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Love Letters to Services Past: Risk and Outdoor Education in Youth Work

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How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the Poet-Laureate of Hope End,

'Sonnets from the Portuguese, 43', 1850

Abstract

Outdoor educators often argue that growing public aversion to, and avoidance of, risk, ironically puts young people further in harm's way, as they lack the experience of successfully managing risk for themselves. Young people also face more significant, 'real' risks from the consequential inactive lifestyles and the attendant health issues. Youth workers and other similar professionals have to manage these tensions in their day-to-day practices as they decide how far to expose young people to risk. These tensions are exacerbated as youth work and outdoor education in the current climate in the UK, specifically England, face unprecedented funding pressures. These pressures impact negatively upon workers' ability to support young people in gaining both the experience of managing risk positively, and of being healthier.

This research instantiates many of the current tensions, conflicts and difficulties faced by the wider public sector in England, through an examination of an underexplored area of youth work practice – that of how youth workers perform and manage risk in outdoor education. This is one of the very few studies to examine the intersection between youth work, outdoor education and risk.

An embedded multi case study design was used to carry out research in one local authority area, and in a medium sized charity. Thematic analysis was utilised to explore the experiences of managers and youth workers, in relation to their work in the outdoors in the case study areas.

Drawing on rich data, each case study explored the value of outdoor education in a youth work context for the development of opportunities for relationship building and for learning. I also report how each of the case study organisations managed risk in this context.

This analysis of the contemporary youth work situation explicates the issues experienced by youth workers, facing risk as an all-pervasive phenomenon. Key gaps in the youth work theory of outdoor education are discussed. The analysis draws on a range of theoretical frames from the diverse areas of outdoor education, youth work and risk.

I posit the notion of 'Slow' practice to capture the centrality of relationships to effective youth work practice. Further, I analyse the current situation in youth work and outdoor education through the concepts of precarity, post-neoliberal hegemony and liquid modernity. Slow practice offers a counternarrative to the current post-neoliberal context of precarious short-term funding regimes, by suggesting that relationships developed through Slow practice are more effective ones, and, where they are built on concordance, offer better risk mitigation strategies.

Key words – youth work, youth workers, risk, young people, outdoor education, Slow practice

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Glossary

AALA – Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority
ACYP – Association of Communities and Young People, pseudonym for case study 1
BERA – British Education Research Association
CWVYS - Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services
DfE - Department for Education
DfESc - Department for Education and Science
DfES - Department for Education and Skills
Hillshire CC – Hillshire County Council, pseudonym for case study 2
HM Gov. – Her Majesty's Government
HSE – Health and Safety Executive
IOL – Institute for Outdoor Learning
IOL NE – Institute for Outdoor Learning - North East
LBFEW - Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales
LOtC – Learning Outside the Classroom
NCIA – National Coalition for Independent Action
NCS – National Citizen Service
NEET – Young people who are not in education, employment or training
NOS – National Occupational Standards for Youth Work
NYA – National Youth Agency
PbR – Payment by Results
RoSPA – Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
SHU – Sheffield Hallam University

Prologue

In 1998, I was the worker in charge of a school trip to a remote part of the Yorkshire Dales. I was responsible for a group of young people on a residential activity. This trip was well planned and organised with experienced, qualified, careful staff, and a high staffing ratio, given that we were working with a group of young people whose behaviour was challenging.

What transpired was by far the worst experience of my professional career. During the course of the first evening away, one young man, here given the pseudonym of Niki, fell backwards out of a first floor window onto the concrete path below. The sickening sound of the leaden thud as Niki hit the ground, and the attendant screams from the other young people, shocked by the course of events, will stay with me forever.

Clearly, my first and overriding concern was for the young man whom we suspected had broken his back and, secondly, for the other young people and staff all traumatised by the event.

When, hours later, it was confirmed that Niki was an incredibly lucky individual and was not seriously hurt, my thoughts turned to "What if" scenarios? How would I feel if something terrible had actually happened to Niki? How could I ever live with myself if Niki had been seriously hurt? The potential psychological impact upon others and myself was too difficult to contemplate. Where would this incident leave me (and us as a team of workers) with his parents or his school? What would be the consequences for the youth service I worked for and the local authority as the umbrella organisation? My thoughts also turned to my own professional standing. Was I negligent, despite my attempts to model best practice when planning the trip? Would I be sued? Would I work again? If I did not or could not, how would I support my growing family?

I spent much time speculating on the potential consequences of a serious injury even though I knew Niki was alive and well.

Several years later, now employed as an academic, generations of my students have analysed the detail of this trip. I use it as an educational case study. With the twin benefits of hindsight and forensic questioning, they usually find some flaws with the planning. Some of these students claim there was a case for negligence. That may or may not have been the case. In actual fact, there was a happy ending. Niki did not sustain a serious injury, 'just' a bruised coccyx; there was no litigious parent, rather a mother who - and I paraphrase - threatened to "kill the little bleeder if he doesn't stop doing these sort of stupid things" and a disinterested set of employers. For me, on the other hand, there was an abundant opportunity for reflective practice and the kernel of a research interest.

This vignette is the first of many stories of, and from, practice that help frame this work. This thesis offers new theorisations of practice in relation to outdoor education and risk in a contemporary English youth work context, whilst recognising that outdoor education is contextualised differently in other fields (the latter issue is discussed further in Chapters One and Two).

Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter, and the prologue that precedes it, explicate the origins of my interest in outdoor education in youth work. I start this chapter by offering a broad overview of the research, outlining some of the pertinent contextual issues, that of risk in outdoor education and cuts to public services. I then outline my stance in relation to the research, in order to support transparency and reflexivity. A more detailed background and context section follows, which examines three major themes – those of youth work, outdoor education and risk. The research aims, objectives and research questions are then delineated, as is the overall approach to the research. I conclude with a summative outline of this introductory chapter and a chapter structure of the remaining thesis.

We are storied beings; narratives of ourselves are central to our agency, to being human (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2001). I have, therefore, elected to open with a vignette that indicates the genesis of my interest in this area. This key incident helped form my guiding interests and sensitizing concepts (Charmaz, 2006). It took place against a backdrop of high profile deaths involving young people on outdoor education trips in the United Kingdom (Fulbrook, 2005). Some of these incidents, despite their relative rarity (Baillie, 2012), assumed such significance that they led to a change of policy, guidance or even legislation – for example, Lyme Bay 1992, Stainforth Beck 2000, and Glenridding 2005 (Baillie, 2003; Fulbrook, 2005). Such high profile incidents were all subject to intense media interest, despite the relatively good safety record of the outdoor education industry – in fact, a child or young person is statistically as likely to die from being struck by a bolt of lightning, as on an outdoor

education trip (Fulbrook, 2005). The high profile nature of such incidents forms an important consideration and context for youth workers, teachers and other similar professionals who engage young people in risk in the outdoors.

The second contextual issue for this research is that of the unprecedented cuts to the public sector following the global recession (2007/2008 onwards). These cuts have fallen disproportionately upon youth and outdoor education services (Wylie, 2015). A recent Unison report estimates that between April 2010 and April 2016 some £387 million has been cut from youth service spending across the UK, with some 93% of (local authority) youth services reporting severe cuts (Unison, 2016). The Institute for Outdoor Learning refers to the ''*death*'' of local authority outdoor education centres in England (IOL NE, 2011). My contention is that the pressures of unprecedented budget cuts, in the context of austerity Britain (McGimpsey, 2013) is reducing the quality and quantity of what is on offer in terms of both youth work and outdoor education. Further, a culture of caution (Thom, Sales & Pearce, 2007; Wood & Hine, 2009), impacts negatively upon the perceived risks of taking young people into the outdoors, so practitioners are more reluctant to engage young people in risk in this context. The result of these two issues is that there is a fundamental change in what is on offer to young people.[1]

This research has been influenced by the theoretical constructs of the perception of risk as an all-pervasive social phenomenon (for example, Beck, 1999; Giddens, 1999;

Whilst I sometimes employ the term 'austerity Britain' my research and focus is on the situation in England, as there are considerable differences in policy, practice and impact of the cuts in the other three nations of the United Kingdom (Barnard, 2010). [1]

Power, 2007). I argue that the practice of outdoor education in youth work currently faces the combined pressures of the very restricted funding of austerity, complex funding regimes (Mason[2], P. 2015), and the strictures of managerialism in a post-neoliberal environment[3] (McGimpsey, 2013). This, combined with those all-pervasive concerns about risk, mean that taking young people into the outdoors is a potential source of concern for workers. This explicates the tensions workers experience in their day-to-day practice with young people; tensions that are examined in this case study research of an underexplored aspect of youth work practice, that of outdoor education in a youth work context.

Personal Stance

From the interpretivist position taken in this study, understanding one's personal stance and being reflexive is central to social research. I begin, therefore, with an outline of my stance[4], in order to offer personal context and to be as transparent and reflexive as possible at the earliest opportunity (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012; Rose, 1997). There is further discussion of reflexivity and positionality in the methodology chapter.

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[2] I have indicated the author's first name here, and throughout the thesis to differentiate between the two authors with the same surname published in the same year.

[3] This notion is explored further in Chapter Two, but describes a phase beyond the neoliberal emphasis on cuts, competition and market, through to a new policy making era for youth services that is fundamentally changing their situation (McGimpsey, 2013)

[4] Personal stance is defined here as the researcher's position towards the research that comes from their beliefs and views (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013)

As can be seen from the prologue, the early motivation for the research was rooted in my past practice; this practice is explored briefly here:

I attended what might now be termed a 'sink' secondary school before going to a very privileged sixth form and then to an elite University. Consequently, I have had some experience of being both advantaged and disadvantaged, of being 'othered' and of understanding different perspectives, different worldviews. This has underscored my professional values of promoting social justice, entirely in keeping with youth work's emancipatory traditions (Nicholls, 2012). It has also led me to understand the importance of subjectivity, and the futility of seeking absolute objectivity in qualitative research.

As both a youth work practitioner and manager, I worked with a variety of marginalised groups and individuals, and it was this experience that led me to outdoor education and related programmes. I saw outdoor education/ accreditation programmes as being useful tools to facilitate developmental work with individuals, rather than being ends in their own right. In short, I see outdoor education as a tool for empowering marginalised groups and individuals, rather than being primarily concerned with developing a competency set for outdoor (sports) participation. This approach is absolutely in accordance with mainstream youth work traditions. I see outdoor education as being a tool with which to positively engage in young people's subjective experiences of the world. This is in keeping with the anti-foundationalist perspective taken in this research, where the nature of 'reality' is seen to be socially and discursively constructed (Grix, 2010).

My interest in the research is partly about how approaches to risk in outdoor education 'fit' with the dominant understandings of what it is to be professional in the youth work field, rather than that of a specialist outdoor educator. I came to the research as that of an outsider, in terms of the outdoor education world, and as someone who is hostile to some of its discourses (that is, systems of thought and ideas that help construct 'truths'). From the youth work perspective, I am a 'lapsed' insider, having been out of practice for several years now. Consequently, I find myself having both an insider and outsider identity as a researcher, suspended in a betwixt and a between position (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, 2001). However, I felt that this led to neither inclusion nor exclusion by the research participants but to a dialectical one, where I was continuously informed by the differential perceptions of both myself as researcher and the research participants (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010).

I am also an advocate for both youth work and outdoor education, seeing both as being positive forces for good (although not unproblematic) in young people's lives. Further, I believe in the ethos of public service and, contrary to the dominant (post-) neoliberal hegemony[5], do not see competition and the dominance of the market as having a place in the broadly educational projects that are youth work and outdoor education. I recognise that this could offer a potential for bias in my work and so have tried to be reflexive in my analysis, utilised the tools of journaling to support this. I have also been as open as possible to alternative views, read broadly and asked for a

[5] Defined here in the general sense of a dominant, unquestioned ideology, the concept of post-neoliberal is discussed in Chapter Two.

wide variety of critiques to my work during the course of the research. In the data

analysis, I have quoted extensively from the participants to ensure their perspectives

were captured comprehensively. I have also worked towards participative member

checking, which offers a less tokenistic involvement of the research participants, by

discussing both the transcription and analysis with them (Doyle, 2007). These tools to

mitigate bias have also been employed to counter two other potential sources of bias,

explored below:

My previous experience as a youth work manager and practitioner gives me a

particular perspective on issues of professionalism and risk. I have supported several

colleagues through difficult risk issues that they encountered regarding risk when I

managed them. Prior to that, I had experienced considerable angst as the senior

worker involved in one potentially very serious incident (the vignette in the prologue).

All of these experiences affect my views, in that I recognise that I may approach the

research from the point of view of how to 'protect' workers and young people, rather

from the perspective of someone who advocates for a bolder approach to risk,

although I understand the logic and importance of exposing young people to risk too.

These experiences of being a practitioner and manager involved in what could have

been disastrous incidents, have made me acutely aware of the importance of getting

ideas of risk 'right', of being very aware of what happens when things go wrong, and of

the high stakes involved. This means I come to the research with the view that it is

important to undertake research that will ultimately lead to better advice/ guidance

about risk in this particular field, although I do not see the research as being an action

research project, if the latter is defined by its prime purpose as being to influence or change practice (Robson, 2002).

Having discussed my personal stance, I now turn to a discussion of the background, context and definitions of the main themes of this research - youth work, outdoor education and risk.

Background and Context

The first part of this section offers a brief definition of the contested term that is youth work. I then turn to the contemporary English youth work context with an examination of the impact of youth work funding following the 2007/8 global recession. Outdoor education in youth work is discussed in relation to risk and a youth worker's role as an (informal) educator, arguing that youth work is a profession that demands practitioners expose young people to risk.

The section on outdoor education argues that this sector has been subject to the same pressures of a post-neoliberal environment as youth work, in terms of austerity and cuts. I propose that outdoor education is the most pertinent term as it indicates both the educational intent and the extent of these activities that are used in a youth work context. A case is made for the increasing importance of young people having access to outdoor education opportunities as an antidote to the rise in obesity and mental health issues that sedentary lifestyles can cause.

In the final part of this section, a brief genesis of the term risk and its multivarious uses is offered before professionals' perceptions of risk, in relation to how far workers should expose young people to risk, is discussed.

Youth Work

A variety of phrases cover the territory of youth work: youth and community work; community learning; youth and community development work; informal education and social pedagogy (Batsleer & Davies, 2010; Beck & Purcell, 2010; Packman, 2008; Smith, 1988). Youth work is the term that I shall employ for the sake of simplicity and consistency. Youth work is itself a contested term and practice (Smith, 2001b), but here I refer to youth work as that practice undertaken by those who identify themselves as youth workers, and are engaged in educative work with young people who are predominantly 13 – 19 years. Youth work and youth workers consciously use informal and non-formal education as tools to engage young people, in order to support their development through adolescence (National Youth Agency [NYA], 2007). Further discussion as to the different conceptions of youth work can be found in Chapter Two.

The most significant contextual issue for English youth work is that, following the global recession of 2008, particularly since the Coalition Government came to power in May 2010 and subsequent Conservative Governments from 2015 onwards, severe public sector cuts have fallen disproportionately on the youth work sector (Mahadevan, 2011; NYA, 2016; Unison, 2016; Wylie, 2015). Many youth services have been severely reduced or have disappeared altogether, leaving the whole sector in a

state of precariousness (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011; NYA, 2016). This has been exacerbated by the removal of ring-fenced funding for statutory (local authority) youth services meaning it was no longer protected unlike, for example, schools, pensions and other services that do have protected funding, sealing the demise of a once thriving statutory youth work sector (Jeffs, 2015).

Whilst local authority youth services have been hard hit in the recent cuts, much youth work activity takes place in the third sector, which includes voluntary and community youth organisations. Funding issues have impacted severely on this sector too. Small and medium sized charities, many of which focus on work with young people, have been particularly hard hit (Lloyds Bank Foundation England & Wales [LBFEW], 2016a). Additionally, the move to a commissioning model has meant that many charities have had to fight harder for funding and undergo lengthy, convoluted and expensive processes to be able to gain commissioned work (LBFEW, 2016b, 2017).

