own. This brief auto-ethnography also considers my own narrative capital in relation to the affordances proposed in chapter 7. I write this, aged 56, having worked at the University of Brighton for over 15 years.

8.2   Home and school

I'm the third of four children. I recall my mum in the kitchen, washing, cooking, ironing, cleaning, making, mending and knitting. We were not well-off financially but my mum managed the home well. Later, when my younger brother started school, she went to

work as the receptionist and more latterly as the practice manager, in our local GPs' surgery. She worked there for over 40 years.

My dad worked as a hosiery and knitwear sales rep, doing a job he was totally unsuited for and didn't really value or enjoy, other than he got to meet and talk with people. He loved his garden and it seemed he knew everything there was to know about history, architecture, wildlife and the English landscape. He was also a lay preacher in the Methodist church. He should have been a university lecturer.

I knew my mum struggled with us and with her life generally and this seemed to take its toll. I remember once (I must have been about six years old), she threw a dinner plate at my elder brother in anger. As it smashed against the wall, he laughed, and she burst into tears and I looked on, frightened. On such occasions (there were a few), Mum would cry out "I can't take it anymore!" and would threaten "you'll drive me to Narborough!" (the local monolithic, Victorian psychiatric hospital a few miles away). She would fling down her apron and storm out of the house. I would wait by the back door for her to return, which of course she always did. When she came back, she would hug me and say to me "you're always there for me, aren't you Mark?" I was and I knew I had to be. Being there for people was forged into my professional footplate from an early age.

At school I was clever and hard working. Most school subjects came relatively easily, although I was pretty useless at PE and games. I was desperate to feel I *'belonged',* although being part of a 'team' was something I felt I never quite achieved. I was confident however in speaking out in class and got into drama at secondary school. As a 16 year old, I was also the student representative on the newly created Community College management committee and helped set up a youth club for younger students at the school – my earliest experience as a youth worker.

Dave Burrows was our drama teacher. I loved and worshipped him. He was brash and tender, bullish and sensitive. He talked to us about Bob Dylan and Bertolt Brecht and we did 'experimental theatre' in the blacked-out drama studio that became a

sanctuary for me from the rest of the school and from my uncertainties and anxieties. Dave was my inspiration. He was also good enough to tell me I was never going to make it as an actor. But he did believe in me and called me his 'barometer'. He was my mentor and he was the reason I became a teacher and then youth worker. I wanted to be like him.

8.3   Personal and professional identities

At university I studied Physics with Musical Acoustics. By the time I graduated I realised I was only marginally interested in being a physicist, even one with musical bent, but after a year or two I realised my degree could act as a passport to working with young people. From thereon, over the years, I've worked as a playworker, a secondary school teacher, a youth worker, an education officer and manager, and a counsellor/psychotherapist, before becoming an academic – and interestingly in the context of this study, I've become qualified and gained professional recognition in all these disciplines.

When my teenage daughters entered adolescence and became 'youths' on their own individual terms, I felt compromised professionally. How could I see young people for counselling and therapeutic work, when only an hour or so earlier I'd been embroiled in what felt at the time, to be all-enveloping, unresolvable familial conflict? At University too, I've struggled to remain 'current' in relation to working with young people and young people's services. I knew I could still 'perform' as a lecturer and focused instead on both small and large group facilitation – taking the themes of 'reflective practice' and 'inter-professionalism' as hooks on to which I felt I could hang my academic gown. I let my psychotherapeutic accreditation lapse (I'm currently on 'sabbatical' from UK Council for Psychotherapy registration) and tried to focus on my EdD.

8.4 Research and my developed role

Studying alongside working was always going to be difficult – everyone told me so (and of course it's what I tell my own students). Of my colleagues, Sylvie took well over six years to complete her EdD; Tom had to resign from his post for a year, before successfully applying for and being re-appointed into what was essentially his former post; Gill pulled out of the EdD programme altogether; Davey continues to struggle, scraping through each assignment along the way. I took on more and more leadership responsibilities and just about managed to 'hang on in there' with my doctorate.

I have really struggled with the culture of research. At one level, successful researchers are held in high esteem – additional titles are bestowed upon them – Reader, Doctor, Professor and so on. At research seminars, knowledge is presented from what appear to be exalted positions of pedagogic positioning or paradigm certainty. Presenters read their seemingly dense wodges of text and the expectation is one is able to 'defend' a position. The possibility of not knowing, or rather appearing not to know, is not entertained. Egos rampage – and most of the time I feel confused, isolated and stupid.

I experienced a glimmer of a new place of being though recently, when I presented a paper based on my doctoral research at an international conference, with the paper subsequently being accepted for publication (Price, 2015). At the conference I felt I was able to be authentic and in doing so experienced a sense of acceptance and belonging I have seldom experienced in my everyday work, where the culture of our own department appears to be that of a primary school – teaching and 'pedagogy' are the priorities and Ofsted looms over us constantly. We have to teach more; develop more creative and effective programmes; achieve higher student satisfaction. Performativity creeps in and the landscape takes on a neo-liberalistic sepia wash without challenge.

At work, I hide behind operational certainty – I organise things: new course validations; academic office/study manoeuvres; dealing with 'difficult', inter-personal stuff between colleagues. I squeeze in doctorate study … or rather most of it is squeezed

out of me. I question my professional identity more than ever and the feeling of being 'found out' – firstly as a teacher, then youth worker and therapist, but more recently as an academic – has never really left me. In school management meetings we talk about strategic development plans and the need to 'change the research culture'. I'm seen by colleagues as being part of 'management' and at the same time I'm encouraged to become more research focused. I'm seen as a 'safe pair of hands' … but for the most part, I feel like I've lost all my bearings. I feel like I no longer belong to any professional 'club'. Lave and Wenger (1991) introduced the concept of *legitimate peripheral participation* to describe the process of novice engagement in communities of professional practice. I feel like I'm in the process of *inconsequential professional peripheralisation* – a sort of drifting out of focus, out of depth, out of time. It's as if my specs no longer work … or hearing loss renders speech unintelligible. And with this, my confidence and self-belief falters.

I have loved the process of interviewing past students though. They tell their stories and I become involved – in the recounting of past details and dramas; in the exploration of current reflections and in the re-constructing of identities. The subject matter – the professionalisation and professionality of youth service practitioners – is in danger of becoming fossilised. It's no longer an environment I fully inhabit and in political/policy terms, it has become at best side-lined or perhaps more accurately and more recently, it has been ignored.

8.5   My narrative capital

And so what are my own personal resonances with the focus of this research? If I was being interviewed what observations would I make about my internalised professional selfhood? What would define my narrative?

I loved reading Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights* trilogy. Pullman (1995) introduces us to the concept of an individual's *dæmon* – a person's externalised manifestation of their inner self or 'nature' in animal form. During childhood and early adolescence,

your dæmon changes its form frequently, as your mood and identity change (reflecting perhaps, Marcia's (1980) state of *moratorium*), before settling as an adult into an unchanging form – you become who you are. Professionally, it feels like my dæmon has never settled, unless it's some bizarre badger/bear/beaver hybrid – a platypus perhaps. I don't really fit in and yet I can adapt. At the heart, in my heart, though there is a will and commitment to support others, to help and guide them on their journey to becoming. I think this is why, to some extent, youth work and psychotherapy have both worked for me. And why I've gravitated to reflective practice, interprofessionality and narrative inquiry as an academic. I live in the world of boundary spanning and border crossing. I'm able to look across divisions and am malleable enough to fit into new cultures. But it also means I never feel quite at home … and eventually of course, I go wandering and look for a new home.

Reflexively speaking, this means I resonate with those focused elaborators, of whom Goodson (2013, p.96) observes "when externally produced narratives lose their hold, an internal focussed drive to develop a new self-generated narrative emerges". In the context of working within Sugrue and Solbrekke's (2011, p.3) "altered, fractured and contested terrain", this means I can adapt – and I do. I see the world as navigable – and whilst I rage internally against neo-liberalism, I'm more likely to reposition myself and 'shape-shift' into something/someone new, rather than campaign and take action to change the terrain, to influence the climate. This is why this thesis focuses on the affordances of narrative capital – how telling and re-telling and recreating our story in action gives us a means of living *from* the past, *in* the present and *for* the future. I narrate, therefore I am.

9. Reflections and conclusions

"Narrative inquirers strive to attend to the ways in which a story is constructed,
for whom and why, as well as the cultural discourses that it draws upon"
(Trahar, 2009, p.2)

9.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I reflect on and present conclusions in relation to the following:

- the extent to which my original **research aims** have been met *(with reference to chapters 1, 6 and 7),* including reflection on the narrative profiles and development of narrative capital in the policy context discussed in chapters 1 and 2;
- the **process of the research** *(with reference to chapters 3 and 4 and section 3.6 particularly),* including acknowledgement of challenges faced;
- the **value of the research** *(with reference to chapters 1 and 7)* and potential impact
- **my development** as a researcher *(with reference to chapters 3, 7 and 8).*

9.2 Reflection on the research aims

9.2.1 *to examine how those working in young people's learning and development services articulate their professional identity and professional formation process*

This research was positioned initially in relation to exploring and 'mapping' the developing professionality of youth practitioners. The earlier discussion on the policy and practice context (see sections 1.1 and 1.2) outlined the reformation and expansion of the young people's workforce in the UK under the New Labour government and then the resulting impact Conservative/Liberal-Democratic coalition government policy on this emergent professionalisation process. The research sought to illustrate these

changing processes through the recounted lives of practitioners who had undergone professional development and qualification programmes at university.