Since the demise of so many local authority and third sector youth services and up and down the country (NYA, 2016), the National Citizen Service (NCS) is now the Government's flagship (and sole) yet controversial policy, and underperforming service for young people and youth work (de St. Croix, 2011, Mahadevan, 2011a; Public Accounts Committee, 2017). This is despite a previous Government's paper that claimed to be "*Positive for Youth*" (HM Government [HM Gov.], 2011). In many cases, the *only* types of youth work that are receiving funding now in particular areas are those NCS projects, as mainstream youth work funding has been decimated (Unison, 2016). These (NCS) projects have, at their heart, a belief in the transformative power

of residential activity - often based on outdoor education - to build a more cohesive society by mixing social groups (NatCen Social Research et al, 2012). Unlike year round youth work provision that has traditionally been provided by local authority and third sector youth work organisations, the NCS projects are largely designed to be short lived, one off, 'rites of passage' type experiences.

Youth work's emancipatory traditions mean that many youth workers approach work in the outdoors with young people in a very particular way, seeing outdoor education as an opportunity to promote young people's autonomy and decision making (NYA, 2004) and support their understanding of risk (National Occupational Standards [NOS], 2012). Most professional (paid, full time) youth workers see themselves as educators, but with an emphasis on informal or non-formal approaches rather than focusing on the strictures of the formal (school-based) education system (Stanton, 2015). This, I will argue in Chapter Two, has important implications for how youth workers' view risk.

As exposing young people to risk is an essential part of a youth worker's job (NOS, 2012), youth workers potentially expose *themselves* to risk when they carry out this core part of their professional role. I argue that youth workers who chose to expose young people to risk through the medium of outdoor education are particularly at risk as professionals, given that risk in this context is an all-pervasive phenomenon (Power, 2007). Further some types of risk incidents, such as those involving young people in the outdoors, are much more likely to result in public and media interest due to the social amplification of risk, discussed in Chapter Two (Kasperson, Kasperson, Pidgeon,

& Slovic, 2003). However, any reluctance on the part of youth workers to embrace this aspect of their work, that is, to fail to support young people to understand and manage risk themselves, could be damaging to the efficacy of their professional role. The implications of this are discussed further in Chapter Two.

Outdoor Education

What is meant by outdoor education is also contested (Nicol, 2002a). Some commentators distinguish between outdoor education and outdoor (adventure) education, with the addition of the bracketed (adventure) utilised to distinguish one category from another. The latter category tends to focus on activities that are usually seen as more adventurous – skiing, sailing, kayaking and the like, thus distinguishing it from the more 'mundane' range of outdoor activities such as camping and orienteering. Other terms that are frequently used that cover similar territory include outdoor learning, environmental education, experiential learning, outdoor adventure education and adventure play.

In the UK from the 1970s onwards, outdoor education was the ubiquitous term used to cover an incredibly wide range of out of school ventures, from outdoor pursuits, field studies, and educational outings, to environmental education and wilderness therapy, to name but a few (Ogilvie, 2013). The term outdoor education became outmoded as many in this very broad sector (including some in the youth work field) wanted to distinguish what they did from formal education, that is, from the work of schools (Ogilvie, 2013). Outdoor Learning became the preferred term as instantiated by the changing title of the leading professional body in the late 1990s, when the

National Association for Outdoor Education became the Association for Outdoor Learning (Ogilvie, 2013).

I reclaim and use the term outdoor education, in this particular context of outdoor education from a youth work perspective, for two very specific reasons. Firstly I wanted to find a term that has been used to cover the very broad range of away from base activities that youth workers would utilise - such as outdoor pursuits, fishing, camping, cultural visits and residentials. All of these examples were referred to in the data set. This broad range of activities is entirely in keeping with the history of the use of the umbrella term outdoor education (Ogilvie, 2013). Outdoor education is, of course, used and defined very differently in different contexts, this conception of it is limited to a youth work context here, its appearance in different fields is further discussed in chapter two.

Secondly, I use the term in order to emphasise what I feel should be the raison d'être of youth work, that it should be a broadly educative project (Davies, 2015b; Smith, 1999, 2002). I use the term outdoor education here to signal that the *intention* of the youth work project is to create opportunities for learning. This is entirely consistent with the (albeit contested) nature of youth work. If youth work's purpose is to create opportunities to facilitate both informal learning[6] and non-formal learning[7], then the intention of the interaction is purposeful, planned and broadly educative from the youth worker's perspective. The youth worker's role is central to creating the

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[6] That is the learning that goes on in daily life (Jeffs & Smith, 2011).
[7] Planned learning that is not usually accredited, goes on outside schools and complements formal learning (Smith, 2001a; Stanton, 2015).

conditions for learning, using informal education as a particular practice, and being ready to educate in different settings (Stanton, 2015). In short, in this definition of outdoor education, the youth worker is consciously using outdoor activities as educative tools, and the outdoors as a setting to create the circumstances, through conversation and by encouraging reflection, in which informal and non-formal learning will take place (Jeffs & Smith, 2005).

Austerity has also hit the world of the outdoors hard. Reports point to 95% of local authorities cutting outdoor education centres in what some are describing as the "*death*" of outdoor education in this country (IOL NE, 2011). Local authority run outdoor education centres have been the victims of a succession of spending cuts in the UK since the start of the global recession (for example, Cook, 2012; Ghose, 2006; McHugh, 2017; South Wales Argus, 2011, Yorkshire Post, 2011).

Given the reduction in local authority funded centres, private providers increasingly dominate the sector. The practices of some of those private providers of outdoor learning has, however, caused concern, with commentators calling for *"further research that more explicitly explores the processes and implications of privatisation and commercialisation on outdoor learning globally…"* (Prince, 2016, p. 84). Indeed concerns about what has been dubbed *"recreational capitalism"* in a neoliberal climate (ibid) have something of an established history. For example, Loynes applies Ritzer's concept of the McDonaldisation of education to warn of the negative impact of the marketisation of outdoor adventure. The danger, he argues, is that this approach commodifies and 'packages' outdoor education experiences that lack authenticity and

deep learning (Loynes, 1998). Concerns about the commodification of the outdoors and the 'Disneyization' of outdoor experiences as products, in terms of their branding, commercialisation and standardisation detracting from authentic learning experiences, also find traction in more recent critiques (Beames & Brown, 2014; Prince & Loynes, 2016).

The final significant contextual issue is the impact of the rise of obesity and physical inactivity on the health of wealthy nations such as Britain, and the impact that this has on young people. There is much concern about a rise in killer diseases, such as diabetes, caused or exacerbated by inactive lifestyles (Public Health England, 2015). Mental ill health is also seen to be rising in Britain, with young people particularly adversely affected (Summers, 2017). At the same time, there is an increasing awareness that outdoor education is positive for people's mental and physical health and that time spent in nature increases peoples' physical activity. Decreasing sedentary lifestyles in young people is particularly significant in reducing BMI with its attendant health benefits (ten Brink, et al., 2016). Ecotherapy (access to green spaces, part of an outdoor education philosophy) is linked with improved mental health and wellbeing (Mind, 2015). Giving young people access to outdoor education opportunities, it can be argued, is particularly important for their wellbeing at a time when health contraindicators are on the rise.

Risk

Risk as a term was first used in relation to Portuguese explorers in the fifteenth century to refer to sailing into uncharted territory (Giddens, 2002), so risk and outdoor

adventure has a long history. More recently, the term risk has been used to describe a very wide range of phenomena: from the chance of getting a particular disease or infection; to the perceived danger inherent in particular outdoor activities; or indeed a description used to negatively label swathes of young people (Dwyer and Wyn 2001). For example, young people are often labelled 'at risk' if they are deemed to be vulnerable to some kind of exploitation (see Chapter Two for further discussion of the use of different uses of the term risk). Alternatively, young people might be seen to be 'risky' or 'risk taking' if they are misusing substances such as alcohol, all of which has potentially detrimental impact on health, causing yet further issues and risks (Nelson & Taberrer, 2015).

Writing about risk management, Power (2007) claims that the discourse of risk has become an all-pervading global phenomenon; risk has become a grand narrative. Indeed there are significant debates about the existential nature of risk and the post-modern condition (for example, Beck, 1999; Giddens, 1999, 2002). Bauman (2000, 2006, 2007) termed this post-modern phase as that of liquid modernity, to conceptualise the transition from an earlier (modern) understanding of risk. That modern phase was when scientific rationality seemed to promise control over any threats, and any risks that appeared were the more predicable ones of, for example crop failure. This Bauman (ibid) sees as being in contrast to the current situation, where increased and unprecedented globalised uncertainty and its associated risks are conceptualised as ushering in a different phase, that of liquid or post-modernity (see Chapter Two for further discussion).

From a sociological perspective, then, risk is a complex, rich and multi layered construct that is used in a wide variety of ways and often conflated with the term danger (Denney, 2005). These sociological frameworks offer a way of conceptualising the broader issues associated with risk. However, in a more literal sense, risk can be seen simply as the ex-ante possibility that things can go wrong or not turn out as expected (Power, 2004). Other positivist and realist definitions point to risk as being the likelihood of a hazard - an object with a potential to cause harm - being realised (Health and Safety Executive [HSE], 2012). A constructivist paradigm in contrast, sees risk as being nothing more than subjective perceptions viewed through cultural and social lenses (Rosa, 2003).

In relation to this research, there are two particularly significant risk issues, the first of which is that work with young people in the outdoors on trips and visits is often perceived to be risky for the **staff** if things go wrong (White, 2004). Indeed in the formal education sphere, one teaching Union's advice to their members after a particularly high profile tragic incident – the Stainforth Beck drownings of 2000 - was that teachers should not lead such activities because of the perceived risk to the teachers' professional status (Fulbrook, 2005). This advice has since been rescinded and there have been some potential loosening of the statutory requirements of risk assessment following the Young report (Cabinet Office, 2010). However, many professionals from related sectors are still reluctant to engage in such activities because of the perceptions of risk to one's professional status if things do go wrong (Fulbrook, 2005; van Rooijen & Newstead, 2016).

Secondly, as alluded to in the abstract, given that the contemporary climate, described above, is one where risk aversion is hegemonic, youth workers and others could be seen to be *too* cautious and over protective of the young people in their charge (Connolly & Haughton, 2015). These societal and cultural concerns can, ironically, put children and young people more at risk by not giving them enough experience of managing risk successfully; further a lack of opportunity to access the outdoors can, it is claimed, impair children's development (Gill, 2007; Humberstone & Stan, 2009; Prince et al, 2013). This has led Baillie, amongst others, to pose the question – how far should we expose young people to risk? How far is this exposure acceptable from the perspectives of the young person, the worker leading the trip/ visit and other stakeholders, such as employers and parents?

> *The key problem is that if any risk remains, there is always some further control which at least some people will want to see applied even if that control measure is total avoidance...we [will] eventually lose the ability to identify, let alone manage everyday hazards around us... (Baillie, 2004, p. 142).*

It is my contention that the combination of the contemporary legal and risk frameworks, and managerialist hegemony (explored in Chapter Two), means that youth workers are under increasing pressure to 'perform' by hitting targets as quickly as possible. This, in and of itself, can have implications for risk, especially when working with increasingly marginalised groups of young people, where workers have to 'perform' in a culture that is risk averse. This is explored further in Chapter Two.

Overview of the Approach to the Research

This section delineates the research aims, questions and objectives that have driven the project. It offers a brief summary of the methodological approach to this case study research. The section ends with an explanation of the thesis's title and the approach to writing.

The consequence of my experiences and personal stance outlined in the previous sections in this chapter and the prologue, combined with the current context, theoretical influences and debates about risk and outdoor education in youth work delineated in the background and context section, led to the construction of the central aims for the research. These were:

- to contribute to the debate as to the purpose and underpinning theorisation of outdoor education in a youth work context;
- to explore perceptions, approaches and understandings of what constitutes acceptable practice in terms of risk in the outdoors in a youth work context
- and to explore what, if any, impact there was on outdoor education from a youth work perspective, in light of the recent financial cuts to public services.

My analysis of the literature (see Chapter Two) indicates that there is a dearth of literature exploring 1) the perceptions of youth workers' understanding of risk in outdoor education and 2) of how decisions about those risks come to be taken. Further, my reading of the literature leads me to argue that there are significant gaps in the conceptualizing and theorizing of outdoor education/ outdoor learning in

relation to youth work. These gaps justify the research questions on the value of outdoor education and the assessment of risk from a youth work perspective.

The research questions were:

> o   *What is the value of outdoor education from a youth work perspective?*

That is, to understand what youth workers perceived to be the most important aspects of outdoor education in helping develop and support effective youth work practice. What, if anything, is it that makes outdoor education an effective 'tool' that youth workers can use as part of their repertoire of methods for working with young people? What were the underpinning ontologies for youth workers in this regard?

> o   *What are the perceived risks versus benefits of outdoor education from a youth work perspective?*

This question sought to explore how youth workers came to decide what were the actual and perceived risks to young people, to themselves as professional workers and to their organisations, of engaging in outdoor education activities. Conversely, what are the perceived / potential benefits of taking part in outdoor education activities from the point of view of those workers and their organisations?

> o   *How do youth workers/ youth work managers come to ascertain whether risks are worth taking in this context?*

This question focused on the actual mechanisms and processes that workers and managers used to ascertain whether a particular risk, in relation to an outdoor education activity, was worth taking. Who took the responsibility for such acts and

how were the decisions communicated? How did the case study organisations and managers arrive at their decisions to sanction/ support some activities but not others?

- *How have the recent cuts to youth services impacted on young people's opportunities to engage in outdoor education?*

That is, what, if anything, has been the impact of the cuts in austerity Britain (McGimpsey, 2013) on the case study organisations? What have been the consequences for local services and any delivery of outdoor education in youth work contexts? Has there been a change in the amount and type of outdoor education provision that the case study organisations were able to provide?

- *What are youth workers' and youth work managers' perceptions of the recent reduction to youth work provision and its impact on young people?*

This final question invited the case study participants to comment on how things may have changed in their provision over the last few years, given the broader economic climate and cuts to public services.

The objectives of the research were to:

- carry out a pilot study to pre-test and scope the case study approach;
- gain access to two contrasting youth work organisations willing to contribute to the research;
- undertake an embedded multiple case study of the two youth work organisations to explore the research questions;
- analyse the data generated using thematic analysis;
- share the provisional findings with the case study participants and then the wider field;

- write up and disseminate the project.

More details of these objectives, including dates of the research undertaken, are to be found in tabular form in Appendix A. The approach to ethics and consent is discussed in the methodology chapter (Chapter Three), however, copies of information and consent forms can be found in Appendices C, D, E and F. Further information as to the types of questions posed in the interviews to the research participants can be found in Appendix G. The research questions and the research aims outlined above, explore what has been an under theorised and under examined aspect of youth work practice.

The research was carried out in two different organisations using case study methodology, here defined as:

> *A qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and report a case description and case-based themes. (Creswell, 2007 p. 73)*

The first organisation was anonymised as the Association of Communities and Young People (ACYP), the second, a geographic area known by the pseudonym of Hillshire County Council (CC). The organisations were chosen as they offered different perspectives; ACYP because it was a third sector organisation that ran youth work projects and Hillshire because it was a local authority run youth service and so offered a different approach to youth work.

I used focus groups, one to one interviews and the collection of various artefacts, in addition to grey literature (reports, policy documents etc.) in each 'case' to provide the

data. This approach is entirely in accordance with the multiple sources of data recommended for case study research (Yin, 2012, 2014). I used thematic analysis based on an inductive, grounded theory approach to data analysis (discussed further in Chapter Three) and present the findings in Chapter Four, Chapter Five with discussion in Chapters Six and Seven.

In terms of the title of the thesis and the approach to writing, this is case study research, not autoethnographic nor narrative inquiry, (discussed further in Chapter Three and defined below[8]), but I have been influenced by those traditions. The promised love letters of the thesis' title, therefore, conveys an attempt to represent the 'story' of risk and outdoor education in a youth work context in a personal, engaging and accessible manner. Further, the love letters and vignettes represent personal epiphanies, remembrances of significant moments, of falling in 'love' with various aspects of outdoor education, youth work and Slow practice, part of the autoethnographic tradition (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). The use of love letters helps develop the thesis' 'story' and indicates my positionality, as does the vignette that opens the prologue, and the reflective piece earlier in this chapter. Love letters are to be found after each chapter as intermezzos; that is, short independent interludes between one part of the thesis and the next, but still fundamentally part of the thesis' 'story'.

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[8] Autoethnography is defined here as writing which seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience, further it sees research as a political and part of a socially just act. (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Narrative research is similarly reflexive and brings together various types of narratives to help give meaning and understanding of our lives through story (Trahar, 2009).

The use of term love letters also points to the futility of the rationalist project, of the impossibility of carrying out perfectly objective research. It acknowledges that research is not carried out in an ahistoric, decontextualised bubble but in and through the subjective, lived experience of the researcher and the research participants (Barter & Tregidga, 2014). To this end, some of the research participants have added their own love letters in response to my requests, in order to convey their feelings and concerns as to the plight of the 'Services Past' of the thesis' title and the attendant impact on young people. These love letters are to be found in the epilogue.

Chapter summary and thesis outline

This chapter, Chapter One, sets out the case for an exploration of how youth workers perform risk in outdoor education in contemporary England and outlines my particular interest in this area by way of a vignette from my practice. Two main contextual issues are discussed, that of the high profile nature of incidents involving young people in the outdoors, and the funding cuts in the wider public sector, specifically in the areas of youth work and outdoor education. Definitions of the key themes of youth work, outdoor education and risk were offered. The penultimate section offers an overview of the approach to the research and the research questions.

Chapter Two offers a critical review of the literatures around youth, risk and outdoor education. This review is by necessity very selective, given that it covers three broad and significant literatures. Details of how the literature review was conducted can be found in Appendix B. I argue that there is a gap in the literature in terms of the

theorisation of outdoor education in youth work. Further, I argue that there is not a

risk framework offering a specific youth work focus, and there have not been any

significant studies into the culture of risk in the outdoors in a youth work context. This

literature review also examines theories that are from the broader fields of sociology

and risk management, in order to support an understanding of risk and youth work in

the outdoors.

A methodology chapter follows (Chapter Three) that sets out how this case study

research was undertaken. The research methodology is outlined following an adaption

of Grix's (2002, 2010) typology and justifies the constructivist stance utilised. Ethical

issues are discussed as is the approach taken to data analysis (thematic analysis) and

there is a discussion of the validity and limitations of the work.

There are three data analysis chapters. The first of these, Chapter Four, highlights the

responses gleaned from the three embedded cases in the organisation anonymised as

ACYP. It outlines the background and context to ACYP, specifically to the ACYP projects

in Midtown and Northtown. It sets out the context in which the ACYP projects operate,

particularly focusing on the funding situation. It reports findings in relation to the use

and perceptions of outdoor education in ACYP, with particular attention to relationship

building and learning opportunities. The chapter highlights the perceived risks

associated with outdoor education from the workers and managers' perspectives and

looks at their risk processes.

Chapter Five explores the second case in a similarly structured way, offering background and context, and reports the key data themes that arose from the case study of 'Hillshire CC'. The key contextual issue of the educational landscape is discussed. This chapter then explores the values of outdoor education from the perspective of the workers focusing on relationship building and learning opportunities. It also examines the issues pertaining to the management of risk from the staff's perspectives.

Chapter Six explains the similarity and differences between the two cases of ACYP and Hillshire, by contrasting the context of the two cases and the differing landscape each faces. This chapter offers an analysis of some key findings emerging from the two case studies of ACYP and Hillshire. Four aspects of relationship building that were seen to be important in the cases are discussed, with particular emphasis on relationships between workers and young people, and family relationships. The importance of developing trusting relationships over time within outdoor education is explored. Outdoor education and learning particularly with regard to the notion of broadening horizons and its links to social justice is discussed, as is risk management through the concept of responsibilisation.

Chapter Seven offers an analysis of the data through the concept of precarity, arguing that it is a concept that could be applied not just to young people but also to the whole youth work sector. The notion of the precariat[9] is used to explicate the considerable

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[9] This concept is discussed further in Chapter Seven but is based on the use of the term by Standing (2011) which talks of the emergence of a mass class of people whose existence is marked by insecurity

difficulties in which the youth work sector, youth workers and young people find themselves. The idea of educational triage is applied to youth work in an attempt to explicate the somewhat contradictory tensions from practice. A case is made for Slow practice and concordance to provide space for effective and safe outdoor education practice in youth work, despite the pressures of liquid modernity.

Here 'Slow' is borrowed following Ulmer (2017), who asserts that the capitalised 'S' distinguishes between the ontological Slow Movement and the 'slow' movement of epistemological significance. That is the knowing, the *doing* (of) slow across time as an epistemological slowness (like the slow research of a longitudinal study) in contrast to Slow (youth work) practice which questions what it is to practice differently, to understand and to be a practitioner who embodies Slow practice. Here, Slow is seen as a practice that takes place across time rather than being an activity that takes place slowly, this is discussed further in Chapters Seven and Eight.

I draw on Bauman's concept of liquid modernity to explain the context where youth workers (and others of course) experience the speed of change to their everyday lives as being bewilderingly and increasingly rapid; there is little that is 'solid' in their lives, the certainties of the solidity of the modern period are gone. Liquid modernity is the state of being of the post-modern or neo-postmodern world, where the forces of globalisation are so extreme, that individuals are left in a state of existential fear that overemphasises risk to the individual (Bauman, 2000, 2006, 2007).

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and uncertainty. The suggestion here is that the term is particularly pertinent when applied not only to young people as a group but the youth work sector as a whole, given its fragility.

Chapter Eight summarises and concludes the thesis. It acknowledges the limitations of the research and reflects upon the approach and the learning. It summarises the key findings and knowledge claims, points the way to possible further research and offers suggestions for policy and practice. In short, the research addresses gaps in relation to outdoor education in the youth work literature; a 'youth work' approach in the outdoor education literature, and discusses how sociological theories of risk in society are relevant in the complex circumstances of youth work practice.

An epilogue brings the 'stories' of the research participants up to date and closes the piece. All the works cited are to be found after the epilogue and before the appendices. The latter includes the detail of undertaking the literature review, data collection/ analysis details and a good practice summary.

First Love

It was a hot autumn day. I was 15 years old and amongst a group of excited students transported to the Lakes for a practice expedition: lessons abandoned; giddy teachers. We lived fairly near the Lakes but even so I had not visited them before. Getting out of the bench-seated, seat belt free minibus, the sun-drenched colour of the landscape was a shock to my urban soul. The mountain, perhaps it was Skiddaw, seemed to soar forever, and even though I knew I had seen higher hills elsewhere, this was somehow different. This hill was more real, more awe inspiring, more colourful, more terrifying, as I knew I had to conquer part of its lung busting, leg aching upwardness. Would it be possible to survive with just my external frame rucksack full of heavy clothing, topped with exotic Vesta ready meals? The indignity of regulation issue orange cagoules and the discomfort of feet and back somehow melted into the background as the achingly beautiful hillscape triumphed. No one said much. It would have distracted from the raw, visceral experience of first love.

Chapter 2. Mapping the Terrain

In Chapter One, I introduced three broad areas relevant to the research - youth work, outdoor education and risk, and offered a contextual analysis of these areas. In this chapter, I interrogate a selection of literature in each of those areas that are most relevant to the study, in order to examine their intersection in relation to the research focus[10], and offer further context. Given the broad scope of these literatures, set against the narrow constraints of word count, I have only reviewed the literature that offers some illumination of the intersection of the three topic areas, rather than a comprehensive literature review of each individual area.

I start by offering a review of the youth work literature and follow it with the area I have called outdoor education (defined in the previous chapter). A section on risk follows, which includes some discussion of the wider risk frameworks that support an analysis of outdoor education in youth work in contemporary England. The final section brings together the three key themes of the thesis and points to the gaps in the literature.

Youth work

The following section discusses some of the pertinent issues to be found both in the theoretical and practice based literature: the relational, process-driven nature of youth work; the role of workers to expose young people to risk; the difficulty of doing so in the present climate, where risk is all pervasive and risk aversion is key; and the dominance of managerialism in the current post-neoliberal context. Here, the notion

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[10] Appendix B complements and supplements the chapter by offering more detail on the approach taken to the literature review.

of workers targeting young people 'at risk' in the particular context of youth work is explored, as a precursor to the broader theoretical discussions of risk as a construct found later in this chapter. These discussions offer necessary background to the very specific detail of the intersection of risk in outdoor education in youth work contexts, explored at the end of this chapter.

Youth work gained its tenuous statutory[11] origins only around the Second World War, when local authorities were given a duty to provide adequate youth service facilities (Davies, 1999, Roberts, 2004). The so-called 'Golden Age' of youth work followed in the 1960s, with a rapid expansion of youth work provision, particularly in the so called statutory sector, formal youth work training courses developed, as did a thriving third sector (Davies, 1999).

Different types of youth work practice emerged, such as outreach and detached (street based) work, but youth work using outdoor education as a tool to engage young people has a more established pedigree (Ogilvie, 2013). This is particularly the case in third sector youth work organisations, where the use of outdoor education has a long heritage; pioneered by movements such as the Boys Brigade towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Scouts and Woodcraft Folk in the early twentieth century, and Outward Bound and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in the mid twentieth century (Davies 1999; Ogilvie, 2013).

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[11] There has been no enforceable statutory guidance for youth work for some time (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011; Wylie, 2015), but frequently youth services that are directly run by local authorities are still referred to as statutory youth services, as short hand to distinguish them from third sector/ voluntary/ community/ social enterprise youth service organisations, this is a convention I have maintained throughout the thesis. I use the term third sector as a 'catch all' term for the latter sector.

There is general consensus that youth work's broader origins go back further, to at least the mid nineteenth century (Davies, 1999). However, for a practice that has such a long history, the body of youth work specific literature is quite small, and there is a reliance on key theorists in related areas, such as sociology, psychology, criminology and education, applied in youth work contexts. Over recent years, a series of specifically commissioned core texts designed to 'fill the gap', primarily for youth and community workers on degree courses, has helped redress the imbalance. This has provided theoretical and practice material on a range of contemporary debates in youth work (for example, Batsleer & Davies 2010; Beck & Purcell 2010; Packman 2008). Nevertheless, this has still not addressed the specific issues related to workers taking young people into the outdoors. For this, youth workers would turn primarily to their own local and or national policy guidance/ good practice manuals (for example; Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services [CWVYS], 2014; Department for Education [DfE], 2014a; Learning Outside the Classroom [LOtC], 2013; Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents [RoSPA], 2012).

Whilst youth work is a contested practice, with leading commentators failing to agree on its purpose and ways of working, there is some agreement in the literature and in good practice guides, that a youth worker's central role is to develop positive relationships with the young people they serve (for example, Davies; 2015a; Mason, W., 2015; Ord, 2016; Sercombe, 2010; Young, 2006). These relationships are cultivated in order to better understand the needs of those individuals and groups, so that an appropriate, tailored (informal) curriculum can be developed with and for those young

people. This is what Davies (2015a, p.6) alludes to when he asserts that youth workers must start with *''where young people are starting'',* in terms of their learning journey, and underlines my assertion that youth work is broadly an educative project (Ingram & Harris, 2001). To be able to do this successfully, of course, youth workers need to understand the young people's needs and to have a positive relationship with them, in order to appropriately support and facilitate their individual learning journeys. Engagement is seen, in this understanding of youth work, to be voluntary on the part of the young person, with the balance of power tipped in their favour as much as possible (Davies, 2015a).

In this conceptualisation of youth work, the notion of voluntary engagement and the balance of power being with the young person makes for a concordant relationship. The concept of concordance is borrowed from the medical literature to convey the idea of equality, of shared problem solving and responsibility between practitioner and patient, of partnership (Bell, Airaksinen, Lyles, Chen, & Aslani, 2007). Here, the youth worker actively encourages a young person's participation so that they take responsibility and engage in decision making through a supportive relationship (Ord, 2016). The concept of participation, also a central tenet of youth work values, is enshrined in youth work's ethical principles, as the need to "*respect and promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices*" (NYA, 2004, p. 6). Concordance builds upon the youth work notion of promoting as equal a power balance between the worker and young person as possible (Banks, 2010; Fitzsimons, 2011), or indeed, tipping the balance of power in the favour of the young person

(Davies, 2005, 2015a). I argue for the utility of concordance particularly in relation to risk management later in this thesis.

Relationship building is, therefore, foundationally significant to youth work (Mason, W., 2015) and that relationship building is premised on a concordant relationship. The significance of all of this, in relation to youth work and outdoor education, is that there is an understanding that the youth work project can be a 'long game', as relationships need to develop across time, especially when working with marginalised young people as these relationships may take even longer to build.

The other issue to note is that outdoor education is positioned here as a *method* of youth work (Ord, 2007), adopted, adapted and used in order to support the building of these positive relationships over time and space rather than an end in its own right. Outdoor education is, of course, understood and used in very different ways, by others; I argue here specifically for this particular conception of it just from a youth work perspective.

Having discussed aspects of youth work practice, I now turn to youth work typologies. Coburn and Wallace (2011) postulate that youth work practice can be broadly categorised into three approaches: functional youth work with a focus on socialising targeted groups of young people; critical youth work with its critical/ radical traditions, and, finally liberal youth work, where more open programmes focus on social engagement through informal education. It is within this last tradition that outdoor education in the context of youth work would appear to sit most comfortably,

although, of course, outdoor education is, and can be, used by practitioners from all youth work traditions as a tool or means to a particular end.

Ord (2016), in contrast, identifies four different models of youth work, the first two being particularly relevant to this study, given its relationship to outdoor education. The first, that of character building, is labelled a functionalist model, where young people are socialised through youth work into the existing moral and social values of society. According to Ord (2016), the second, personal development, from an interpretivist paradigm, seeks to understand everyday social life, but also sits within a functionalist perspective as it does not attend to the wider social issues, but to the needs of individual young people, helping them through their period of transition into adulthood. Ord's (2016) other two youth work models, those of critical social education and radical social change, focus on raising the critical consciousness of young people, particularly marginalised young people. I argue later in this chapter that these latter two models, which could be subsumed under the critical youth work banner articulated by Coburn and Wallace, (2011), are less likely to find an established home in the outdoor education camp, whereas ideas of character and personal development have a very established lineage there (Brookes, 2003a).

Personal and social development, then, forms an important part of what could be described as a youth work approach, as it does for outdoor education (discussed later in this chapter). Here, I use the Young Adult Learners Partnership's definition, as it offers a 'youth work take' to the concept (2003, p. 8):

Personal and social education operates through a process of developing relationships with young people based on mutual trust and respect. It engages their interest and participation, on a voluntary basis, in activities, experiences or issues, which are rooted in their personal experience. At the same time it stretches them and opens them up to new horizons. It develops inclusive behaviour by engaging young people actively in their own development. It encourages them to reflect on their progress in developing social skills, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in the range of opportunities provided.