It is hard not to reach anything but a depressing analysis (e.g. NYA, 2014) of the changing policy context for those entering and working in the field of youth services in the UK over the period of this research. A lack of coherent national policy particularly over more recent years, widespread service and job cuts, confused role focus and increased workloads (with accompanying prioritisation on 'measurable outcomes' and a climatic emphasis on performativity rather than on professional autonomy) and a reduced commitment to maintaining professional recognition and continuing professional development, all have taken their toll on individual and collective professionality and morale.

The six portrayals presented in chapter 6 take the form of co-constructed narratives and provide representations of individual professionality and the changing professionalisation of youth services over this period. Highly personalised stories are recounted of journeys from childhood, through adolescence and then into adulthood and arrival in the professional field. Explicit reference is made to the impact of those in mentoring roles and the importance of higher education as a context for critical interrogation is highlighted. The participants connect easily with an obvious passion and commitment to the work but their responses to the increasingly hostile pressurised political and economic landscape differ.

What emerges is not a shared experience of a coherent professional community but rather a sense of professional fortitude and resilience. It is this fortitude and resilience – and the range of principled decision making strategies adopted – which particularly illustrate the power of the individual narratives and potential capital that these narratives afford the narrators.

9.2.2 *to explore to what extent and how relationships with mentors and significant others influenced and shaped their professional identity*

Of particular interest is the role and function of those in 'official' mentoring and related roles, and the broader influence of 'significant others' on the practitioner's professional development. Each practitioner was able to identify the positive influence of someone in a mentoring role during their early career, including when engaged in their studies at university and in some cases, the practitioner was able to compare contrasting influences and relationships. However, the access to mentoring relationships does not always continue as the practitioner becomes more experienced. This in turn further exacerbates feelings of frustration and isolation for those who are, in particular, experiencing the pressure of managerialism and performativity (see Robert and Chloe especially).

Two important dimensions to mentoring are identified. Firstly, the dimension of role modelling, where the mentor provides an example of the experienced practitioner in context – someone who models professionality in practice and potentially for the practitioner to emulate and learn from by association (Engeström, 2001). This reflects particularly Pawson's (2004) *coaching* and *advocacy* mechanisms of mentoring and Heron's (1975, 2001) *authoritative* interventions. Secondly, the faith the mentor has in the practitioner's potential for professionality and the experience the practitioner has of this faith as a validation of emergent professional selfhood. Here, it is Pawson's (2004) *affective contact* and Heron's (1975, 2001) *facilitative* interventions which are key.

The issue of faith is of particular significance in terms of its contribution to narrative capital and the way practitioners experience this as affirmation of developing professionality, both in current practice and in potential for the future.

9.2.3 *to explore and determine why and how significant dimensions, qualities, elements and perspectives shape and become embedded within individual, professional identities*

The practitioners' narratives are distinctive and evocative. A recurring theme is the way that the practitioner's developing narrative provides a vehicle for alignment and re-alignment of personal and professional selfhood. This drive towards alignment or congruence (Rogers, 1961) of multiple selfhoods (Rowan and Cooper, 1999) is embodied within the narratives through past, present and future story-telling. These elements of story-telling – how the practitioner came into the work, their experience of professionality within every day practice, and their anticipated experience of the future - are not 'snapshots' but rather 'journeys in motion'. Already out of date as soon as they are recounted, the narratives evolve in their continued retelling. Both Mia and Kathy have offered to be interviewed again, wanting to engage further in the process – possibly to help me in my research, but also, I imagine, because each practitioner's narrative needs to be re-told in order to continue to re-create, affirm and develop their professionality.

The narratives are rich representations of reflection (Schön, 1983, Claxton, 1999) and reflexivity, particularly in relation to selfhood, practice and the broader socio-political context (Brookfield, 2005). Evident in the narratives is a strong emotional dimension to reflection and reflective learning (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1996), taking both retrospective and prospective approaches to reflective learning (Mumford, 1995). In this way the practitioners demonstrate their commitment to act from a principled position of right action – *phronesis* – and to conscious engagement in processes of furthering social justice – *praxis* (Smith, 1999).

This conscious, passionate commitment to action can be both a blessing and a curse. Awareness of transformative moments of learning (Mezirow, 1991; Brockbank and McGill, 1998) is illustrated well in Kathy, Jackie and Mia's narratives and contributes to their professionality and professional resilience. But experiences of working within a climate of performativity and case management (see Chloe, Kathy and Robert) can

lead to frustration, where opportunities to work from a position of agency and practice aligned to professional values, are constrained.

9.2.4 *to consider the value and affordances of professional practitioners' developing 'narrative capital'*

The specific original contribution to knowledge that this thesis makes is the model of affordances of narrative capital in relationship and in context, relating to the development of professionality, presented in chapter 7: *affirmation of integrity; fuel for self-belief; future readiness.* The nature of affordances in context is key, in that the youth services profession is both one that was in a significant process of professional remodelling under New Labour (DfEE, 2001; DCSF, 2008), which at the time was considered by some (e.g. Smith, 2002) as a downgrading of services, but under the current Conservative/Lib-Dem government (DfE, 2010 and 2011) is now regarded as increasingly, severely under threat (Hall, 2013; UNISON, 2014).

The particular circumstances of practitioners coming into the work, usually after experiences in other areas of work (evidenced by all six portrayals here), means that the narratives reflect adult lives lived and roles inhabited. This can be in contrast to other comparable professions (teaching and nursing, for example), where it is commonplace for many of those entering the profession to be younger.

These provisos aside, the model of narrative capital affordance is of relevance to all professional trajectories, particularly those where Hargreaves (2000) *fourth age* of professionalism is evident and practitioners are required to respond to a seemingly recurring round of neo-liberal repositioning.

9.2.5 *to consider how this understanding impacts on and informs higher education programmes and associated pedagogy*

A practitioner's narrative hence provides a powerful tool for maintaining a flexible and responsive individualised professionality. Each of those interviewed here refer explicitly to the role of HE in the forming and shaping of this professionality. In particular, practitioners highlight the role that academic tutors provide in terms of creating an environment for critical reflection and connection to a community of independent professionalism and agency (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Specific reference is made to the use of reflective practice and critical interrogation of theory and policy. This is central to a commitment to maintaining independent critical thinking and to supporting ethical practice and individual agency and autonomy. More broadly, this reflects HE's key role within the professionalisation process, providing a site of resistance and a critique of the neo-liberalist hegemony of austerity, compliance and performativity.

In particular, and evidenced through the practitioners' narratives presented here, Higher Education is required to resist the drive towards instrumentation and standardisation as the dominant discourses in professional development and qualification programmes. Rather, it should focus particularly on providing sites of learning which offer narrative capital building programmes – points of coming together for storytelling and witnessing individual and shared professionality and the development of burgeoning professional communities.

9.2.6 *to contribute to wider discussions and knowledge regarding professionalisation, professionality and narrative capital in practice based communities and contexts*

A recent assessment of the impact on cuts to young people's services over the two financial years 2012 to 2014 (UNISON, 2014) records that at least £60 million have been lost across the UK, resulting in more than 2000 jobs being cut, including Robert's,

who was recently made redundant. The narratives presented in this thesis then perhaps also document the impact of such cuts in terms of practitioners' professional lives and identities. None of those interviewed said 'I don't want to work with young people any more'. None felt the work was worthless. But in their own individual way, they all said 'how can I continue?'

The narratives, in many respects, provide representations of Hermans' (2001) dialogical self. When the participants describe and reflect on an internalised professionality, influenced and developed in response to encounters with significant others, they develop a dialogue of internal selves or 'societies' within the mind. Alongside this internal space, the participants of course inhabit and give voice to externalised selves – as youth practitioners, their colleagues, their managers, their clients. The affordances of the narratives (and their associated capital) are hence 'stories in action' – psychodramas of professionality and professionalism in context. Through telling their story, the participants develop narratives which help them makes sense of this dialogue of selves and resolve tensions and potential contradictions.

This examination, management and resolution of tensions and contradictions is regarded here as a being fundamental to the professionalisation process.

9.3   Reflection on process

In undertaking this study, I have strived to maintain critical awareness of the process of *co-construction* and the extent to which as researcher, I have become an active participant in the creation of each practitioner's narrative. By coding, analysing and selecting elements of the individual texts, I act as editor of the presented portrayals. For the participants, the need for clarification and ensuring I understood their respective discourses and perspectives was evident and significant. Hence, I became a subjective, active witness to their developed and developing identities; the affordance of their narrative capital was tested on me.