As noted previously, youth work is a contested practice. However, if one accepts the view of the NYA, who are, after all, the national body for youth work, then the role of a youth worker is to support teenagers' successful transition to adulthood (NYA, 2007; Strycharczyk, et al., 2011). A key part of this professional role is to expose young people to risk but not harm (Sercombe, 2010). Indeed, the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (2012) exhort workers to help develop young people's understanding of risk and to provide challenging opportunities that support this (ibid, Youth Work Standard 9).

Young people need opportunities to safely explore and learn about risk if they are to go on to make good judgements about risk and risky situations (Davies & Merton, 2009; Merton 2007). Further, providing these challenges and supporting young people in understanding risk has the benefit of encouraging resilience (Gill, 2007, 2010). Youth work and youth workers are ideally positioned to support young people in this endeavour because of the non-authoritarian, voluntary relationship, which uses informal and non-formal educational approaches, (Smith, 1999, 2002) including, of course, outdoor education; an ideal vehicle to facilitate that exploration.

I have argued that exposing young people to risk is at the heart of a youth worker's role. However, this specific aspect of the role has come under increasing scrutiny, due to the strictures of managerialism in a (post-) neoliberal world with its all-pervasive emphasis on risk management (Power, 2004, 2007). Risk management and its dominance is discussed in the section on risk later in this chapter; it is to the rise of managerialism in youth work specifically that I now turn.

Two key debates about youth work – the necessity of both outcomes focused and targeted youth work, discussed below - are analysed by using both youth work literature and the literature from the related field of formal education, on managerialism within the broader (post-) neoliberal environment. The concept of managerialism is explored first, to enable a discussion of the two contextual issues of outcomes and targeted work, seen here as a manifestation of managerialism.

In terms of that rise of managerialism, from the youth work literature, Merton (2009) points to a distinct period, 1979 – 2009, where the emphasis was on the 'efficiencies' to be achieved in a private sector model. The state's role then, in contrast to the post war period, was merely to commission services. The youth work sector was immersed in this managerialist trend, albeit later than some related areas (ibid). An example of a related area is given below.

In the formal education sector in schools, the advent of the national curriculum in 1988 and of the ascendancy of school data/ targets, sharpened what Ball refers to as, a long standing obsession with school and individual 'performance' and the rise of the

performativity culture within a managerialist hegemony (Ball, 2003). Ball (ibid) sees quality as a means of control and points to what he terms three interrelated policy technologies; the market, managerialism and what he describes as performativity. The latter being the negative and disempowering effect performance management systems, such as inspection regimes, have on individual professionals (Ball 2008).

So, managerialism came to youth work later than formal education. For instance, youth work did not get its first clearly defined nationally agreed targets and outputs until the advent, under New Labour, of the seminal document *Transforming Youth Work – Resourcing Excellent Youth Services [REYS]* (DfES, 2002). This attempt to 'modernise' youth services, by prescribing targets, was what McGimpsey, drawing on the work of Ball and others, would refer to as the zenith of the neoliberal phase for youth work, where (statutory) youth work embraced the controversial space of competition, measurement (through Ofsted inspections in the case of youth work) and market with youth services becoming social enterprises and the like (McGimpsey, 2013).

It has been argued that the public sector, specifically including youth work, currently exists in a *post*-neoliberal climate. Neoliberal is understood here a place where the ascendancy of individualism and the market is hegemonic, (Robertson, 2007). *Post*-neoliberal alludes to the transition from a neoliberal phase, found in the New Labour era of policy making, up until the financial crisis of 2007/8 onwards and the formation of the Coalition then Conservative governments (McGimpsey, 2013). New Labour was very active in developing competitive, targeted and target driven youth work policy

initiatives, as exemplified by REYS; this was a neoliberal agenda. In contrast, McGimpsey uses the term *post*-neoliberal (McGimpsey, 2013) or *late* neoliberal (McGimpsey, 2017) to distinguish between that neoliberal phase of policy making, as exemplified by REYS, and the phase, which, following the global recession of 2007/8, marked such a distinct and significant change to services to young people, that it merits a different term to distinguish it from the previous neoliberal era. According to McGimpsey, this post-neoliberal phase has had the effect of shortening the development of relationships between youth workers and young people through project based work, and disconnecting youth workers from local communities (McGimpsey, 2013).

The impact of this is also that many youth workers and their organisations struggle from short term funding to short term funding, in what is increasingly a low paid and precarious sector (de St Croix, 2017; NCIA, 2015). Further, the advent of the 'Big Society' meant that voluntary organisations were expected to fill the gaps left by the withdrawal of the state, encouraged through commissioning and Payment by Results (PbR) funding systems that few voluntary bodies had the financial capacity to make work for them (Wylie, 2015). The effect of these cuts, part of the move to 'transform' public services, as instantiated by youth services, is so significant it is claimed, that it amounts to a dismantling of the welfare state in the UK (Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015).

The concepts of managerialism, performativity and post-neoliberalism are useful for explicating the backdrop to the two key issues for youth workers discussed below of outcomes focused and targeted youth work. Both of these issues are significant for the

research as they form a major part of the context for the case study organisations, and therefore impact on the way in which youth workers and youth work managers perform risk (Sercombe, 2010).

In the youth work literature, there is some consensus that there should be an emphasis on *process* as opposed to product or outcomes. That is, as Davies puts it, that *process* should be at the heart of the work (Davies, 2015a). It is this focus on process that can be the most problematic for many youth workers when it comes to reconciling the perceived needs of young people with the varied strictures of management/ funders' requirements. Process can be slow; funders, on the other hand usually want to see clear outcomes of work with young people, that is, they want to see a *product,* or outcomes, speedily (Hoggarth, 2009). The focus for the funders would be on the tangible benefits, such as a young person who is not in employment, education or training (NEET) moving into a job. For many youth workers, these tangible outcomes are not necessarily what they would see as the immediate priority of their work (Wooder, 2010), nor indeed realistically achievable in the funder's time frame. This is what is meant by outcomes-focused work and explicates the first of the two contextual tensions facing youth work.

Indeed, this focus on outcomes can actually be injurious to good youth work, as it can distract the workers from supporting a young person in tackling the multiple issues they may face – that is, the *process* – and of supporting the young person with what their perceived as their priorities (Yates, 2009). The process of coming to understand, and being able to effectively address a young person's (multiple) needs, could be a

long one. However, funders may require outcomes to be met, such as a young person successfully accessing work a few weeks after initial engagement. Yet, this could be particularly unrealistic where a young person faces significant barriers to successfully engaging in employment (Davies, 2015a; de St Croix, 2016; McGimpsey, 2013).

Cooper (2012), writing about youth work specifically, claims the current approaches to performance management, like this focus on outcomes, is part of a positivist approach. This approach emphasises accountability at the expense of a deeper approach to improving the quality of the work through what she terms participatory and collaborative approaches - that is, where practitioners are centrally engaged in what really benefits their practice (ibid).

The second debate is about 'targeted' youth work and young people 'at risk'; also particularly significant in current youth work policy and practice. This is a complex area, entwined with what is seen as a key controversy in both the literature and in practice; whether 'true' youth work can only occur where there is the voluntary participation of young people (Ord, 2016; Smith, 1999, 2002).

The reference to targeted young people here alludes to the situation where groups of, or individual, young people, are increasingly being targeted – directly approached or referred - for early intervention work by professionals, such as social care workers, to youth work projects. Here, the targeting of individuals often means that young people are referred to youth work projects to address whatever aspect of their lifestyle is deemed to be putting them 'at risk' or is perceived as being problematic (Jeffs & Smith,

2010). The term is also used to refer to young people who are at risk of poor outcomes, be they associated with, for example, education, employment, gun crime or sexual exploitation (NYA, 2007). This deficit model approach to labelling young people has been widely criticised (for example, Kemshall, 2009; McGimpsey, 2013), particularly in critical youth studies literature, which focuses on deconstructing and problematising the labels that are used to marginalise young people (for example, Wenham, 2013).

Given the restrictions of austerity, there is much less of a resource base to fund the different types of youth work and, frequently, the only monies available are for targeted work. One of the dilemmas for practitioners, consequently, is whether to try to stay outside a much more targeted and target-driven system and remain 'true' to youth work's emancipatory, but now largely unfunded, traditions (de St Croix, 2016).

Many youth workers would not choose to undertake exclusively targeted work, feeling that open access work, which is open to all, is more positive and offers better preventative and resilience-building approaches (Wylie, 2015). Pragmatically, however, workers have little choice, if they are to remain employed, but to accept that the very limited resources left have to go to more targeted groups. Consequently, many youth workers now work more or less exclusively with groups of young people who are marginalised and often present with more challenging behaviour, rather than working in open access provision where there is a wider mix of young people (Davies & Merton, 2009; Wylie, 2015). The focus on targeted work presents both practical and philosophical dilemmas for practitioners.

Youth work, then, increasingly takes place in projects where voluntary participation on the part of the young people is more or less non-existent (Davies, 2015a). That is to say, youth workers are now much more likely to work with groups of young people who are labelled in a stigmatising way (such as young people deemed likely to offend) and have no real choice about whether or not to engage in the project. This approach is sometimes characterised as utilising youth work skills without the value base (Ingram & Harris, 2001). The result of these changes means that youth workers are more likely to work with targeted, marginalised groups of young people (European Commission, 2014; NYA, 2014). Inevitably, some of this work will be in outdoor education settings, being one of the many methods of youth work (Ord, 2007). This is likely to have an impact on workers' and young people's engagement, their choice of delivery methods, perceptions of risk, focus and behaviour.

In summary, the literature around performance and the neoliberal / post-neoliberal context suggests that youth workers will find themselves having to focus on the measurement of any work that they undertake, and find themselves working with more or less exclusively targeted young people over shorter periods of time than may previously have been the case. This has an impact on the amount of time given to building relationships and concordance, defined earlier in this section. This is at odds with perceptions of good youth work practice, where building relationships over time is seen to be effective (Yates, 2009). Youth workers may be more likely to see the value of outdoor education in part, at least, from the perspective of how outdoor education supports the achievement of their funders' outputs.

Further, whilst there is a significant volume of literature and studies about young people and risky behaviour, often from the domain of criminology, psychology, sociology, social work and critical youth studies (see for example, Furlong 2013; Nelson & Taberrer, 2015), there appears to be a gap in the literature about the risks faced by youth workers taking young people into the outdoors and another gap in terms of youth work organisations' perceptions of risk and working with 'at risk' young people in this specific context. This underlines the need to explore this aspect of practice through this research.

Outdoor Education

In this section, there is a reminder of the definition of the scope of the contested term of outdoor education employed in this study, and an abbreviated history of outdoor education's origins; its imperialist legacy in Britain. I argue that this particular legacy means that the approach to risk from an outdoor education perspective can be narrow and focused on physical risks. As a risk averse society, the temptation is to over protect young people and not allow them to have experiences that help them to become risk aware, because of the perceived dangers (Gill, 2007, 2010; Humberstone & Stan, 2009). This is an important contradiction, as it means that youth workers involved in outdoor education have to wrestle with the competing tensions of trying to support young people's need to understand and experience risk, as their job is to expose young people to risk not harm (NOS, 2012; Sercombe, 2010), but workers feel they will be held responsible if anything goes wrong (Fulbrook, 2005).

As previously discussed (in Chapter One), the term outdoor education can encompass a significant range of activities and approaches to learning (Ogilvie, 2013). Outdoor education is contextualised differently in other fields, however for the purposes of this study, I have concentrated on outdoor education/ adventure/ learning, and dubbed all three areas 'outdoor education', as they are, in my experience of practice, the areas most pertinent to a youth work approach, and the areas most likely to have youth workers engaged in them. As explained previously, I have chosen not to focus on other, related areas such as environmental education, as they are too broad to cover in a review of this size and scope.

Outdoor education in the UK has a long history, some of which mirrors that of youth work (Cook, 2000) and this is reflected in the literature. Further, there are many common roots and parallel developments with the U.S., in terms of both outdoor education and youth work. This is significant, as it means that there are similar understandings of outdoor education and ways of viewing risk in both countries.

The origin of outdoor education shares a common time line across both countries. For example, the first organised American camp dates from Camp Gunnery in 1861 (Ewert & Garvey, 2007). In the UK, just a few years later, the Boys' Brigade set up their first camps. Scouting, a tremendously influential movement in the outdoor education world, was set up around 1907 by Lord Baden-Powell. The UK's Boys' Brigade and the American Woodcraft Indians and Sons of Daniel Boone movements in the U.S heavily influenced the development of Scouting (MacDonald, 1993).

The concept of addressing what were seen as the four aspects of child development –

social, physical, emotional and spiritual, in short what was then termed 'building

character,' was stressed early in the development of U.S. outdoor education, where

the American Youth Foundations camps in the 1900s saw this notion as being pivotal

to their mission (Ewert & Garvey, 2007).

In the UK around the same time, Baden-Powell was wrestling with what he saw as the

centrality of 'character building' in the development of the scouting movement

(MacDonald, 1993). The character building ideal in the British context had its roots in a

perceived crisis in the fitness of youth, following the publication of the 1903 'National

Health: A Soldier's Study', appearing, as it did, to suggest that only two in five

volunteer soldiers were fit enough for active duty, adding to the nation's concern for

its imperial ambitions (Rosenthal, 1986).

Both Rosenthal (1986) and MacDonald (1993) point out that the scouting ideal was to

train good citizens. This was defined, it would seem, by producing fit young men who

could serve their God and country; who understood how to be a '*good brick*', that is, to

know their place in the order of things, to be able to follow orders and to be able to

cope cheerfully and competently in inclement weather and difficult circumstances

(Rosenthal, 1986). The training of youth in the outdoors, then, was closely associated

with Britain's concern to uphold its imperial prowess (Cook, 2000). As Baden-Powell

put it:

> *We are very much like bricks in a wall, we each have our place…if one*
> *brick crumbles or slips out of place, it begins to throw an undue strain*

> *on others, cracks appear and the wall totters. (Baden-Powell 1908, yarn no.26)*

This notion of putting up with hardship has been at the centre of the contested 'character building' debate. Indeed, Brookes (2003a) wryly suggests that more recently the term *'a character building experience'* would be short hand for enduring an unpleasant outdoor event, perhaps involving hardship or survival in extreme conditions. The concept of character building is a contested one (Brookes, 2003a; Rosenthal, 1986), now largely replaced by the idea of personal and social development as a more acceptable alternative, with concepts of improved self esteem being central to that, however simplistic and contested that notion might be (Leather, 2013). I have defined what this concept might mean, from a youth work perspective at least, in the previous section.

Interestingly, there has been a resurgence of interest in the related area of 'character education' in schools, with the previous government promoting the concept and the establishment of the University of Birmingham's specialist unit, the Jubilee Centre for (presumably good) character and virtues (Arthur, Kristjansson, Walker, Sanderse, & Jones, 2012; DfE, 2014b). Perhaps the idea of character building is not yet quite buried under its imperial legacy.

The German educationalist who forged his career in the UK in the 1940s – Kurt Hahn - is often seen as one of the founding fathers of outdoor education (Martin, Cashel, Wagstaff, & Breunig, 2006). Hahn's experiential therapy for young people had at its heart, four key elements: fitness; expeditions; project work; and service to others

(Knoll, 2011)**.** Hahn's legacy in Britain includes Gordonstoun, the school he founded in 1934, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (established in 1956) and the Outward Bound movement, the latter being influential in both Britain from the Fifties onwards, and in the US from the Sixties onwards (Prouty, 2007; Smith, 1997). For Hahn, character building was a central concept to his educational philosophy and much of the outdoor education movement that followed it (Brookes, 2003a). Indeed, the Outward Bound movement still espouses a Hahnian philosophy of achievement through active learning, character development and teamwork (Outward Bound, 2016). According to Loynes (2007), Hahn's legacy has strongly influenced the widespread notion of outdoor education broadening young people's horizons, and this has had lasting impact on the development of outdoor education in youth work.

An example of a tool used to facilitate that learning, Greenaway's four arrows model for reviewing development is widely utilised in outdoor education, lending structure to the otherwise somewhat nebulous concept of personal development (Stott, Allison, Felter, & Beames, 2015). Greenaway's framework, based on earlier work by Giges and Rosenfeld (1976), views personal growth as being something that helps young people make new connections in a number of ways:

- Upwards to achieve individual potential with increased confidence and physical and social resilience/ self reliance and overcoming challenges;
- Outwards to make connections with others, to learn about others and to increase sociability;
- Inwards to increase one's self awareness, ability to reflect and understand one's emotions;

- And downwards to touch earth, and be grounded, that is, to connect to nature, be that a mountain or a wilderness area, and to learn about the environment (Greenaway, 1993, 1998; Stott, Allison, Felter & Beames, 2015).

Greenaway's model is frequently used to define what personal and social development might mean in outdoor education, but other definitions of development needs, based on 'classic' theorists such as Maslow and Rogers, look to a broader range, and include belongingness, acceptance, care and friendship, praise and recognition, responsibility, self-respect, achievement and new experiences (Greenaway, 1998).

Several authors point to an outdoor education heritage that they attest draws on Plato, Rousseau and Dewey's emphasis on experiential education, to give credence to the legitimacy of outdoor education as an alternative educational approach (for example, Barnes, 2004; Nicol, 2003; Smith, 1997). However, according to Ord & Leather, (2011), many of these texts draw heavily and inaccurately on references to Kolb's (1984/ 2015) experiential learning cycle, over simplified as a plan – do - review process, a model that is, incidentally, heavily used in youth work practice too (Ord, 2016) alongside Schön's (1983) enjoinment to reflect in and on practice.

In terms of the success or otherwise of outdoor education as a tool for personal and social development, some meta analyses of outdoor learning have pointed to the largely positive impact on young people's attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions (including confidence, self esteem and coping strategies) and interpersonal skills (including communication skills and teamwork). This is particularly where programmes provide longer, more sustained experiences and appropriate scaffolding and review

facilitates the learning (Rickinson, et al., 2004). Subsequent meta analyses confirming the notion that outdoor education has positive benefits on children and young people's fitness, motor skills, self confidence, self-esteem, and relationship with adults, finds widespread accord in the literature (for example, Fiennes, Oliver, Dickson, Escobar, Romans, & Oliver, 2015; Malone, 2008). Further a particular type of outdoor learning that of adventure or wilderness therapy, found predominantly outside the UK, claims to offer successful 'clinical' interventions with older young people, families and adults (Bowen & Neill, 2013).

Barnes (2004) claims that the outdoor education sector still has a significant Christian ethos – that of a healthy mind and healthy body, which also strongly influences the movement. The significance in the history of the outdoor education world of key individuals, such as Baden-Powell and Hahn, is their part in the creation of foundation myths as Brookes terms them; that is, that those myths can offer an explanation and analysis of the militaristic and masculinist culture of contemporary outdoor education (Brookes, 2003a, 2016). This influences our understandings, and the performance of, risk in outdoor settings and helps form the dominant discourse that appears to focus mainly on the physical aspects of risk. For example, Colin Mortlock's classic text on adventure, divides dangers into a binary – subjective or objective danger. Mortlock does, however, acknowledge the importance of experience and personality in the mix of the danger/ safety/ risk debate (Mortlock, 1994). Although this binary has a long tradition, good practice guides do now routinely point to the need for instructors to be aware of physiological/ emotional aspects of risk (for example, Gregg, 2007) however,

the legacy of the foundation myths can still be seen from the types of risk that are emphasised.

As a result of this particular heritage, there is little space in the field of outdoor education literature taken up by – or perhaps granted to - those wishing to explore the impact of 'other' identities of participants in the outdoors. There is less emphasis on exploring alternative conceptions of what is meant by outdoor education, less literature focused on problematising the idea of outdoor education, than there is on explaining how to 'do' outdoor education. Indeed, as Roger Putnam put it:

> *… The outdoor field was strong on practice, providing a range of experiences which generally gave important developmental and value-forming experiences for young people. However it fell seriously short when it came to discussing and understanding the learning processes at play in outdoor education. (Putnam, 2004, p. x)*

In short, much of the outdoor education literature seems to focus mainly on how to make things happen. It is pragmatic, grounded in practice (for example, Trant, 2010) and does not often question the epistemological and ontological assumptions that start from the basis that outdoor education is a universal good (Nicol, 2002b).

However, there have been more recent attempts to look at social theory in relation to outdoor adventure (for example, Bowdridge & Blenkinsop, 2011; Pike & Beames, 2013; Stewart, 2008; Zink & Burrows, 2008), but this would still appear to be part of a relatively small body of literature. Other commentators have developed the notions of the purposes of outdoor education, with, for example, discussion of slow pedagogy across time and place in the context of higher education (Payne & Wattchow, 2008).

The underpinning epistemological and ontological bases of outdoor education have also increasingly been challenged, as critiques offer alternative perspectives, for example, of the impact of outdoor recreation on indigenous peoples (Mullins, Lowan-Trudeau, & Fox, 2016). Further, there is also a relatively small body of literature that critically examines culture, gender, 'race' and social justice, in relation to outdoor education (for example, Humberstone, Brown & Richards, 2001; Humberstone, Prince, & Henderson, 2016; Rose & Paisley, 2012; Warren, 2016; Warren, Roberts, Breunig, & Alvarez, 2014).

However, these 'alternative' voices are relatively rare and, given that the majority of the work in the UK, US and Australia would appear to be written from a largely mono-cultural position, ideas about what constitutes risk are perhaps narrower than if a more diverse set of commentators were routinely available. Whilst, as noted above, there is now more critical commentary about outdoor education generally, this does not appear to stretch to critique notions of risk substantially.

Further, there are still very few authors, with the exception of Jon Ord and Mark Smith, writing about outdoor education specifically from a youth work perspective, with a youth worker's 'take' on risk in the outdoors (for example, Ord & Leather, 2011; Smith, 1997). There is a new book due out in September 2017, which focuses specifically on outdoor, experiential and informal education (Jeffs & Ord, 2017). Even so, this does not have a specific chapter on risk, so a gap still remains in the literature on outdoor education and risk from a youth work perspective and, indeed, more broadly on outdoor education from a youth work stance.

Having discussed two of the three themes of the thesis, youth work and outdoor education, the issue and genesis of risk as the third theme is now discussed in more detail.

Risk

Risk is a widely used term and a complex and multi layered construct. In order to offer an understanding of risk that supports this thesis conceptually and practically, I start with a broad overview of the genesis of risk, offer a summary of the key risk constructs for the purposes of this research and, finally, examine risk in relation to young people.

Risk has always been apparent in the on-going struggle of humans for survival. Risk, in the sense of the potential for natural hazards such as famine and flood to realise their potential to cause disaster, has been an accepted and feared part of the tale of the struggle for humanity's survival and its ability to thrive (Giddens, 1991). Risk, in terms of its etymology, however, is a relatively recent term, as explained in Chapter One, and one that is associated with the outdoors.

In what is often termed the dawn of modernity - the Enlightenment – humanity's struggle in the West, at least, was more frequently conceived of as a tale of the triumph of human endeavour, of scientific rationality, overcoming medieval and ancient obsessions with fire, plague and pestilence, of man's (sic) ability to construct, to shape the world, rather than be a victim of it. This triumph of scientific rationality suggested that the world could be understood and therefore controlled more than in

previous epochs; history was conceived of as the advance of human control over the environment. Risk could be controlled and perhaps predicted (Callinicos, 1999; Giddens, 1999; Seidman, 2008).

Britain is frequently seen as the first industrial nation in the eighteenth and particularly the nineteenth centuries, two centuries or so after the start of the Enlightenment (Mathias, 1983; Seidman, 2008). As such, Britain is often seen as one of the first countries to start to engage with risk in a discernibly 'modern' way. As part of this process, the country's move to the factory from the farm brought attendant challenges for regulating and managing workers (Burnes, 2004). Concerns about the conditions of the work force, particularly the plight of children, brought legislation to this country as early as 1833 with the first Factory Acts (Mathias, 1983). Ideas of childhood as a special period of life emerged in the Western Enlightenment; the young needed to be protected from risk (Tebbutt, 2016). The idea of regulation, combined with the Enlightenment's concern for control, led to a further belief that all risks could be anticipated, regulated and controlled (Giddens, 1994).

There have been a number of attempts to characterise the different theoretical approaches to risk, given it is such a multi-layered construct. For example, Denney (2005) offers six typologies of risk, including the individualist, culturalist, risk society and post-modern positions. Beck, Giddens and Bauman write about societal risk (Bauman, 2007; Beck, 1999; Giddens, 1999) in ways that would probably be categorised as the risk society positions in Denney's typology.

Bauman's assertion is that we live in a globalised society, which, he terms liquid modernity rather than a post-modern one, where change is occurring more rapidly than in the (earlier) modern, more stable and solid world. One of the results of these changes and the rapidity of them is that risks – and fears – are more diffuse and unpredictable. As Bauman has it:

> *Unable to slow the mind-boggling pace of change, let alone predict it and control its direction, we focus on the things we can, or believe we can, or are assured we can influence. (Bauman, 2007, p. 11)*

One of the effects of globalisation is that there are movements of whole swathes of the population, creating new risks that have not been faced before and new fears that leave us in a constant state of anxiety. Social forms and institutions are in a state of flux; one outcome of this is that individuals have to be more flexible, lives are more fragmented - the pressures on individuals are increasing in this liquid era (Bauman, 2000, 2006, 2007).

Power's concept of the rise of risk, in relation to the development of managerialism from the 90s onwards, offers a Foucauldian analysis (Power, 2007), which could also be seen to inhabit a post-modern position on risk (Denney, 2005). This framework, (along with other insights) is explored in the next section, as it offers useful tools to analyse the situation in which youth work finds itself.

Power's study of risk management and uncertainty offers an important insight into the broader area of risk. He claims that the discernible interest in, and growth of, risk management comes from a growing focus on internal controls in organisations (Power,

2004). That focus means that an organisation's efforts are on producing auditable trails of documentation and complying with what he terms legislative codes. These codes are not necessarily strictly legal codes, but voluntary codes and in-house procedures. The effect of this is to conflate real and imagined risks and processes. Power's argument is that these processes 'miss the point' of good practice and/ or distract practitioners from taking real responsibility. They also, he claims, make organisations overly defensive (Power, 2004).

According to Power (2004), hyper-internal control amplifies the time and attention spent on secondary risk management - that is, not on reducing the risk from a main event per se (the first order issues) but being concerned with the fall out, particularly in terms of reputational damage, from anything going wrong. He claims that practitioners can become distracted from being properly concerned about the main event - the first order risks. Workers can become pulled into, or socialised into, particular ways of thinking about the organisation that can trap organisational thinking in a particularly unhelpful or even dangerous way (Power, 2004).

Further, Power asserts that there is a direct link between the growth of risk management in the mid 1990s and the rise of internal control mechanisms in organisations. This could be seen to mirror the wider growth of managerialism outlined above as instantiated in the youth work field (discussed earlier in this chapter).

Power's suggestion of hyper control means that practitioners could potentially spend too long worrying about secondary concerns, and worry more about those risks that are likely to lead to them being disciplined or sued. This could be at the expense of a focus on the important issues in working with risk and young people. In the case of working outdoors with young people, this could mean practitioners choosing not to engage in any type of activity perceived to be dangerous at all, or failing to carry out dynamic risk assessments as and when necessary (defined as an approach that emphasises the importance of altering plans in light of changed circumstances on the day (BCU, 2002)). The practitioner's energies will have been directed solely on completing the formal, static risk assessments and other paperwork, rather than on their ability to make important judgement calls in light of, for example, bad weather or the rapidly changing behaviour of a young person that could be potentially dangerous. Their eyes will effectively have been taken 'off the ball'.

A framework that is also written from a Foucauldian perspective (Foucault, 1969/2002), but predating Power, is the influential work of Castel. Castel claims that the subject has been lost in the contemporary discourse of risk. In its place, the focus is on a combination of the factors of risk; that is, that one to one relationships between the care givers (in this case youth workers) and those receiving care (young people) have been displaced by risk assessments and a range of abstract factors (Castel, 1991). This framework offers another 'take' on the rise of risk and managerialism and may help explain how youth workers 'perform' in the current climate (see Chapter Seven for further discussion).

Finally, another risk framework suggests a further aspect to risk 'performance'. A framework developed in the 1980s from risk communication finds resonance in current youth work practice. The Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF) postulates that risks and hazards are not communicated according to their objective seriousness, but rather the interplay with psychological, social and institutional processes. This means that some risks are exaggerated or amplified by social stations (e.g. the media) or, in some cases, attenuated. Any work with young people that causes harm to them is likely to lead to what is termed a ripple effect, similar to a stone being dropped in still water, where the (objective) harm leads to a disproportionate impact on the organisation and individuals involved, far beyond the persons directly involved in any incident (Kasperson, Kasperson, Pidgeon, & Slovic, 2003). The SARF framework, when applied to a youth work/ outdoor education context, posits the suggestion that any incident involving young people and risk is likely to be amplified, therefore leading those working with young people to be even more risk averse.

The literature on risk would suggest that youth workers are likely to find themselves in a context where the culture of compliance to risk agendas is all important and all pervasive, but where that culture does not necessarily focus on the most important 'real' risks but on other secondary factors, such as risk assessments rather than the subjects, the young people.

Risk, Outdoor Education and Youth Work

As has been claimed earlier in this chapter, the theorising of risk in the particular context of outdoor education in a youth work context is sparse. Outdoor education risk commentators frequently point to Furedi's work on risk as a theoretical underpinning on perspectives of risk (for example, Baillie, 2004; Sharp, 2004). Furedi's assertion is that the fear of risk is rising at a time when those in the West are generally healthier and better off than previous generations. However, as a society we are obsessed with the 'worship' of safety, and, as such are more likely to deprive children of important experiences, such as trips and visits, rather than risk any sort of accident or tragedy (Furedi, 2005).

Baillie further points out that the actual risk of dying on a school trip/ outdoor education experience is minimal, particularly when compared to the risks of being killed by the things most likely to cause premature death – cancer, heart attacks, obesity and unfitness (Baillie, 2012). These killer diseases, he asserts, could all be mitigated by active participation in outdoor education activities. This backdrop of increasing risk aversion, at a time when health contraindicators (partly due to lack of physical activity) are rising, underpins the second research question about how practitioners see the risks versus the benefits of outdoor education. In the context of unprecedented cuts to the public sector, and youth work and outdoor education funding specifically, the final two research questions, relating to the impact of the funding cuts in this context, are timely.

The wider literature offers some concepts that support an understanding of risk

aversion. For example, the concept of responsibilisation, that is:

> *''… The shift from state responsibility under the old, Keynesian, welfare*
> *states to a responsibilisation of teachers, students and associated*
> *forms of discourse, accountability, and assessment regimes… market-*
> *like arrangements and a market rationality have been employed to*
> *responsibilise the individual and to naturalise regimes of self-care in*
> *neoliberal environments.''(Peters, 2016, p. 2)*

The counternarrative of responsibilisation has been described more recently by Gill

(and others) as a growing tendency to unhelpful risk aversion when it comes to

outdoor education activities (Gill, 2007, 2010). This assertion finds substance in the

work of Norbert Elias, whose study of long-term trends brought his collaborator,

Dunning to the notion of a civilising spurt. Here, he exemplifies the concept through

boxing:

> *The 'civilizing spurts' involved in the 'sportization' of leisure activities*
> *…occurred in conjunction with 'civilising' changes in the personality*
> *structure and habitus of the people who pursued them… such changes*
> *reveal that these people were gradually becoming less wiling and / or*
> *able to witness or participate in activities characterized by forms and*
> *levels of violence that their predecessors had enjoyed. (Dunning, 1997,*
> *p. 481)*

The employment of the concept of the civilising spurt to outdoor education is a useful

lens through which to view societal and parental anxieties, which have, over time,

given rise to the idea that young people need to be (over) protected and so are kept in

an artificial state of dependence longer than would have previously been deemed

appropriate, whilst those who care for them face more scrutiny than ever (Gill, 2007,

2010).