In many ways, this role as facilitator and at times co-constructor in the professional narrative development process mirrors the role I have as an academic tutor and programme leader. The power and affordances of the professional narratives developed in this study, reinforces the role that HE has in creating a learning space for professional formation and development. This learning space is both individual and shared or collective. The wider professional field for those working in young people's services though is disparate and dispersed (Department for Education, 2011; Hall, 2013). Coherent communities of professional practitioners tend only to exist in pockets of shared resilience and resistance and several of the participants reflected, usually after I had turned off the voice recorder, on how much they missed talking about their work and themselves in work with someone who understood the issues they faced and shared their professional culture.

The subtlety and finesse with which these narratives developed only really became apparent to me with hindsight, reflecting on the process with my supervisors and in the case of Mia and Kathy, in conversation with them individually, long after the portrayals were complete. Central to this process and in relation to the research as a whole therefore, is a developed methodology of co-constructed narrativity. Every time we tell our story, we tell it slightly differently, depending on the context and the state of our selfhood. But through the retelling, and repeated re-witnessing, we strengthen our narrative capital.

In the context of this research, the literature I presented in chapter 2 (and summarised in figure 1, page 49) details the conceptual lens I brought to the active witnessing role within this co-construction process, compounded and brought into focus by my own narrative (chapter 8). And through this research, this lens has been developed further. In particular, my understanding of the impact of social and political dimensions of professionality on the individual's selfhood and self-concept has been brought in to sharper focus, whilst a resonance with practitioners' principled approaches to right action and social justice has been reinforced. Newer emergent elements of knowledge for me have developed, in relation particularly to narrative inquiry and its role both as research methodology and in the context of professional formation and development

programmes within higher education. In turn, this contributes to a developing re-conceptualisation of what it means to be a 'professional'.

These shifts in understandings about and within the co-constructional relationships though are dependent on a significant level of mutual trust and faith. I was confident of my understanding of the importance of these qualities in relation to ethical dimensions of the research (sections 4.4 – 4.6); I think now though I have a greater appreciation of the positive influence of these mutually held qualities on the resulting narratives. These qualities and dimensions of relationship were also reinforced by the participants themselves in their reference to the importance of their mentors' faith in terms of affirming professional potential and validation (see section 7.3.2).

Key to all this are my own roots in and adherence to the youth practitioner's professional values and culture (DfEE, 2002b; NYA, 2004; IYW, 2013b), which I share with those I interviewed. The particular core professional values here which I have sought to maintain throughout are related to *person-centredness* – that in terms of the processes of interaction, these have been undertaken from a position of *congruence* and *unconditional positive regard* (Rogers, 1961) and have drawn upon *facilitative* interventions (Heron, 1975 and 2001). The focus and interpretations offered have been as result of interactions with each participant to reach where possible, a negotiated position of analysis in relation to the specific narrative developed.

Within this though, I have been aware of positions of assumed and projected authority – the co-dependency created between tutor/student and researcher/participant inter-personal dynamics, that exerts a pull towards informed but potentially unconsciously emotional judgements – which inevitably are at play here. I was delighted to hear of Kathy's success with her new community arts project and felt frustrated and angry at the circumstances that have clearly impacted on Robert's professional life. I trust that I have presented the portrayals as 'fairly' as possible, with validity contingent on my own maintained reflexivity (Shacklock and Smyth, 1998; Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Another researcher would have different relationships with those interviewed, would utilise a different turn of phrase and would resonate at different points and in

relation to different themes. The resulting portrayals would be refracted through a different lens.

9.4   Reflections on value and utility

This research claims to have value or utility in relation to:

– the opportunity for participants to enter into a collaborative process of self-enquiry and to develop their narrative;
– as a record of a particular professional-social history in changing times;
– providing a rationale for higher education to maintain its independence and critical perspective in relation to professional agency and autonomy;
– a propositional model of affordances of narrative capital and the associated contribution to the development of narrative learning theory and practice.

Reflecting on the challenges of the research in terms of its broader impact, from a localised policy and funding perspective, it would appear that support in the UK for a strengthened, dynamic and coherent range of services for young people is minimal. As such, an articulated professional community of youth practitioners, supported by HE institutions like my own, is unlikely to thrive unless there is a significant shift in the political climate. Potentially this limits the relevance of this research. However, it is the responsibility of HEIs to maintain a focus on the critique of professionalisation and professionality, particularly in relation to education, health and social welfare related practices more broadly, where de-regulation and privatisation potentially threatens professional agency and autonomy. The challenge therefore, is to maintain and develop a sustainable pedagogy which supports narrativity in the context of professional formation and continuing professional development. And whilst the youth services field and related policy context in which this research is situated, is specific to the UK, this echoes the much broader *global education reform movement* (Sahlberg, 2012) which in turn reflects a widespread neo-liberal, marketisation of social welfare

and other public services. Hence, this research contributes to wider international discourses and critiques on narrativity and professionality.

The central issue of value here therefore, is claimed in relation to the furthering of narrative as a cornerstone of professionality and Higher Education's associated role and position in the professionalisation process. At a time when a centralising, bureaucratic control on professionalism (Bacon et al, 2000; Ball, 2001 and 2008) is seemingly ever present, a re-assertion of the need to focus on professional trajectory as "an ongoing process of negotiation and construction of meaning that involves representations, beliefs, skills, expectations, biographies and situated practices" (Marsico, 2012, p.128) is paramount. Sikes' (2012) analysis regarding the ethical nature of narrative truth is key. It is intended that the 'truths' presented in the six portrayals and the overarching analysis of narrative capital, supports and contributes to the developing academic canon in this field.

9.5   And a final reflection on self

At a personal level of course, this thesis is also about developing my own narrative, as I too have journeyed over the past seven years, from academic practitioner, to becoming a member of the senior management team and now a researcher at a UK university. As I complete this thesis, the march of neo-liberalism and performativity in my own department is increasingly evident as new courses are developed with an eye on carving out a successful niche in the student 'buyers' market' and higher ratings are demanded in relation to published work and student feedback.

In relation to the three affordances of narrative capital presented here, this enquiry has enabled me to review my own professional development. As each participant has recounted their early professional journeying, this has triggered reflections and recollections of my own – of my path from drama workshops and a background in physics and music, through to targeted work with disadvantaged and disengaged young men and on to academia. And as I have continued to construct the narrative

portrayals of these six practitioners, my own narrative – the seventh portrayal – has taken shape. In many ways this has enabled me to 're-create' myself and this has then resulted paradoxically in both a strengthened self-concept and integrated professionality and an uncertainty of where this then takes me as I enter what feels like the latter stages of my career or professional journeying. I hold particularly the sense I have of Robert and Chloe's frustration of managerialism and performativity, of Caitlin's commitment to the professional field, of Kathy's energetic professional renewal and of Mia and Jackie's faith in the next stage of their respective professional learning, and I trust my own narrative has afforded me the wisdom and resilience to continue on to whatever is next for me in my professional life.

58,962 words

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Appendix 1: Participant Consent Form

Becoming a youth practitioner – a narrative study of personalised constructions of professionalism and professional identity formation

Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my research into the professional identity formation of those working in the 'young people's workforce'. I intend to focus particularly on the how particular relationships have contributed to and have shaped professional development for those working in the field of youth support services.

My intention is to undertake two interviews with each of a number of ex-students, currently working locally in services for young people.

The first interview will explore some general questions. For example:

- *How did you come to be working within young people's services? What were the key events, processes, milestones along the way?*

- *What is it that makes you who you are 'professionally'? What would you say have been the most significant factors in developing your own 'professional identity'?*

- *Thinking particularly about becoming professionally qualified, what relationships and interactions have been most influential in your own professional development and formation process? What was it about those relationships and interactions which particular influenced your development?*

Each interview will last for 60 – 90 minutes and will be led by what *you* see as important and relevant to you and your individual professional development and identity.

The second interview will follow approximately 12 weeks later and will involve further discussion, exploring of themes/issues identified and raised in the first interview. Before this second interview you will be sent a transcript of the first interview for you to consider and reflect on further. In this way, the intention is that each interview will be very person centred, aimed at capturing *your* story.

Within the research process, all transcripts will be anonymised in relation to names and all other personally defining features. You will even be invited to select a pseudonym for yourself!

Initially, the research will be written up as part of my Professional Doctorate (EdD) at the University of Brighton's School of Education. There may be further academic publication beyond this.

All interviews will be recorded on a small digital, audio recorder and later transcribed. Audio recordings and transcription will be held as password protected files.

If you have any further questions, regarding the interview process, then please do ask.

With many thanks

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND SPORT
FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Becoming a youth practitioner – a narrative study of personalised constructions of professionalism and professional identity formation

♦ I agree to take part in this research which aims to explore the nature of professional identity formation in the emerging young people's workforce (CWDC, 2009)

♦ I am aware that I will be required to be interviewed and asked to reflect on and discuss my experience in becoming a 'young people's professional'.