I have argued that a very particular conception of risk has evolved given the genesis of outdoor education in the UK. This privileges tangible, physical risk; given the focus of outdoor education on developing the 'manly' virtues of the male dominated Anglo Saxon world it began operating (Barnes, 2004, see also section on outdoor education earlier in this chapter). It could also be posited that worker responsibilisation and the 'civilizing spurt' of parental anxiety has changed the way workers view a risk-benefit approach to outdoor education in youth work contexts. The latter point is tested in the research aim to explore perceptions of practice of risk in outdoor education in youth work. Gaps in the literature and the genesis of outdoor education in the UK justifies one of the research aims, that is, to contribute to the purpose and theorisation of outdoor education in a youth work context.

Running alongside the debates about risk aversion and over protecting young people is that of the issue of litigation (Gill, 2007, 2010). Fulbrook's (2005) assertion is, like others, that the risk of children and young people being hurt or killed whilst participating in outdoor activities is very low. He claims that the chance of being killed on a school/ youth centre trip into the outdoors is about the same as the chance of being killed by lightning – about 3 deaths a year. Statistically, those deaths are more likely to arise from the transportation to a trip/ visit rather than from the activity itself (Fulbrook, 2005). However, the perception of many is that the risk to the professional of litigation is high if things go wrong (Fulbrook, 2005), this arises partly from the recent history of outdoor education disasters in the UK, this is briefly explored next.

In the UK, there is general acknowledgement that the first significant disaster in recent times in outdoor education was in the Cairngorms in 1971, when a school party was killed in the Scottish hills walking in winter conditions (Campbell, 1971). The impact of that accident according to Mortlock, was that the concept of adventure was considered unacceptable (Mortlock, 1994). A legacy of this is that winter mountaineering with young people is seen as being too risky by many in the outdoor education world (for example, Barton, 2007). Further, many accidents in the 1950s and 60s formed an additional impetus for the formation of the Mountain Training Board schemes and other outdoor sports governing bodies (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2011), which focused on training leaders in the outdoors to ensure they are properly equipped to take others there. This is a skills-based approach, and one that focuses on risk in terms of environmental hazards (Loynes, 1992). There have been a string of other well-publicised tragedies following the Cairngorms disaster, many of which have led to reports recommending or enforcing changes in practice that also focus on tangible, physical risks.

For example, the Land's End disaster of 1985, where a party of school children drowned after being swept off the rocks by a freak wave, led to the first national guidelines *Safety in Outdoor Education*. They indicated that teachers had to exercise control and discipline on students on school journeys (Department for Education and Science, 1989 [DfESc]; Fulbrook, 2005). A few years later, the Altwood School inquiry (1988) – when four boys slid off a mountain in Austria - led to the recommendation of stricter supervision, including regular head counts. The Lyme Bay tragedy of 1993 –

another drowning incident - led to the 1995 Activity Centre's legislation that regulated outdoor activity providers (AALA, 2002); a piece of legislation that is currently still under review by the *Common Sense, Common Safety* initiative designed to reduce legislation and so-called red tape (Cabinet Office). The impact of the Lyme Bay drownings, according to Barnes was that risk became a "*dirty word*" in the outdoor education world (Barnes, 2004, p. 11).

Since 1996, there have only been two successful prosecutions of teaching or youth work staff where children or young people have died – this is at odds with the popular perception of teachers being frequently jailed for their efforts to take young people out on trips. In one of those cases, Paul Ellis, the teacher in charge during the Glenridding Beck drowning of 2002, was deemed to have acted in an "*unbelievably foolhardy and negligent*" manner by the judge and received a jail sentence (Fulbrook, 2005, p.68; Gill, 2010; HSE, 2005).

In terms of the legal position, outdoor educators and youth workers are subject to the generic Health and Safety laws that are applicable in other areas, the main Act being the 1974 legislation (HSE, 1974). This Act subsumed other legislation and established a general duty on employers to take care of employees, have safe systems of working in place, and importantly, established a general duty on all employees (including youth workers): "*to take reasonable care for the health and safety of himself **and of other persons who may be affected by his acts or omissions at work**;*" [**my emphasis**] 7a (HSE, 1974). Further, it made a duty of co-operating with the employer on Health and Safety issues. This legal duty means that all youth workers have to follow their

employer's rules, policies and procedures with regard to Health and Safety. Whilst the emphasis might not appear burdensome, it could be argued that this approach to Health and Safety could lead to a regime fostering compliance and formal risk assessment, rather than a more holistic, individual approach to risk management, with an emphasis on the use of dynamic risk assessment (previously defined).

Subsequent legislation in 1999 established the duty to have formal risk assessments for activities (HSE, 2003). Further, the general principals of duty of care, reasonableness and foreseeability are important, particularly in establishing negligence (Fulbrook, 2005). More recently, the Compensation Act of 2006 sought to discourage claims of negligence when the defendant was undertaking ''*desirable activity*'' (HM Gov., 2006), such as engaging in trips and visits. The 2007 Corporate Manslaughter Act sought to define duty of care in specific circumstances (HM Gov., 2007). Specific legislation with regard to outdoor education includes The Activity Centre's (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 (HM Gov., 1995) and the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996, 2004 (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2004) alluded to earlier.

Youth workers, then, are subject to the same range of legislative strictures as other educational professionals and this raft of legislation, and guidelines/ reports following high profile incidents, means that risk and outdoor education in this country are bound in a very specific legal and socio–cultural discourse (Frey, 1991). This combination of legislation, together with the rise of managerialism and performativity (discussed earlier in this chapter), would suggest that youth workers' engagement with risk in the

outdoors in England is constrained by particular legal, political, social, and historical forces, meaning that the workers' perceived agency is curtailed. Risk is seen as being culturally located, and, so in other countries where litigation is not as constrained, for example, risky situations are less fearfully perceived (Humberstone, 2009).

Summary

This literature review supports the notion of there being some key gaps in the literature. It suggests: that outdoor education is under theorised in terms of a youth work understanding of its purpose and approaches; that there is not a risk framework offering a specific youth work focus in outdoor education; and that there have not been any studies into the 'culture of risk' in the youth work field.

In this chapter, I have stressed the relational nature of youth work and propose that the youth worker, who is frequently not a specialist outdoor educator, has, in the UK, a very particular role to play helping young people understand risk. I argue that the genesis of outdoor education in the UK means that the discourse of risk has, until recently, focused on physical risk at the expense of other, broader understandings of risk. These factors, combined with a risk averse societal view of work with young people, makes the youth worker's role of exposing young people to risk (but not danger) particularly challenging.

Following my Heart

1989 post-graduation, I did weeks of voluntary work outdoors in some of the most beautiful parts of the country. What use was my degree anyway? By contrast, this was *real*, this was *useful*. It always seemed to be sunny and I was running camps, spending time with amazing young people. The regional coordinator was a paid member of staff. "*Wow*!" I thought, you could actually get paid to do this stuff... Less than a year later I had managed to find one of those jobs where people paid you to do stuff that you loved. Could this be real? Those golden days were brimming with images of paddling in the Thames, biking in the New Forest or camping in Surrey. But it is the stories of the people I was with that glow and burn with their intensity. These stories were unfolded over weeks and months, started by simple questions like, "*Are you sure you've got all your kit?*" and "*Are you ready*?" These questions led to conversations, conversations led to stories. Some stories were tragic, some sad, some uplifting but all were revealed over time and space in activities of sun and light. When a full time job in the strange, liminal existence of youth work came up nearer my beloved Northern hills, I knew I had to follow my heart.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological and other associated considerations relating to undertaking the research. It discusses the approach taken and draws on the findings from the pilot study that informed the main research project. The chapter starts with a reminder of the research aims, objectives and research questions. There follows an adapted version of Grix's typology (2002, 2010), to ensure consistency and clarity, given the contested nature of so much research terminology. This adapted version of Grix's typology starts with a brief exploration of ontology and epistemology. The methodology section includes an explanation of the selection of the case studies, followed by an outline of the methods employed. I then outline the approach to data collection, analysis and reporting that I have used. There follows a discussion of some of the ethical issues highlighted by the research. The chapter ends with a discussion of the reliability and limitations of the approach.

Aims, Objectives and Research Questions

My personal and professional interests in the area of risk and outdoor education, outlined in the prologue's vignette and the piece on personal stance in Chapter One, were the initial starting point for my research journey. This commenced in January 2012, with a taught professional doctorate programme. However, in the process of undertaking the initial scoping of the research through the assessed assignments, and in the completion of a pilot study, I came to further appreciate the significance of the funding issues facing the public sector and youth work. The combination of these particular circumstances, the timing of the research, the outcomes of an extended literature review and developing theoretical interests, outlined in Chapter Two, led to

the formulation of the aims of the research, which were to: contribute to the debate

as to the purpose and underpinning theorisation of outdoor education in a youth work

context; to explore perceptions, approaches and understandings of what constitutes

acceptable practice in terms of risk in the outdoors in a youth work context; and

explore what, if any, impact there was on outdoor education from a youth work

perspective, in light of recent financial cuts to public services.

The objectives of the research were to: carry out a pilot study to pre-test and scope

the case study approach; gain access to two contrasting youth work organisations

willing to contribute to the research; undertake an embedded multiple case study of

the two youth work organisations to explore the research questions; analyse the data

generated using thematic analysis; share the provisional findings with the case study

participants and then the wider field; and, finally, write up and disseminate the

project. A summary of the stages of the research is provided in tabular form in

Appendix A.

The attendant research questions were:

1) *What is the value of outdoor education from a youth work perspective?*
2) *What are the perceived risks versus benefits of outdoor education from a youth work perspective?*
3) *How do youth workers/ youth work managers come to ascertain whether risks are worth taking in this context?*
4) *How have the recent cuts to youth services impacted on young people's opportunities to engage in outdoor education? and*
5) *What are youth workers' and youth work managers' perceptions of the recent reduction to youth work provision and its impact on young people?*

The research questions and aims/ objectives outlined above supported an exploration of what has been a previously under theorised and under examined aspect of youth work practice.

Philosophical stance

This section discusses issues of ontology, epistemology, paradigm and the chosen approach to the research that of constructivism[12]. As Merriam et al. (2001) put it: *"All researchers begin data collection with certain assumptions about the phenomenon being investigated, situations to be observed, and people to be interviewed"* (ibid, p.406). Therefore, ontology - that is, what is the nature of reality and what is in the 'real' world (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013) - has to be the starting point of a researcher's journey, as ontological questions drive what the researcher thinks can be researched (Grix, 2002, 2010).

Some commentators (for example, Marsh & Furlong, 2002; Marsh & Smith, 2001) postulate that there are essentially two extreme positions in ontological terms; on the one hand, that of foundationalism, that is, the belief that there is a real world 'out there', independent of an agent's view of it; on the other hand, in contrast, the anti-foundationalist position can be described as viewing the world as essentially socially constructed. Grix (2010), however, sees these terms as being epistemological, one of the many examples of research's wicked problems (Savin-Baden & Howell Major,

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[12] Defined here as a tradition that sees knowledge, meaning and the nature of reality as being generated within human relationships (Gergen & Gergen, 2012).

2013). He uses the umbrella terms of objectivism and constructivism as the key ontological binaries, with the latter defined as the production of social phenomena and categories being produced through constantly revised social interaction. Others see realism or idealism as being the ontological binaries (for example, Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2014; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

In contrast, the anti-foundationalist position would represent an approach where phenomena are seen primarily as social constructs (Marsh & Smith, 2001). I take an anti-foundationalist perspective, given that the purpose of the research is to explore practitioners' views of risk; this approach is completely congruent with the research focus. I have briefly outlined why I take this anti-foundationalist view in the sections exploring stance in Chapter One.

Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) argue that a choice of paradigm (defined here as a belief system or world view) guides a researcher's philosophical position and that choice of paradigm subsequently influences all other choices that a researcher makes. Clearly, there are links between one's choice of paradigm and issues of ontology and epistemology. For the sake of clarity here, I have elected to adhere to Grix's (2002) approach and treat ontology separately and as a precursor to discussions of epistemology. I have included discussion of philosophical stance under epistemology. I

recognise that the research field is a complex one, where terms are contested with a widespread use of homonyms[13] (Grix, 2010; Niglas, 2004).

If epistemology is concerned with taking a view of what can be known about a research area, an exploration of types of knowledge is the next logical step after achieving clarity about one's ontological position (Grix, 2002). According to Marsh and Smith (2001), the two most common epistemological classifications are the binary positions of the positivist tradition, on the one hand, or the interpretivist tradition on the other. Other commentators point to a divide, or paradigm war, between quantitative (positivist) and qualitative (interpretivist) approaches and, according to one author at least, these two paradigms still dominate methodological textbooks (Feilzer, 2009). Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) argue for a positivist/ post-positivist paradigm versus a qualitative one. In their classification, qualitative paradigms include critical social theory, pragmatism, phenomenology, post-critical/structural, constructionism or constructivism.

In contrast, some authors (for example Charmaz, 2014) use the latter terms of constructivism and social constructionism interchangeably, subsumed under the general term of constructivism (Andrews, 2012). Others, for example, Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape (2014), see social constructionism as emphasising the *socially* constructed nature of meaning making by examining the ways in which people co-create knowledge, as opposed to constructivism which sees meaning making taking

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[13] Here I use the term to refer to the same word with different meanings/ interpretations

part in the individual mind (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). Part of the social constructionist tradition has its roots in Berger and Luckmann's classic work (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), although of course, the term is contested and represents at least three separate movements within it (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). Charmaz's definition of constructivism is a broad one emphasising the individual cognitive focus whilst acknowledging that all research participants, including the researcher, construct the realities in which they participate (Charmaz, 2014). It is Charmaz's use of the term constructivism, as an umbrella one, subsuming both the individualistic nature of constructivism with that of social construction (with its more intersubjective focus), I employ and follow here for the sake of inclusivity and clarity.

Further, there is a contested issue as to whether or not mixed methods research (MMR) represents a middle, third paradigm in itself (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011) but again, for the sake of clarity, I have elected to use the binary position of positivist versus interpretivist (Marsh and Smith, 2001). Both are umbrella terms, the former suggesting a concern for objective research modelled on the natural sciences, the latter for subjectivity i.e. understanding the way individuals construct their social world (Grix, 2010).

Given my professional background as a youth worker, and youth work's dominant paradigmatic stance in the interpretivist tradition, it was appropriate for my research to follow in that tradition, specifically that of a constructivist stance, as defined above. If, following Furlong and Marsh (2002), one's ontological and epistemological positions are skins not pullovers (they cannot be taken off, they are *who* you are), then this

degree of congruence is essential to the research process. This is in keeping with youth work's person-centred approach, with its central project being to understand young people's lived experience. In Chapter One, I briefly explored what I have dubbed the youth work approach, alongside my personal stance as a researcher. This idea of the research as being 'just' about understanding people's experience is not, however, one that is value neutral, as all social research is broadly political as it takes place in a particular policy context (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Indeed, I aspired for the research to be more than 'just' interpretivist, it aimed, like youth work itself, for it to have emancipatory features, to change perceptions of practice, to make a case for change, to light up a practice that was otherwise in the shadows. The choice of reporting styles, examined further in the data collection section, attempts to reach a wider audience and is, therefore, part of the emancipatory project.

Now, following my adaptation of Grix's typology, I turn to methodology as the next logical step from discussions of ontology and epistemology (Grix, 2010).