♦ The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study and the possible risks involved.

♦ I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will normally be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else.

♦ I understand how raw data (interview notes and transcripts of interviews) will be anonymised and where appropriate pseudonyms will be used.

♦ I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without incurring consequences from doing so.

Name (please print):   …………………………………………………………...

Signed: …………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………………………………..……………

Appendix 2: Example of coded transcript

Highlighted colours relate to the six themes identified in chapter 5; this selected text is then summarised in Appendix 3.

<mark style="background:yellow">Coming into the work – steps towards professionalism</mark>
<mark style="background:red">Relationships and personal interventions</mark>
<mark style="background:cyan">Reflection on professional learning and identity</mark>
<mark style="background:magenta">Transformative learning and crossing a threshold</mark>
<mark style="background:green">A professional community</mark>
<mark style="background:blue">Values and commitment - in search of praxis</mark>

Jackie: Interview 1 – March 2012

MP: So we'll come onto the fact that you've moved up beyond your job you were doing when you were here as a student. Let's first of all talk about how you got to be working with young people. Start wherever you want to start.

JACKIE: As you know I've got a nursing background so when I had my daughter I couldn't do nursing anymore so I had a friend who was, what was it called, it was all the YOT schemes. I got involved in that and she said oh you can teach health and social care so I ended up teaching health and social care in Brighton for about a year and then I left that.

I just did that one day a week and really enjoyed it and it was when the NVQs where very new and I did an assessors award and it was all. Basically I realised how clever I was but I wrote a course because there was no materials so I wrote it for myself, so I did that, but that was with adults that were unemployed.

Then I left and I didn't work for a couple of years because I still had a very young baby. Then I went back into nursing for a little while, I did a little bit of nursing and I then decided that because I wasn't working, because I was income support as a single parent, I could go and do this course at Exford [local town] to train to be a teacher. Because I'd just done it I thought well I quite like doing this and it's a bit more nine-five than nursing.

So I went to Exford [local town], it was called the tertiary college then, I did a year there to train to do the City and Guilds 7307 and whilst I was there I got to know the tutors, I mean it's all serendipity really. They said to me oh you've got to do so many hours teaching we'll have you for cheap, we won't pay you, you can teach some of our NVQ students. So I starting teaching NVQ students there and so I got

the qualification and they offered me so many hours a week teaching NVQ students and Foundation students. So that's how I arrived working for the first time with young people from sixteen onwards really, so that was my first experience.

I think I worked there for about two years but they weren't giving me very many hours and I wanted to get back into the workplace, you know my daughter I think had started school and I needed more money and it wasn't really happening for me. They weren't offering me a proper job, I think I had something like ten hours a week. So I left it and back into nursing and did night duty because that's my old bread and butter job. So that's what I did for a year, no I did it more than for a year, I did that for a little while but I was looking constantly for something else, looking for teaching jobs and things coming up. The following year because I was on income support, I was using my situation and went again to Exford [local town] tertiary college and did a counselling course at level 2, so I had that. But again it was level 2 so I wasn't really up and running as a fully qualified or accredited, you know I was kind of something and nothing.

So I had that. Then this Connexions post came up and I'd applied for one before and didn't get the job and then applied for a second Connexions post, and it was at the college in Blayton [local town], and I think what got me that job was the fact that I'd had, when I'd worked at Exford [local town], cos I'd worked at Exford I knew the college anyway and I'd had a part role in being a personal tutor. There was a personal tutor who was basically being sent off to do other things so I was a cheaper version of her and I could just slot in and do some of her work. So I milked that in my CV, that I've been a personal tutor, as you do while I'd probably done a couple of hours of it a week but I kind of understood what the role was. And I had the counselling background and I think a lot of luck.

At that point I was working partly in a nursing home doing night duty and I was also working, and you know my career was really stagnating, that was earning the money, and I was doing some bank work for the NHS. It was really hard for me to get back into the NHS and my skills were getting very rusty and I knew it and I was doing district nursing, which I did enjoy, but I wasn't going anywhere and I knew it.

But I did have quite a young child really but I eventually got the job with Connexions on the basis of that history. And I worked and they said to do it you've got to do the training and I said thank you very much because I knew I needed a degree. Because I did the old fashioned nursing which was more of an apprenticeship based learning where we worked ten weeks on the wards as labour, really manual labour, and it was. When I think what nurses do now I mean I was so physically fit. Yeah so my daughter was eleven, it was 2004 when I started with Blayton [local town] at Keatley [local college] and it was on the basis that I would go and do the degree. And amazing really it's amazing to think about it now that some people didn't want to do that whereas I just knew that was my ticket really.

MP: In what way?

JACKIE: I suppose we're talking about professionalism. I had all these skills and years of experience in nursing but I'd been out of it with nursing, I'd been over to Australia, I'd dipped in and out of nursing, I hadn't really followed any particular path and during that time they started to bring in the Diploma for nurses and more nurses were doing the diploma and some were doing the degree, now everyone does the degree. So it was in that transition for nurses at that point so I was really the old guard and I was getting left behind in terms of employability and my experience wasn't very current. It wasn't state of the art experience. That qualification was beginning to get very out of date for me.

So I knew that for me to move on I needed a degree and this was the world I was in, I needed a degree. I think at that time my motivation for that job was that I wanted really out of nursing and I wanted to go more towards counselling because I'd done the counselling course and I thought right this is much more of a pastoral role.

It was incredibly nebulous and what I realised when I got the job was that actually I could make this job whatever I wanted it to be. At first I didn't realise that and I felt quite afraid because I just thought having come from nursing where you're told what to do and how it's done and there are protocols for everything. But after about a year I realised actually this is an incredible opportunity and I really blossomed. What happened was I really brought myself to the job and after a year I started the degree and all of that at that moment when I started the degree all of those things met. It was kind of all those roads came together.

And so those years of experience, that knowledge, that motivation and the timing for me was really really good. I like to think that it was really good for the college as well and for Connexions because I think actually there was enough not really knowing what the job was and there was enough maturity and experience in me, plus the guidance of the course to actually create something really quite new and positive. And I really felt that in the course, I felt there was a really mutual exploration of what this role could be and it felt very exciting. It did feel very exciting I think. And being one of the more mature students I became, with Eve and Eve was a very important colleague I think, I think we really knew what that opportunity was and we were gonna to use and we were gonna take it.

MP: It's funny because my memory of you is that you really did throw yourself into it.

JACKIE: I loved it.

MP: Sometimes students will nibble around the edges or some dip in and out but you did live and breathe it, as it were.

JACKIE: It was a very particular time in my personal life because the year previously and when I - we can go into this more if you want to - but I had raised my daughter from twelve weeks pregnant alone. I mean I've always been on my own with her, her father left. I'd had relationships but I'd moved in with a partner who I'd know for quite a number of years as a friend and he died very very suddenly and unexpectedly when I started that job in the September. I started the job in the August and he died in the September, very suddenly and unexpectedly so my whole world that I thought was suddenly becoming much more stable just got tipped upside down.

It's really different, it's really weird because I can look at it from a bigger distance now so I think my perception now is different than it might have been when I started the job. I did know that actually I've got to make this life for myself and I think one of the defining things about me as the woman I am, is the fact that I've raised a child alone and I have been a single parent. I think that has moulded me in many, many ways. So I think starting the course I think the one thing I knew I had, I didn't have much money, I didn't have a family that had much money, that wasn't the background I came from, but what I did know was that I was bright. I didn't always know I was bright but by then I knew I was bright and that the one thing that was gonna get me through was me and that I needed to develop me because there was nothing else to develop.

MP: OK, can I just go back to you as a nurse and where the nurse bit then is now? So you've started the job and you've the course, this is 2005?

JACKIE: Yeah we started in September 2005 I think it was.

MP: So is the nurse bit in the past? Is it with you? Is it alongside you?

JACKIE: I love my nurse! I think there were times when I didn't like it. I think my identify as a nurse is something that I think I've wrestled with a lot but now I feel I've integrated her. She is a part of me and she is a part of me as a psychotherapist and I think she is a part of me, if I went back to youth work she is a part of that.

MP: When you were doing the Connexions job...

JACKIE: I was wrestling with her.

MP: OK that's what I was wondering about. The fact you've been a nurse then you've gone into a bit of teaching and City and Guilds 7307 or 7407 and then you went with Connexions and you've arrived at uni. Because who you became professionally in that role does have a relationship in some way to your identity as a nurse, that's what I was just touching on.

JACKIE: Say that again.

MP: OK. It may be that this is me making massive assumptions. You were a nurse, you did nurse training and you became a nurse and you described then the process by which you'd had your daughter and you were doing some teaching and you were doing night shifts and you were keeping things going. And then you'd done the counselling course and you got the Connexions job and then that enabled you to throw yourself into that role and that process. So I'm saying at that point where was Jackie the nurse?

JACKIE: She's always been there but I think at that point, finally I was in a professional role or a job where those parts of me that aren't a professional, those parts of me that are Jackie the human being and those qualities within me that I think are my greatest strengths and what I like most about myself and I think that had been contained by nursing were finally liberated. Does that make sense?

MP: Yeah.

JACKIE: So for me I was just going 'nah nah nah' to nursing but also knowing that nursing had nursed me there. Does that make sense?

MP: It makes perfect sense.

JACKIE: And I suppose if you like I was going through a bit of a teenage rebellion with it but I still feel that nursing, now that I'm a fully grown adult, I can appreciate what nursing gave me. But at that point because I was free of it and free of some of the containments of it but I can see I'm all of those things.

When I spoke to you on the phone I just thought I'm all of those things because you know they're all parts of me. There's this nurse that wants to stomp on the ward and be matron and stick my hands on my hips and just say 'for Christ's sake. pull yourselves together!'. And I love that part of me but then there is this much more refined part of me and a much more - a side that's learnt to use her intuition and far more finer parts of herself, but I'm also aware that sometimes that's what people need. You know I am fifty now and I think it's a glorious age, because at fifty I can draw on all of those, they are all parts of me and I can be extremely common and swear like a trooper. I can be extremely rough and ready but I can also be extremely subtle and very refined and they're all me and it's delicious.

MP: Fantastic.

JACKIE: Yeah it is and I think all those bits of me are, you know, I thought I'm not one or the other I'm all of them.

MP: OK well I'm going to take you back to, you started the job at Keatley and you're here on the course and you said unlike some students you relished the idea. And the other thing you said, which I thought was really interesting, was the fact that it wasn't prescriptive about what the role was. We were creating this role, so what was that like? Tell me about that time.

JACKIE: Well I remember being astonished that I was sitting in bed one morning reading social policy with relish. Dear God what's happened to me!! What was really interesting about that time, I mean it almost seems like, I mean it's heart breaking now when you look at how things are and it wasn't exactly a revolution that was going on, but when we were on the course it was a very particular moment because we were saying we're waiting for this paper to come out. This is the green paper and we were waiting for it to come out and how will this mould and how will we interpret this.

And I think some of the other people didn't grasp that but I just thought actually I can interpret this, and realising that - and I think there were people like yourself were very key because you were saying yes and you are the people that are going to pick this up and you're going to make it what it is and I think I was mature enough at that age, I was old enough to. You know I developed a lot more confidence in myself during those years as well but I think I was ready to actually think yes I can create this profession, I can create this role. And if you remember I had all that stink with CAMHS do you remember all that?

MP: Yeah yeah.

JACKIE: And I just remembered because thinking about it I was very fresh and it was good that I was fresh I think but it was - you know I now see having gone back into the NHS and seeing how Mental Health works and being a lot more jaded myself, but I was coming up against this dusty old world and I was going 'no actually!' - and it was me. Yeah I can remember being really frustrated with it and wanting to challenge it a lot,

I think I wanted to challenge it and looking back now I think it was a very particular time because I think we were - you know I've lost touch with those people, I'd be really interested in how they've adapted to all the shit we have to deal with now. What would really interest me is how, if I'd stayed and not got made redundant, how would I have survived, because actually what we were was quite a challenging group but actually what I'm seeing in professional life is the people that get on are the arseholes. You know they are the people that are quite happy to tow the party line, ignore people's needs and wants and actually just tick the boxes.

And we were not being, that course did not teach us to tick boxes it did teach us to think. And I was aware, again Eve and I were ready for that, I was aware that there were younger members of that team who might have been less ready to be so challenging but it was still a very intrinsic part of that course but, I mean this sounds awful but I don't quite know how to put it, but I wonder of those of us that were on the course I wonder if the ones that were less inspiring are the ones that are more successful.

MP: I don't know.

JACKIE: That's a terrible thing to say.

MP: No no no, that's interesting.

JACKIE: Because I don't think I would have done very well if I'd stayed. Again it was serendipity but I got out, I think, at the right moment for me.

MP: It's completely sideways but I had a tutorial this afternoon with somebody, she's a teaching assistant in a school, and she was really struggling and saying I don't know what it is I'm doing. She's struggling about who she was and how the module we were doing related to what she did. And I said, 'what is it about your job that really makes you feel that you can make a difference? Where do you feel at home in your job?' She said 'oh I don't know I don't think I've ever felt that.' And then there's another student who was with me said in a very wonderful way 'yeah but how old are you?' to the other student and she said 'I'm twenty three' and she says 'well give yourself a chance, you're not there yet.'

We talked a bit about that and she said 'well how did you decide you wanted to be a university lecturer?' and I said 'I didn't. I didn't go oh I think I'm going to be a university lecturer' it kind of happened but then one of the things about our work is, it works well when we feel we can be in a role where we can make a difference and we've got some level of belief and passion. But there are times when we feel actually -I always think it's a bit like those whelk shellfish, where the case contains them. Hermit crabs, that's it. As they grow they have to pull themselves out of the shell and find a new shell to go into because it doesn't contain them. Sometimes I think if we don't find the new shell to grow into, it stunts our growth and that's the tricky bit in terms of changing job. It's a very long winded way of saying it sounds like the Connexions post and the course gave you a chance to kind of...

JACKIE: Yeah there was spaciousness to it. And there were all sorts of things that I suppose I hadn't known that I'd thought, but actually it taught me to respect my own thinking because I think I'd always been quite contained and the way that I thought and the ideas that I had weren't valued in those circumstances. Whereas they were being valued in this role and in this course and so suddenly I was able to - it meant that they were being validated. Because they were being validated I could then develop them within me and there is nothing nicer than doing that.

MP: Tell me about Eve. You've mentioned her a couple of times.

JACKIE: I love Eve. I do and I still see Eve. Tell you about Eve?

MP: Well what was it about her because a couple of times you've said Eve was really important.

JACKIE: She was really important. Basically because we were both doing the same job for the same college, she was at Exford [local town] and we both sort of went 'what the bloody hell is this job. We've arrived, we've got these skills, they seem to think

we can do it, what do you think we should be doing?' So we were like as long as we always say that we're both doing it it'll be alright.

Eve is just a true friend because actually if I'd said 'I was painting the students faces blue', Eve would have said well she was doing it as well. She would have backed me up. She might have taken me aside and said 'what the hell do you think you're doing Kate?' but she was, and I just knew very quickly with Eve that she was an ally and a really good friend and she's remained a very good friend, and in fact we're quite different people.

She was that bit older than me and she had children quite a bit older than my daughter and she'd lived abroad, she'd been the good wife, I think and she'd come back and done this nice job in a school but Eve's just so bright - it was her time. It was more than her time to do something with her brain.

And I think she knew that as well and I think more for her, although I don't want to speak for Eve, but I think I had a sense that for her it was now or never, so I think it was very important.

But I think we both, I think we complemented each other because we were very different but I think it was her friendship - but she was much more organised than me, she's a much more organised and orderly person and far less frenetic, so she anchored me. Whereas I think I'm a bit more wild and silly and a bit more, much more passionate about things. But I think that did her good. So I think we were quite a good balance because when I was going 'well I don't know what we're meant to be doing' she would organise me but I would go off in big fat inspired moments but she would write it down, so it wouldn't get lost, so it was a very good team and I think we recognised that we were good for each other in that way. I don't we've ever talked about it.

MP: That's quite interesting, I can see that.

JACKIE: For me one of the most important things in friendship or relationships is respect and I think I've just always really respected Eve. Yeah, I think that's developed into love. It's a curious friendship, it's very defined. We're not in each other's houses we're not those sorts of friends. We look each other up and we see each other and we do things. It's not like other friends I've got where some come and live for a while. It wouldn't be like that with Eve and there are areas of her life I don't know anything about but yeah, it's still a very very strong important friendship.

MP: OK. So you're doing the course, two and a bit years. You didn't do the first bit?

JACKIE: No we didn't. Eve and I were really pissed off about it but actually it was very good. We had to go and do that have you ever written your name, come and see. What was it we did; I think we did several sessions with you.

MP: Oh that's right it was all a bit last minute wasn't it.

JACKIE: It was really good and you got us to analyse a paper and to write a few words and there was me and what was her name? Who was the girl whose husband was in the army? Nicky.

MP: Nicky, yes.

JACKIE: There was Nicky, there was me and Eve and there was another woman who was quite eccentric but I don't think she made it, I think she started and then left. I can't remember but there was us four and we really knitted together and we were all the 'oldies' and it was really positive.

That was a very positive start because, and I think that something that you did give us I think was that you really did genuinely value what we were saying and you weren't ticking a box, you might have been but it didn't feel like that at all, that you were genuinely interested in what we were bringing and what our abilities were and were very nurturing of that and encouraging us to open out and there was very much that belief that we were in there even if we didn't know it.

MP: Oh good!

JACKIE: Yeah and I do remember that, I'd forgotten about it but it I think it was very significant and I think it gave us a taste of we're not just going to sit in these classes and just write notes and go. We are going to think. And we were all ready and we were all ripe for it and I remember Nicky was really ripe for it, I think she was at a particular point.