Methodological approach

The terms methods and methodology are often used interchangeably (Giddings, 2006). Here, I distinguish between the two by defining methodology as being focused on knowledge acquisition, whereas methods are the procedures deployed to acquire knowledge (Grix, 2002). Case study research as the methodological approach is justified and explored in this section, as is the selection of case study organisations.

As discussed in Chapter One, I was attracted to the accessible and engaging nature of narrative research and found the reflexive approach of autoethnography useful (defined in Chapter One). However, whilst influenced by these traditions, as can be seen in the approach to reporting, discussed in the data reporting section, I found the case for case study research compelling. I felt it offered a robust and established framework for studying a wider range of phenomena than other qualitative traditions, in short, the use of case study allows for detail, richness, and depth (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

So, this study was carried out using case study research, the origins of which can be seen in the work of the early American pragmatist movement (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Case study research (as previously defined in Chapter One) is the qualitative exploration of in-depth, bounded cases (Creswell, 2007). Case studies commonly use interviews, documents and observation as their data collection methods (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013) and are seen to be part of a flexible design (Robson, 2002). A case study approach has the advantage of generating rich data about risk management practices in contrasting organisations/ centres. Case studies of specific organisations can be a rich source of data – of thick description – pointing to the ethnographical and anthropological influences of the approach (Geertz, 1973/1993; Savin-Baden & Major Howell, 2013; Robson, 2002; Yin, 2014).

Case studies can be utilised in a variety of different ways, depending on whether they are from a range of disparate organisations or from a more narrow focus on one or two similar organisations. The use of explanatory case studies allows for a clearer understanding of context and process, the causes of particular phenomena and the

fostering of new hypotheses/ research questions (Flyvbjerg, 2011). This approach was apt, given that my research was focused on 'how' and 'why' questions about a contemporary issue in an area where I as researcher had little or no control (Yin, 2014).

Initially during the pilot, as explained in the following section, a constructivist grounded theory approach to data analysis was used (Charmaz, 2014); note only a grounded theory *approach*, as I went in with some prior theory development in line with a case study methodology (Yin, 2014). A 'fully' grounded theory piece of research would suggest not having done this type of theoretical grounding work previously (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013), although quite what is meant by the grounded theory in this regard is debated (Charmaz, 2014). Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of a situation where a researcher would not take some form of prior theoretical constructs into the research with them, but of course one must also be open to possibilities that emerge from the data (Joffe, 2012). Further detail on the approach to data analysis can be found later in this chapter.

Selection of the Cases and the Pilot

The first case study organisation was anonymised as the Association of Communities and Young People (ACYP). It had nested units (projects) within the main unit of the ACYP organisation itself. The second organisation, a youth work department in an English council area, anonymised here as Hillshire, was a holistic case study, that is, a single unit of analysis (Yin, 2012). This research could more accurately be described as having a multiple-case study design - that is, where more than one case is examined to

carry out the research, using an embedded case study approach in *one* of the cases (Yin, 2012). This is an adaption of what Yin (2012, 2014) would describe as an embedded multiple-case design, as it combines elements of an embedded case design (AYPC) with those of a holistic case (Hillshire), to address what are essentially explanatory questions that explore outdoor education in a youth work context. As previously asserted, case study research is justified as it is seen to be most effective when, as in this situation, a 'how' or 'why' question has been asked of a contemporary set of events over which the researcher has little or no control (Yin, 2014).

A purposive sampling approach to the case study selection was adopted; the cases were selected because of their particular characteristics (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant, & Rahim, 2014). Cases were selected, first and foremost, on the basis of youth work projects that used outdoor education. I looked for one in the local authority youth work sector (anonymised here as Hillshire CC) and one in a third sector organisation (given the pseudonym here of ACYP), in order to examine different approaches to outdoor education within youth work. The case studies organisations therefore, represented exemplars that were typical of their particular type of youth work (Yardley, 2000). The case study organisations were not selected as sampling units, nor to offer statistically generalisable outcomes, given the small-scale nature of the enterprise, but to be able to offer some modest claims of analytic generalisation, that is where theory may be able to be generalised from case studies (Yin, 2014).

The other key factor in case selection was a practical one – I needed to find cases that were within a few hours' travelling time of my base, given the demands on my time. As

Stake points out, the another important criterion is to find cases where one can learn, so their willingness to participate, to be hospitable, as well as being easy to access was vital (Stake, 1995), all of these factors came together in Hillshire and ACYP.

I deliberately chose cases where I did not have close personal connections. I was concerned this could present ethical issues that could mean the research was compromised in some way. However, in ACYP, I was referred, following initial contact at a national level, to a project that was run by one of my former youth work students. Although I would not have chosen this, it had its advantages, in that I was able to build on an already existing positive relationship, and this may have led to the collection of more data than in a situation where I had not known the participant. This could be one of the advantages of being an insider researcher, of having already built trust, knowledge and a relationship with the participant.

However as Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhamad (2001) point out, the idea of being an insider or an outsider can be more complex, more fluid, than the binary of being insider **or** outsider. Whilst I was something of an insider, knowing the organisation and the individual, I was also in a liminal state with some of the characteristics of an outsider, having being out of youth work practice for some time. I was concerned that the situation could have presented particular ethical issues (discussed later in this chapter) with the potential to jeopardise my research. Fortunately, this did not turn out to be the case.

I worked with gatekeepers in the case study organisations, defined as the individuals who secured access to the participants, in order to ease my access to data and to gain informed consent (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Webster, Lewis, & Brown, 2014). However, I recognise the potential ethical issues of gatekeepers unfairly excluding some from participating in the research (Webster, Lewis, & Brown, 2014). In order to mitigate this risk, the gatekeepers identified participants they felt to be suitable, following detailed conversations with me about the research. This worked particularly well in Hillshire, where my gatekeeper secured the permission of the County's outdoor education adviser to participate in the research (Fred). His particular outdoor education expertise offered something different from the other participants who were more experienced in youth work, and thus I was able to gain a broad range of very informed views.

I was conscious too that there was a potential advantage – aside from the practical issues – of me not 'choosing' participants. The gatekeepers chose the participants, so it was less likely the participants would share my worldview and would, therefore, offer different perspectives to my own. I tested the transcripts, data findings and thesis with the participants at a number of points during the write up phase, to ensure I had offered an accurate and fair rendition of their accounts and in an attempt to work towards participative member checking, where research participants are treated more as equal partners in the research process rather than data sources (Doyle, 2007).

Prior to the main study, I undertook a pilot to test out the use of intensive interviewing (defined in the section on methods) and establish the difficulty or otherwise of

obtaining artefacts. The pilot was with a project within the ACYP Northtown provision – the Positive Opportunities Project. Morse (2010) sees the pilot as being an opportunity to pre-test techniques that are then utilised and honed for the main study. The lessons learnt from that process informed the next phase of the research. However, I was keen to utilise the data from the pilot in the main study, as there was so much rich data gained that was of direct relevance. To that end, data from the pilot was re-analysed and treated as a further unit in the case study of ACYP.

I felt there was a significant ethical dilemma if I did not use the data that was shared with me in the pilot in the analysis, particularly in the case of one of the participants – Ben. His interview was so personal and moving that I felt a moral obligation to ensure his voice was heard. I felt incredibly privileged to have been given so much very personal information about this individual's background, motivation, and worldview. The interview became an opportunity for the worker to disclose sensitive information that he wanted to share. This displayed a tremendous amount of trust in me as a researcher and I felt obliged to do more than 'side-line' that information, which would have happened if I had utilised the pilot data 'just' to improve the efficacy of the main study. This accords with the argument that case studies, even if used as a pre-test, should be seen as significant and legitimate research in their own right (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This echoes Robson's (2002) claim that, in the instance of case studies or ethnographies, the effort needed to build up acceptance as a researcher, and the potential difficulties in gaining access to participants, are such that it would be untenable to view this data as 'just' for a pilot.

Methods

Methods are the procedures, the concrete actions, one uses to acquire the knowledge that the methodological strategies, the conceptual framework, dictate (Ma, 2016). The methods used in this research were intensive interviews, focus groups and the examination of artefacts. These methods are discussed in turn in this section. More than one method of data collection was used to offer a more rounded view (Robson, 2002) and this multi methods approach is consistent with a case study design (Yin, 2014). Methods, such as focus groups and semi-structured interviews, were used that helped co-construct ideas about what practitioners and managers saw as being the key issues. This is entirely congruent with a constructivist approach (discussed earlier in this chapter). The methods are now examined in turn.

Intensive interviews are defined here as the in-depth exploration of a particular topic with individuals who have had relevant experience in that area (Charmaz, 2006). Here, practitioners were selected who had the experience (and in some cases, extensive experience) of delivering outdoor education activities to young people. I used semi-structured one to one, intensive interviews, in order to address the central questions of worker's views on outdoor education, risk, funding etc. These individual, intensive interviews were very useful in generating rich data, however, they are very time consuming and by their very nature limited the number of individuals I was able to see in a small-scale project.

The complexity of risk and its interpretation by different practitioners was evident in the wide-ranging issues covered in the interviews. I deliberately chose not to offer a narrow definition of risk immediately prior to, or during, the interviews. I felt that the outline of what I saw as the key issues were covered sufficiently in the preliminary discussions with participants and in the printed material I sent out prior to the interviews (see Appendix C and Appendix E). I chose not to narrowly prescribe these ideas, so as not to constrain participants' views as to what constituted the key issues for them in defining risk and outdoor education. In short I wanted to get as close as I could to the participants' own views of risk, an example of constructivist grounded theory[14] (as opposed to objectivist grounded theory) perhaps, where as a reflexive researcher I was conscious of my own presupposition's potential impact on the research (Charmaz, 2006).

Having prepared exclusively for intensive interviews, on two separate occasions the case study gatekeepers requested moving to a focus group when the practical constraints of the participants' time were in question. Although this was not what I had originally planned, I was cognisant of the need to be respectful of colleagues' time and their other responsibilities, as part of an ethical approach to research, so felt it necessary to be flexible and adapt my approach to comply with the gatekeepers' requests (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). This was a case of 'dynamic' decision making in the field, or of an emergent design, but it felt entirely appropriate and in line with the overall approach to the research.

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[14] Constructivist approach emphasizes the data and analysis as being created by shared experiences, objectivist grounded theory sees the data as being 'real' in and of themselves (Charmaz, 2006).

As Kidd and Parshall (2000) attest, focus groups have become almost ubiquitous in their use in research over the last few years, given that they can elicit a range of opinions and be a source of rich data. Their use is not unproblematic, however, as there is always a danger of strong voices within the group dominating and swaying the discussion. This is a familiar critique of the use of such groups (Litosseliti, 2003). I have also come to appreciate that the very act of discussing the topic in a group situation can change the way the group and individuals come to conceive of and understand it (Salomon & Perkins, 1998). However, I felt that, on balance the use of the groups was justified, in terms of their ability to diminish the influence of the researcher and so offer rich data that was less constrained by the researcher's presence and positionality. In this sense, the focus groups were able to offer more varied perspectives on the research questions than would have been collected through only using intensive interviews, given the different dynamics at play in the two methods (Litosseliti, 2003).

Documents relating to risk in each of the case study organisations were obtained. These included health and safety policies and key policy and procedure manuals. Further, artefacts generated by the case study organisations, such as risk assessments, were examined, in order to enrich my understanding of the data from the interviews and focus groups. I felt that the written risk assessment, representing, as it generally did, a rich record of co-construction, would be useful background information to the research. This is because risk assessments are frequently the result of collaborative work between colleagues and, in many cases, between workers and young people. At

organisation level, a substantial bank of artefacts has been created as a result of the legal requirement to produce written risk assessments (National Archives, 1999). Accessing these data in local organisations could have been difficult, so it was important to secure the agreement of gatekeepers (Creswell, 2007), however, there were some issues with this that I had not originally anticipated (this is discussed later in this chapter under data collection).

I felt that there were benefits of looking to naturally occurring data, such as the risk assessments; indeed, Silverman (2007), adapting a list from others, advocates this type of data as a starting point and claims five key benefits thereof, including:

1. *The researcher is not left to make inferences from the data that could be problematic as the topic is studied directly*
2. *It allows for the opening up of unexpected avenues of exploration*
3. *It gives a "rich record" of people carrying out their lives (ibid, 2007, p.59)*

I considered undertaking observations of practitioners carrying out risk assessments as a further method, which would have been congruent with the overall approach to case study research (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013; Yin, 2014). However, the likelihood of risk assessments being written at the very moment I happened to be on site was so low that it would make the chance of a naturally occurring observation of this practice more or less untenable. I also felt that by accessing previously written risk assessments the data was more reliable, as it would not have been influenced by my presence (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting

This section outlines the use of grounded theory and discusses data saturation and thematic analysis as part of the approach to data collection and analysis. The section ends with an explanation of the way the data from the case studies has been reported in the thesis and an explanation of the use of 'love letters.'

Data Collection

As previously discussed, the case study organisations were chosen because they ran different types of youth work provision and used outdoor education as part of their work. This approach, of looking at different types of youth work provision, allowed for constant comparison analysis (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Charmaz (2006), also stresses the importance of being able to compare data in undertaking grounded theory analysis – an approach I explored in the pilot phase. I utilise Charmaz's definition of grounded theory here, that is, a systematic and inductive method of data analysis that helps researchers focus their data collection and build middle range theories from that data. The process is fundamentally an iterative, comparative and interactive one (Charmaz, 2011).

When undertaking the pilot, I had anticipated issues in deciding when I had obtained 'enough' data, particularly in terms of the artefacts, and what to do if I received too much data that I would be unable to analyse. I ascertained that the data set of relevant artefacts (risk assessments) was around 200 per annum in one project and this proved to be similar in others. However, due to the sensitivities involved (and indeed legal

proceedings in at least one case), I did not have to worry about having too much data and being over-saturated (Charmaz, 2006). The initial proposal was to limit a review of risk assessments to sample ones carried out in the last calendar year and to only examine the most recent and relevant policies produced by the organisation. As I did not access as many artefacts as I had anticipated, this sampling criterion was more than adequate. Having discussed data collection, I now turn to the approach to data analysis.

Data Analysis

My approach to data analysis changed slightly over the course of the research. In the pilot, I transcribed the data from the intensive interviews and used a grounded theory *approach* to data analysis to help theoretical frameworks emerge. The data generated was compared – a crucial step of the process according to Charmaz (2006) and another reason not to 'side-line' the data from the pilot - as a grounded theory approach relies on comparing data across different data sets (Robson, 2002).

Charmaz (2006) defines grounded theory coding as follows:

> *Grounded theory coding is more than a way of sifting, sorting and synthesizing data, as is the usual purpose of qualitative coding. Instead…[it] begins to unify ideas analytically because you kept in mind what the possible theoretical meanings of your data and codes might be. (p. 71)*

However, during the pilot, I had completely underestimated (despite previous experience) the time it would take me to transcribe the data I had collected and I did not have sufficient time to properly utilise the three kinds of coding of standard

grounded theory – that is, open, axial and selective coding (Robson, 2002) or, indeed, Charmaz's approach, which requires initial, focused, axial and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006), so worked towards a grounded theory approach rather than taking all of Charmaz's coding steps.

For the subsequent analysis of case study data, I elected to use thematic analysis[15], given its congruence with a constructivist approach, and so used open/ initial coding of the data, and then grouped the codes into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012). The themes represented patterns found in the data, in an attempt to make sense out of and analyse, it (Boyatzis, 1998). For an example of an initial coding of the data, see Appendix H, Appendix I exemplifies the process of analysis, linking the initial open codes, to sub themes, which were then clustered into the broader themes. These themes are clearly linked to the findings in this appendix.