MP: Even now when I hear about something that's happened in Afghanistan or Iraq I always think of her and wonder what happened to her.

JACKIE: Yeah I do.

MP: OK so two and a bit years.

JACKIE: It was three years because I did the PSLD.

MP: I was going to say yes you did the PSLD. Was there a point where you arrive as being professional or does it creep up slowly?

JACKIE: What do you mean by professional?

MP: Well what do you mean by professional?

JACKIE: Well I think without getting all therapyised on you, I do think we are all in a state of becoming. I do think that. I've arrived so many times in my life I don't think I'm just not going to do it anymore because I just think there are platforms and you move on because...

MP: Was there a point, this platform or this stage, I mean I think I agree with you ...

JACKIE: Yeah and actually what I think is beginning to happen is that I'm beginning to not care so maybe I'm near to arriving.

MP: What's that fantastic T.S Elliott quote? Something like 'we shall not know…', I can't remember it but the paraphrase is 'you don't know where you've been until you get there'. 'You don't know the end where you realise where you started from'. It's a lovely quote I'll send it to you. I always remember it cos when my Dad died it was part of his obituary thingy, you know the church service thingy it says at the end 'of all our wanderings we shall arrive at the place from which we came and know it for the first time', or something like that.

JACKIE: That's so true.

MP: So I would agree. One of the interesting things about doing this and talking to people is of course it helps me think about who am I? What professional identity have I got? I suppose in the context, if we just at this stage in this chapter, the context of the course, you know I was the course leader on which you came and were a student on that course and certainly the reason we got our money, was that, was it XXXXXX [County Council] or the college that paid your fees?

JACKIE: I think it was XXXXXX [County Council].

MP: Was it John Bradford [development officer]?

JACKIE: Yeah it was John Bradford.

MP: Was that it was deemed to be a qualifying course in terms of professional recognition. Lots of the courses we do here are professionally recognised and people talk a lot about and I talk a lot about becoming professionally recognised or 'professional formation'. So just in the context of this course, the Working with Young People course, did it feel like you were becoming professionally recognised? Did it feel like you were taking on a mantle of some sort which was being a professional or might that not have been an issue?

JACKIE: The interesting thing about the course, because it was this interrelationship between the job and the course, so it wasn't that, for example if you're training doctors well we know what doctors do don't we and we may want to change what doctors do we've got a framework and we'll fiddle with it, but the core will stay the same. So actually there was an idea of what we were going to be, so there's me and Eve arriving and saying what the bloody hell is this job we'll stick together and say that's what it is and tell everybody, and we'll stick together. And we were doing a course that was also being very creative so it was a kind of, obviously there was a very clear framework of what we were going to learn but within that there was still that very exploratory nature of the course at the heart so it wasn't just 'you will come out like this'. It was 'you will have learnt these things but the meaning of those things to you will be, we'll find out'. Do you know what I mean?

MP: How did we get away with it?

JACKIE: I think you got away with it because actually there was a very solid, you know when I look at it there was a very solid structure of what we were going to learn. What I've realised having gone into CBT, which is, you know I just want to slap them because it's just so rigid and inflexible and so uncreative at times I just want to scream. What I realise about it is that youth work, I just feel like our roots were coming from youth workers that were training us. The fabric of that curriculum was youth work with twiddly bits. It was almost like OK we're not going to call you doctors anymore we're going to call you medical practitioners. Whereas you're not going to be youth workers you're going to be Connexions workers. So actually it really felt to me that there wasn't, because I think that you had a vision and I think there were people like John Bradford and Connexions and I got the sense when I read those social policy documents there were those with vision who had obviously seen the limitations of youth work and wanted something new. So my sense was that, that was the fabric but actually we were going to have fun with this and find out.

I think as I'm talking to you, what I'm realising actually what was really delightful for me was actually what you really drew on was the qualities within me and I think that was what I really appreciated about the course and was the most beneficial aspect of it. Because what else did you have?

MP: I still do believe that.

JACKIE: If you think about it if it was a dry old Oxford University or Kings College Hospital and we're training doctors or lawyers and we've done it for centuries and 'we're the best' you know it's just the same old same old but actually this really was an adventure. But it wasn't just pie in the sky we did have youth work. Is youth work a profession or is it just a bunch of people who used to dabble in dope just finding something to do. I don't know but actually we had that fabric. We were plopping lots of other stuff in. I don't know are you still running the course?

MP: Oh yeah. Actually I'm not but someone else is.

JACKIE: So the course is still being run.

MP: Although it's interesting because what's happened is not all but an awful lot of Connexions is being stripped away but of course now everywhere I go people go well there's a real problem because now Connexions has gone we've got no-one who is there for young people. It's interesting, just coming back to youth work, there's no-one that's there on an individual basis for some of the most vulnerable...

JACKIE: I think it's really interesting you know we've stripped Connexions and what was it six months later we had riots in London. And I think, all that is best about so many professions like counselling, about youth work, about advice and guidance, did get condensed into that role. I do think and I met a lot of really lazy Connexions workers, I really did who were just milking it. And they were crap, but they were

people who hadn't done the course that we'd done. I just thought they didn't have vision what they got was a really really comfy ticket that didn't have the vision and I think that... So I did work with people like that who really disappointed me and I think that within Connexions, I certainly saw some poor management and some poor leadership. And I saw some very burnt out youth workers who were doing alright. I think there was that.

But the thing about working in the college, and maybe that was quite unique for me and Eve, was that we were constantly surrounded by young people, which I think is a wonderfully energising environment to be in. I think that's always a positive place to be. And because of the environment we were in, we weren't just surrounded by young people who were on the edge, we were surrounded by largely young people who were doing OK. So actually, we were able to be buoyed up by the positivity of young people but we also had the energy and we had the vision and we had the place and the resources, to actually take hold of those that were struggling. And every now and again we'd work with some nice middle class kid that got a bit drunk at a party and that would be quite nice and we could do some fantastic work within three sessions with them and be gone.

But it was those young people and we had EMA and the whole concept of what that was going to do for young people. And it did make a big difference and also physically where I worked was within student services, so I was working alongside – you know I could see the vision happening because I was working alongside the people that were administering the EMA and I was networking because the whole thing was about networking, and so I was networking with those people saying 'refer them to me' so I really saw the people that were just doing the paperwork with students for EMA. If you think they are, you know, refer them to me.

Networking with personal tutors so I was, you know I think that because of the course I like to think that Eve and I really took that vision within the college and I'd do a lot of talking and go in to meetings with personal tutors and say what we were about and how we might be able to help them and about this agenda and actually about this government agenda to work with NEETs and our role within that and how they might be able to help us with our role. We had this great machine which was the college, plus also the machine of all the voluntary groups and all those sorts of things within our local towns. We did do a lot of networking and drank a lot of coffee! Looking back I did quite a lot of research in that time, quite informal research but ... I think I've gone off on one.

MP: Being part of the college, I mean I do remember thinking that college fabric was quite unique, it's interesting 'cos my daughter's at Exford and she's got a fantastic tutor which is really nice and its interesting hearing her talk about being at college rather than being at school. The sixth form college in XXXXXX is more like school. You would have had some sort of - someone in a mentor role.

JACKIE: Yeah Joanne was my mentor.

MP: What was that like? That was a relationship which was, in theory, about how we support your development in your practice.

JACKIE: Yeah Joanne, I started off with someone else but they couldn't do it, I can't remember.

MP: What's Joanne's second name?

JACKIE: XXXXX

MP: Oh yeah that's right.

JACKIE: In some ways it was quite a formal relationship and she was a really busy woman and I said you've got to do this or else I can't do the course Joanne and she took it on, being the good woman that she was. There was a degree of ticking the box with her, but having now worked in this situation I'm in now where everything is about ticking the box she was an absolute queen. But she was a very experienced woman.

At the time she started mentoring me she was the manager of the personal tutors so it was appropriate that she should work with me. I think she studied Psychology and I think she'd done some counselling in her past and she'd for many many years at the college she'd always worked in a pastoral role and been managing people so she had a good grasp of what we were about.

She was a very good mentor actually. I mean we would meet, I'd say we've got to do this stuff for college. I did talk to other people and they seemed to have a much more closer day by day relationship with their mentors that seemed to be much more lovely. But mine wasn't like that with her but actually, she was older than me, I would say she was in her late fifties, coming towards retirement I suppose. But she was just a really sound woman, really sound woman. She never got flustered about anything and she just had further education running through her veins.

She really struck that balance between being informal and yet quite authoritative, you know in a way that you wouldn't do at university and she couldn't be that informal in a school. So I found her to be extremely helpful and I know I went to her a few times when I was feeling quite overwhelmed with work and she was very thoughtful, she was very insightful, she was very practical in the way she addressed my needs, and also very encouraging. So she was a significant person, but I think my relationship with you and other tutors was more significant during that time.

But it was - you know I think back fondly of Joanne and I think yeah I did learn a lot from you and she modelled behaviour. How to manage yourself in certain situations that are perhaps a bit chaotic and you don't know where you're going. And she really demonstrated and modelled to me how you need to hold on to really simple principles; I think that's what I learnt from her. You hold onto simple

principles - if you can't think what principles, you need to hold onto here, you know when young people are just going 'no I didn't, yes I did' but you've got to always remain fair but also you're not going to be pushed around by this young person, because they know how to play the game. You know those. Because I did some interviews with young people with her who I was advocating for but she was being the big baddie and I just thought she handled them brilliantly. And I always felt that what she did was fair and firm and everybody went out, even if they didn't like what happened, they felt it was fair.

MP: It's interesting because you asked me what do I mean by being professional or professionalism and I think that being principled, having principles which govern, rather than a manual that tells you what to do at five past nine on a Tuesday morning , it's a principle by which you return to. I guess the whole thing about those reflective recordings was about developing those principles in action. What are the values, what are the principles in action which we use as our reference points?

JACKIE: I said that about Eve that she's a woman I respect and it's a really important thing for me in relationships and it's something I've learnt over years that I've really loved people but I've not respected them and so relationships have failed or petered out or whatever. And respect I think is as important as love I've discovered, within me.

MP: Respect is an interesting phrase because it's banded around and I think it's one that's not…

JACKIE: True respect. You can respect someone's role but still think they're an arsehole can't you. But to actually really respect someone and I think I really did respect her. Yeah she was a true mentor I mean I could look up to her and say 'I'd like to be like that'. And I could see that actually in many ways I wasn't like that and that could be something to aspire to.

Yeah and I think she was a really good woman and I think she wasn't a good professional, she was a good woman. Being a professional is easy but being a professional that you respect or a professional that is most effective if you like, I think comes from the human being that is the professional.

MP: What's suddenly popped into my head is a shell, and this might not be right, but there's some sort of outer bit which is professional but actually unless the person inside is a person with integrity that's what we respect, it's like it's not...

MP: I think there's more than that though I think there's more than that because I think if I'd met Joanne out of her work I'd have respected her and I would have liked her but there was something about, I think you can't separate them. I remember talking to a friend of mine, she did dance at college and she was talking about one of her tutors, she went to Goldsmiths or something, and she just said 'God I hate

that tutor, she just stinJackie of dance' and I thought in some ways Joanne really was the pastoral tutor and manager but she was also that woman. But the woman she is and the role that she is had merged and that for me was something I could really...

MP: Did you ever experience that?

JACKIE: Within myself?

MP: Yeah.

JACKIE: Yes I think I have. I think I have, and again it's all stepped. I can remember being eighteen and it was the first ward that I ever worked on, and I can remember being with a patient that was doing, I'd never seen anyone die before, we'd made him comfortable and we left him there and I could have left him but I just thought I can't leave him, I can't leave this man. And I was terrified and oh my God what's he going to do, I was just a kid really but I remember thinking that's my job, I'm the nurse!

And I can remember holding this man's hand and I can remember this silent communication from my heart to his and I remember it so clearly and just saying 'I can't go with you but I'll walk to the door'. And that transformed me as a human being and I can remember that distinctly and I have felt that every time I have been with someone that's dying.

And I really felt it's only me that you've got and I'll do my best. I've observed and I can see actually over the years as I've matured, that's matured but it was sparked then and I can see that now - you know I was sitting with a patient this morning and this woman was sixty and telling me for the first time about a miscarriage she'd had and she'd never really talked about it to anybody before. And, I know that I would have been sympathetic at twenty five and I know I would have done a good job but actually, we were two gnarled older women, not old women, but we've seen life and life's fucking shit sometimes and we just sat with it. and we were both mothers and I just thought - actually that substance that you can't get hold off is what was in the room and what really mattered and I thought that's the professional I am, that's the professional I want to be. So much of that hasn't come out of everything I've learnt out of a book. What I've learnt out of a book, a lot of it has come out of a book but it's merged with all the shit I've been through and all the joy I've been through, the human being that I am. I can't separate them, but I'm getting better.

MP: Would you want to separate them?

JACKIE: No, because it's not just a job, it's not just a profession. You know when I started nursing it was a vocation. It's a really old fashioned term now but it really was that I want to be a nurse I want to help people. If you say that now it's like 'oh don't you

want to be a professional?' No, I just want to help people. I think really at the heart of it for me it's about a vocation.

Appendix 3: Example of coding summary

Jackie: Interview 1 – themed textual samples

<mark>**Coming into the work – steps towards professionalism**</mark>
when I had my daughter I couldn't do nursing anymore so I had a friend who was, what was it called, it was all the YOT schemes. I got involved in that and she said oh you can teach health and social care so I ended up teaching health and social care in Brighton for about a year and then I left that. [p1]
I did a year there to train to do the City and Guilds 7307 and whilst I was there I got to know the tutors, I mean it's all serendipity really. They said to me oh you've got to do so many hours teaching we'll have you for cheap, we won't pay you, you can teach some of our NVQ students. So I starting teaching NVQ students there and so I got the qualification and they offered me so many hours a week teaching NVQ students and Foundation students. [p1]
They weren't offering me a proper job, I think I had something like ten hours a week. So I left it and back into nursing and did night duty because that's my old bread and butter job. [p1]
did a counselling course at level 2, so I had that. But again it was level 2 so I wasn't really up and running as a fully qualified or accredited, you know I was kind of something and nothing. [p1]
Then this Connexions post came up […]I think what got me that job was the fact that I'd had, when I'd worked at Exford [local town], cos I'd worked at Exford [local town] I knew the college anyway and I'd had a part role in being a personal tutor. There was a personal tutor who was basically being sent off to do other things so I was a cheaper version of her and I could just slot in and do some of her work. [p1&2]
they said to do it you've got to do the training and I said thank you very much [p2]
<mark style="background-color:red">**Relationships and personal interventions**</mark>
Eve was a very important colleague I think, I think we really knew what that opportunity was and we were gonna to use and we were gonna take it. [p3]
I had raised my daughter from twelve weeks pregnant alone. I mean I've always been on my own with her, her father left. I'd had relationships but I'd moved in with a partner who I'd know for quite a number of years as a friend and he died very very suddenly and unexpectedly when I started that job in the September […] my whole world that I thought was suddenly becoming much more stable just got tipped upside down. [p3
and I think there were people like yourself were very key because you were saying yes and you are the people that are going to pick this up and you're going to make it what it is […] I developed a lot more confidence in myself during those years as well but I think I was ready to actually think yes I can create this profession [p5]
we were both doing the same job for the same college […] and we both sort of went 'what the bloody hell is this job. We've arrived, we've got these skills, they seem to

think we can do it, what do you think we should be doing?' So we were like as long as we always say that we're both doing it it'll be alright. [p7]

Eve is just a true friend because actually if I'd said 'I was painting the students faces blue', Eve would have said well she was doing it as well. She would have backed me up. She might have taken me aside and said 'what the hell do you think you're doing Kate?' but she was, and I just knew very quickly with Eve that she was an ally and a really good friend [p7]

I think we complemented each other because we were very different but I think it was her friendship - but she was much more organised than me, she's a much more organised and orderly person and far less frenetic, so she anchored me. Whereas I think I'm a bit more wild and silly and a bit more, much more passionate about things. But I think that did her good. So I think we were quite a good balance because when I was going 'well I don't know what we're meant to be doing' she would organise me but I would go off in big fat inspired moments but she would write it down, so it wouldn't get lost, so it was a very good team and I think we recognised that we were good for each other in that way. [p7]

For me one of the most important things in friendship or relationships is respect and I think I've just always really respected Eve. Yeah, I think that's developed into love. It's a curious friendship, it's very defined. We're not in each other's houses we're not those sorts of friends. We look each other up and we see each other and we do things. It's not like other friends I've got where some come and live for a while. It wouldn't be like that with Eve and there are areas of her life I don't know anything about but yeah, it's still a very very strong important friendship. [p7]

I think that something that you did give us I think was that you really did genuinely value what we were […] you were genuinely interested in what we were bringing and what our abilities were and were very nurturing of that and encouraging us to open out and there was very much that belief that we were in there even if we didn't know it. [p8]

we were constantly surrounded by young people, which I think is a wonderfully energising environment to be in. I think that's always a positive place to be. And because of the environment we were in, we weren't just surrounded by young people who were on the edge, we were surrounded by largely young people who were doing OK. So actually, we were able to be buoyed up by the positivity of young people but we also had the energy and we had the vision and we had the place and the resources, to actually take hold of those that were struggling. [p11]

In some ways it was quite a formal relationship and she was a really busy woman and I said you've got to do this or else I can't do the course Joanne and she took it on, being the good woman that she was. There was a degree of ticking the box with her, but having now worked in this situation I'm in now where everything is about ticking the box she was an absolute queen. [p12]

I did talk to other people and they seemed to have a much more closer day by day relationship with their mentors that seemed to be much more lovely. But mine wasn't like that with her but actually, she was older than me, I would say she was in her late fifties, coming towards retirement I suppose. But she was just a really sound woman, really sound woman. She never got flustered about anything and she just had further

education running through her veins. [p12]
She really struck that balance between being informal and yet quite authoritative, you know in a way that you wouldn't do at university and she couldn't be that informal in a school. So I found her to be extremely helpful and I know I went to her a few times when I was feeling quite overwhelmed with work and she was very thoughtful, she was very insightful, she was very practical in the way she addressed my needs, and also very encouraging. So she was a significant person, but I think my relationship with you and other tutors was more significant during that time. [p12]
she modelled behaviour. How to manage yourself in certain situations that are perhaps a bit chaotic and you don't know where you're going. And she really demonstrated and modelled to me how you need to hold on to really simple principles; [p12]
You can respect someone's role but still think they're an arsehole can't you. But to actually really respect someone and I think I really did respect her. Yeah she was a true mentor I mean I could look up to her and say 'I'd like to be like that'. And I could see that actually in many ways I wasn't like that and that could be something to aspire to. [p12]
But the woman she is and the role that she is had merged [p13]
Reflection and professional learning
I realised how clever I was [p1]
I wasn't going anywhere and I knew it. [p2]
I knew I needed a degree [p2]
JACKIE: it's amazing to think about it now that some people didn't want to do that whereas I just knew that was my ticket really. MP: In what way? JACKIE: I suppose we're talking about professionalism. I had all these skills and years of experience in nursing but I'd been out of it with nursing. [p2]
So I knew that for me to move on I needed a degree and this was the world I was in, I needed a degree. I think at that time my motivation for that job was that I wanted really out of nursing and I wanted to go more towards counselling because I'd done the counselling course and I thought right this is much more of a pastoral role. [p2]
What happened was I really brought myself to the job and after a year I started the degree and all of that at that moment when I started the degree all of those things met. It was kind of all those roads came together [p2]
I like to think that it was really good for the college as well and for Connexions because I think actually there was enough not really knowing what the job was and there was enough maturity and experience in me, plus the guidance of the course to actually create something really quite new and positive. And I really felt that in the course, I felt there was a really mutual exploration of what this role could be and it felt very exciting. It did feel very exciting I think. [p3]
I think my perception now is different than it might have been when I started the job. I did know that actually I've got to make this life for myself and I think one of the

defining things about me as the woman I am, is the fact that I've raised a child alone and I have been a single parent. I think that has moulded me in many many ways. So I think starting the course I think the one thing I knew I had, I didn't have much money, I didn't have a family that had much money, that wasn't the background I came from, but what I did know was that I was bright. I didn't always know I was bright but by then I knew I was bright and that the one thing that was gonna get me through was me and that I needed to develop me because there was nothing else to develop. [p3]

I love my nurse! I think there were times when I didn't like it. I think my identify as a nurse is something that I think I've wrestled with a lot but now I feel I've integrated her. She is a part of me and she is a part of me as a psychotherapist and I think she is a part of me, if I went back to youth work she is a part of that. [p3&4]

that course did not teach us to tick boxes it did teach us to think [p5]

there was spaciousness to it [...] it taught me to respect my own thinking because I think I'd always been quite contained and the way that I thought and the ideas that I had weren't valued in those circumstances. Whereas they were being valued in this role and in this course and so suddenly I was able to - it meant that they were being validated. [p6]

And we were doing a course that was also being very creative so it was a kind of, obviously there was a very clear framework of what we were going to learn but within that there was still that very exploratory nature of the course at the heart so it wasn't just 'you will come out like this'. It was 'you will have learnt these things but the meaning of those things to you will be, we'll find out' [p9]

JACKIE: a lot of it has come out of a book but it's merged with all the shit I've been through and all the joy I've been through, the human being that I am. I can't separate them, but I'm getting better.

MP: Would you want to separate them?

JACKIE: No, because it's not just a job, it's not just a profession. You know when I started nursing it was a vocation. It's a really old fashioned term now but it really was that I want to be a nurse I want to help people. If you say that now it's like 'oh don't you want to be a professional?' No, I just want to help people. I think really at the heart of it for me it's about a vocation [p14]

Transformative learning and crossing a threshold

I was going through a bit of a teenage rebellion with it but I still feel that nursing, now that I'm a fully grown adult, I can appreciate what nursing gave me [...] I can see I'm all of those things [...] because you know they're all parts of me. There's this nurse that wants to stomp on the ward and be matron and stick my hands on my hips and just say 'for Christ's sake. pull yourselves together!'. And I love that part of me but then there is this much more refined part of me and a much more - a side that's learnt to use her intuition and far more finer parts of herself, but I'm also aware that sometimes that's what people need. [p4]

I do think we are all in a state of becoming. I do think that. I've arrived so many times in my life I don't think I'm just not going to do it anymore because I just think there are platforms and you move on [...] what I think is beginning to happen is that I'm

beginning to not care so maybe I'm near to arriving [p8]
I can remember being eighteen and it was the first ward that I ever worked on, and I can remember being with a patient that was doing, I'd never seen anyone die before, we'd made him comfortable and we left him there and I could have left him but I just thought I can't leave him, I can't leave this man. And I was terrified and oh my God what's he going to do, I was just a kid really but I remember thinking that's my job, I'm the nurse! [p13]
And I can remember holding this man's hand and I can remember this silent communication from my heart to his and I remember it so clearly and just saying 'I can't go with you but I'll walk to the door'. And that transformed me as a human being and I can remember that distinctly and I have felt that every time I have been with someone that's dying [p14]
A professional community
I remember being astonished that I was sitting in bed one morning reading social policy with relish. Dear God what's happened to me!! What was really interesting about that time, I mean it almost seems like, I mean it's heart breaking now when you look at how things are and it wasn't exactly a revolution that was going on, but when we were on the course it was a very particular moment because we were saying we're waiting for this paper to come out. This is the green paper and we were waiting for it to come out and how will this mould and how will we interpret this. [p5]
I've lost touch with those people, I'd be really interested in how they've adapted to all the shit we have to deal with now [p5]
I just feel like our roots were coming from youth workers that were training us. The fabric of that curriculum was youth work with twiddly bits. It was almost like OK we're not going to call you doctors anymore we're going to call you medical practitioners. Whereas you're not going to be youth workers you're going to be Connexions workers. So actually it really felt to me that there wasn't, because I think that you had a vision and I think there were people like John Bradford [development officer] and Connexions and I got the sense when I read those social policy documents there were those with vision who had obviously seen the limitations of youth work and wanted something new [p10]
But it wasn't just pie in the sky we did have youth work. Is youth work a profession or is it just a bunch of people who used to dabble in dope just finding something to do. I don't know but actually we had that fabric [p10]
all that is best about so many professions like counselling, about youth work, about advice and guidance, did get condensed into that role. I do think and I met a lot of really lazy Connexions workers, I really did who were just milking it. And they were crap, but they were people who hadn't done the course that we'd done. I just thought they didn't have vision what they got was a really really comfy ticket that didn't have the vision [p10]
it did make a big difference and also physically where I worked was within student services [...] you know I could see the vision happening because I was working alongside the people that were administering the EMA and I was networking because

the whole thing was about networking, and so I was networking with those people saying 'refer them to me' [p11]

Networking with personal tutors so I was, you know I think that because of the course I like to think that Eve and I really took that vision within the college and I'd do a lot of talking and go in to meetings with personal tutors and say what we were about and how we might be able to help them and about this agenda and actually about this government agenda to work with NEETs and our role within that and how they might be able to help us with our role [p11]

In search of praxis

finally I was in a professional role or a job where those parts of me that aren't a professional, those parts of me that are Kate the human being and those qualities within me that I think are my greatest strengths and what I like most about myself and I think that had been contained by nursing were finally liberated. [p4]

I can be extremely rough and ready but I can also be extremely subtle and very refined and they're all me and it's delicious [p4]

what I'm realising actually what was really delightful for me was actually what you really drew on was the qualities within me and I think that was what I really appreciated about the course and was the most beneficial aspect of it. Because what else did you have? [p10]

MP: What are the values, what are the principles in action which we use as our reference points?

JACKIE: […] it's something I've learnt over years that I've really loved people but I've not respected them and so relationships have failed or petered out or whatever. And respect I think is as important as love I've discovered, within me [p13]

she wasn't a good professional, she was a good woman. Being a professional is easy but being a professional that you respect or a professional that is most effective if you like, I think comes from the human being that is the professional [p13]

I was sitting with a patient this morning and this woman was sixty and telling me for the first time about a miscarriage she'd had and she'd never really talked about it to anybody before. And, I know that I would have been sympathetic at twenty five and I know I would have done a good job but actually, we were two gnarled older women, not old women, but we've seen life and life's fucking shit sometimes and we just sat with it. and we were both mothers and I just thought - actually that substance that you can't get hold off is what was in the room and what really mattered and I thought that's the professional I am, that's the professional I want to be [p14]