I felt this was more in keeping with a case study approach, that requires some sort of theoretical underpinning before gathering the data (Yin, 2014), rather than a grounded theory one that is purely inductive (building knowledge exclusively from the 'bottom up' from the data, Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2014). I had, at that stage of the main project, completed an initial literature review and been influenced by a variety of theories and so, whilst instinctively drawn to an inductive grounded theory *approach* felt that I came to the research *both* inductively and deductively

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[15] A method for identifying and analysing patterns of meaning which reveals the important themes in a data set (Joffe, 2012).

(theoretically driven, Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2014), that is, I used an interplay between ideas and evidence (Grix, 2010).

Further, I also recognise that transcription is in and of itself an interpretive act (Green, Franquiz, & Dixon, 1997) and had some concerns about the difficulties of interpreting the interview data accurately, for example, where the regional accents of some of the participants challenged my ability to capture their explicit and implicit meaning clearly in a written form.

For subsequent interviews, I elected to use a professional transcriber, mainly in the interests of time efficiency but also as I was aware of the transcriber's more objective stance. I do not feel that involving a third party detracted from my familiarity with the data. I spent hours pouring over and analysing the data, which the participants (who were given access to the transcripts, in line with good practice, (Shopes, 2011)), felt were accurate accounts of what was said. This robust approach to data transcription and checking was designed to support the drawing out of both the manifest and latent themes in the data through thematic analysis (Joffe, 2012).

Reporting

In the data chapters, I have been influenced by, and aspire to, what Yin refers to as a framework for case study methodology in these data chapters, that they should offer a thoughtful, balanced, and transparent tone, methodical but also attractively written (Yin, 2014, p. 191). I have utilised an adapted version of Stake's (1995) advice that case study reports need to contain information about: the nature, background and physical

setting of the case; other important contexts, such as pertinent economic and political issues; and, finally, the case participants. I have followed this advice in reporting the data from both ACYP and Hillshire in Chapters Four and Five.

Although these data chapters are reported in a conventional case study way, and quotes are reported extensively in an attempt to offer rich description, according to Geertz (1973/ 1993, p.6), *the* defining intellectual effort of the research, I have also been influenced by narrative and autoethnographic traditions as discussed in Chapter One. Narrative research is where narratives are drawn on to analyse knowledge from the past, and where the researcher's story is intrinsic to the study (Trahar, 2009).

So, given we are storied beings (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2001), I have elected to go beyond the traditional case study report by offering a series of narratives, the love letters, to be found between each chapter. Indeed, each chapter could be conceived of as a narrative in its own right. These love letters form part of the reflexive project, given reflexivity's importance in educational research (Greenbank, 2003), and offer a window into my position in relation to the research. They build upon the reflexive pieces that are to be found in the Prologue and in Chapter One, and help frame the 'story' of the research. The love letters offer some personal epiphanies, those key moments, found in autoethnographic inquiry (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011).

The choice of research topic, the love letters, and the approach to writing are also political and part of a socially conscious, socially just act, another tenet of autoethnographic research (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011), so the overall approach is

an attempt to help the accessibility of the thesis, so its reach can perhaps go beyond the academy. After the primary research was concluded, I asked the research participants to add their own 'love stories' to the research and some have done this; their updated stories and love letters are to be found in the Epilogue. This combination of case study reporting with some elements of autoethnographic/ narrative writing, is reflected in the thesis' title *"Love Letters to Services Past…"* as, indeed is my positionality in relation to the research.

Ethical issues

A number of ethical issues that were considered before, during and after the research phase are discussed here. The process for gaining ethical approval is outlined, as is the approach to confidentiality, anonymity and gaining consent. Two particular ethical issues are selected here for more detailed consideration, those of safeguarding and the use (and potential abuse) of power.

The data gathering and all other aspects of the research were undertaken following successful approval from Sheffield Hallam University's (SHU) ethical approval processes for doctoral research. Further, data collection followed British Educational Research Association (BERA) and National Youth Agency Ethical guidelines and principles of doing no harm, safeguarding participants, and behaving ethically (NYA, 2004; BERA, 2011). Data protection principles (Data Protection Act, 1998) were followed for the storage, use and destruction of data.

The attendant confidentiality of participants and organisations was attempted, as much as is practical and possible through the use of pseudonyms, both in the raw data sets and throughout the thesis. One aspect of confidentiality is the participants' right to anonymity. I have, in consultation with the participants and their organisations, used pseudonyms to try and offer as much anonymity as possible in these circumstances. I have chosen not to reference the case study area's policies and procedures in the reference list to maintain that anonymity. However, I do wonder just how possible it would be for participants to be completely anonymised within their own organisations, where, for example, there was only one person in that organisation with that particular job role. Even in the best of circumstances, 'full' anonymity is difficult to achieve and some would even take issue with its desirability (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Walford, 2005). This was particularly apparent for ACYP, where I had to change the pseudonym and the details of the organisation given in the thesis a number of times before I felt satisfied that the organisation could not be easily identified.

Examples of the approach to gaining informed consent from the participants are provided in the appendices section, where copies of the information and consent documents can be found (Appendix C, Appendix D, Appendix E and Appendix F). I did also discuss consent and withdrawal with the participants before the interviews, in an attempt to get as close as possible to fully *informed* consent, by satisfying myself that the participants had read the information proffered and understood the implications of the consent forms they were signing. This was an ethical decision rather than a

legalistic one; one based upon ethical praxis, which underpins all stages of the research process, rather than that of ethical practice where ethics is focused on compliance (Palaiologou, 2016).

As indicated earlier, there were a number of other ethical issues that either arose, or that I was concerned would arise, in the course of the data collection. I have chosen to expand on just two of them here, themed as safeguarding and power. I start with safeguarding.

In my original pilot proposal, I envisaged that, as a researcher, I might uncover instances of poor, dangerous and/ or unethical practice that had taken place in the case study organisations. As it transpired, this did not emerge in either the pilot or the main study. However, I felt the initial proposal was ethically sound in that I was clear about the limits of confidentiality in the consent and information sheets and in conversations with the participants before the interviews commenced (see Appendix C, Appendix D, Appendix E and Appendix F). If discussion of unethical practice had arisen then I would have followed SHU guidelines (SHU, n.d.) and discussed any attendant issues with my supervisors, perhaps as anonymised cases in the first instance. I further proposed that, if needed, advice would be taken from an appropriate person on the Faculty's Ethics Committee. On reflection, I would also have had to consider my own professional body guidelines, which privilege the safety and wellbeing of young people, and put a duty of care upon myself as an (ex-) practitioner to ensure my actions promote young people's welfare (NYA, 2004). Indeed, as the SHU

ethical guidelines attest (SHU, n.d.), in the instance of child protection type issues being disclosed, the issue of research confidentiality must come second.

The second ethical issue was that of power, a complex concept that is used in a variety of ways. There were a number of interesting issues related to power that arose in the research. When planning the study, I took the decision not to utilise any of my students in the research, even though they would have made ideal research participants, given that they are experienced youth work practitioners. In fact, I 'ended up' with an ex-student taking part, and a participant who became a student. As such, I have chosen to outline some of the potential issues here.

To do this, I draw on the first of Thompson's model of three aspects of power. Using a Foucauldian approach, he identifies personal, cultural and structural power aspects (Thompson, 2007). Personal power is the power an individual may legitimately have in an organisation; in this example, the power that I, as course tutor, have in terms of giving marks to my students and, ultimately, access, or not, to a professional qualification. Whilst I would never knowingly misuse this power, it is important to be aware that one does possess power (in this example *over* my students) and be aware that some may have felt participation in the research project, or a decision not to participate, may have been connected to their success or otherwise as students.

Given this situation, I felt that the most appropriate course of action was not to involve current students in the research, as it could potentially have been *perceived* as unethical or unfair. I acknowledged a power differential between the students and

myself as their course tutor, even if their participation in my research was deemed voluntary. I was concerned that the students may not have thought participation was 'really' voluntary, especially given it was a small, tight knit student body, and so choices to participate or not would have been known to all parties. I was cognisant of any impact participation may have had or may have been *perceived* to have (Merriam et al, 2001; Palaiologou, 2016).

However, whilst I planned not to use my personal or student body contacts to access data sources, and I was aware of some of the ethical issues (outlined above), I ended up by way of a series of unplanned situations, through the recommendations of gatekeepers (delineated earlier in this chapter), interviewing a student for the pilot study *before* he joined my course and interviewing a student who had just finished my course as part of one of the ACYP case study projects. I felt rather uncomfortable with both of these situations – it was what I would have wanted to avoid, even though they were not current students, but judged that participation in the research for future and ex-students did not have any direct impact on their involvement in my course. I deemed neither situation to be unethical and went ahead with interviewing them, as I also felt that it was important to go with the organisation's recommendation of participants.

Reliability

This section covers a range of issues that are contained in the broader definition of reliability – generalisability, validity, bias, reflexivity and dissemination, and some of the limitations of the study.

This was a small-scale study of two contrasting case studies and, as such, does not make any claims for statistical generalisability – that is, where inferences are made about a broader population based on the results of research (Yin, 2014). Yin does, however, assert that modest claims for analytic (theoretical) generalisation can be made from case study research (Yin, 2014).

I have followed established best practice in ensuring the reliability / trustworthiness of the research by following case study protocols: using theory to support external validity; addressing internal validity by explanatory work in the data analysis and comparing results; and using multiple sources of evidence to support construct validity (Yin, 2014).

Being reflexive and acknowledging one's positionality is increasingly seen as being central to the research process, particularly in qualitative research (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012; Greenbank, 2003; Rose, 1997). My personal stance, which informed my positionality[16] as a researcher, was discussed in Chapter One, but here reflexivity is explored given its importance in the research process, its close relationship to

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[16] Positionality is defined here as the position adopted by the researcher within the research study (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013)

positionality and its impact on research reliability. Personal reflexivity can be seen as

having a self-conscious awareness of the impact one has on the research in its totality;

how one's values, attitudes, perceptions, opinions, actions, and feelings influence the

whole research process; and how those things feed into how the research is viewed

(Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Personal reflexivity, being able to step outside

oneself, "*noticing oneself*" (Elliott, Ryan, & Hollway, 2011, p. 433), is key to being

aware of what these assumptions are. Understanding one's assumptions is essential to

limit bias, or to be more open about bias, particularly in qualitative research (Choak,

2012).

Reflection and reflexivity are commonly cited as the tools to guard against the

excesses of researcher bias (for example, Robson, 2002). I have attempted to be

reflexive and reflective, and, therefore, less biased in my approach, by adopting the

commonly recommended practices of memoing/ keeping field notes, (see Appendix J

as an example of this) (Carlson, 2010). Further, the thesis uses reflexive pieces

throughout, in the form of vignettes and 'love letters', in order to be as transparent as

possible and reflect upon and acknowledge my beliefs, values and views.

Bias can be further mitigated, not only by being both aware of one's positionality but

also by considering one's position as an insider or outsider researcher. However, the

over simplistic binary of the latter has been challenged given the inherent complexity

of each status, and the difficulties of bounding the two positions (Merriam et al.,

2001). For example, in my own position as an experienced youth work manager and

practitioner, there could be advantages of having insider knowledge of the youth work

sphere and to a lesser extent, that of outdoor education, given that it carries certain amounts of understanding. I recognise that a disadvantage of having been an insider could be an over familiarity with the landscape, and, being steeped in the traditions, a consequent inability to see the 'taken for granted' assumptions (Robson, 2002). It would also be dangerous for me to assume familiarity with a landscape that has perhaps moved on without me fully appreciating all the nuances of that change, given I have been out of youth work practice for some ten years.

Consequently, I find myself in something of an in-between state, neither insider nor outsider. I have tried to mitigate the impact of this and of any potential bias by sharing my findings at various stages of the research process with a wider audience, to glean feedback from both insiders and outsiders. As an example of this, I took the preliminary findings of this research to a conference I organised on risk in youth work, in order to take into account the views of a much wider range of (youth work) practitioners. This helped ensure that the findings had some degree of external validity with those who are current insiders (Yin, 2014). Outsiders' views were also elicited at various stages of the write-up stage by sharing drafts and thinking with colleagues from different fields to gain perspectives from critical friends.

To support claims to trustworthiness, I also carried out what I felt was working towards participative member checking, that is, I went beyond asking for feedback from participants about the accuracy of the transcripts, by discussing the analysis of the findings and their views with them (Doyle, 2007). Appendix A has a summary of these aspects of the research process.

As stated previously in terms of limitations, this is a small-scale study, however, I do not make any claims for statistical generalisability; instead a modest claim that the findings may be of use in terms of analytical generalisability (Yin, 2014). Data were gathered, transcribed and analysed with integrity, and data from a range of sources were gathered where that was possible; 'truth' claims are not made but, as previously discussed, a number of attempts have been made to gain multiple perspectives on the issues at hand. The data used was mainly that of the intensive interviews and focus groups, as this was rich data. In contrast, the artefacts I gathered were used largely for triangulating participants' assertions, as I found that these data did not produce new or rich insights.

In conclusion, in conducting this qualitative piece of research, I have followed best practice advice to: demonstrate sensitivity to context; show commitment and rigour; offer transparency and coherence; and finally to consider impact and importance (Yardley, 2000). Sensitivity to context has been attended to through a review of the theoretical and practical literature, gathering participants' perspectives through participative member checking (Doyle, 2007) and being aware of ethical issues that went beyond basic compliance (Palaiologou, 2016). Commitment and rigour has been demonstrated by an in-depth engagement with the topics, through the literature review and by a thorough data collection and analysis, which is three chapters long. Transparency and coherence has been shown by the 'fit' between ontology, epistemology and the methodology; by being reflexive through the use of, for example, the researcher stance statement in Chapter One; and being clear about my

positionality in relation to the research from the outset. The impact and importance of

the work has been supported by a number of dissemination activities including

organising a conference on risk (see Appendix A) and a plan to publish from this

research once this doctorate is completed. The practical implications for youth

workers and policy makers have been set out in the implications section in Chapter

Eight and, at the request of ACYP, a brief summary for practitioners (Appendix K).

Summary

In this chapter I have offered an overview of my approach to the research, that is, from a constructivist stance (Charmaz, 2014) with an embedded multiple case design (Yin, 2012). I used focus groups, one to one and intensive interviews and the collection of artefacts and grey literature (reports, policies etc.) to provide data from each case study organisation.

I have explored some areas of my own reflexivity in relation to the research and discuss the research following an adaption of Grix's (2002) typology. I have outlined the approach taken to data collection, data analysis and data reporting. I have discussed some of the lessons learned from the approach I adopted and examined the attendant practical and ethical issues that this research has highlighted for me as a beginning researcher. Finally, I briefly reflected upon the reliability of the study, through a discussion of bias and related issues.

The following two chapters present the data that came from the case study organisations, first by examining ACYP (Chapter 4) then Hillshire CC (Chapter 5), before offering an analysis and an exploration of some of the similarities and differences between the two cases (Chapter 6). This is in accord with Yin's (2014) suggestion for setting out case study data, as it allows for detailed description and analysis on a case-by-case basis, with then scope for comparisons between the two case study organisations.

Wilderness Wanderings

"Do they do Páramo in maternity wear?" I asked the sales assistant innocently. A few minutes later, I emerged from the disapproval of the shop with a man's coat – extra large - ready for serious Scottish hill action. I had done the Arrochar Alps, so what could go wrong with the Three Sisters area? I had decided that the Cuillins were probably not a good idea when pregnant, even in the summer, but the Aonach Eagach was perhaps more doable. Battling up a hill, the 'Pap' before the ridge, I reflected on the life lessons that walking offered: resilience; independence; ability to endure pain, all of which have stood me in good stead in the years that followed that particular venture. I would never have had the opportunity to imagine let alone undertake these adventures, had it not been for a lucky combination of factors: a school that valued such things; third sector organisations that encouraged wild wanderings; and enough personal resources to be able to engage thanks, in part, to a free education system. How will the generations that follow, those who are not entitled, manage to touch sky and earth, I wondered?

Chapter 4. The Case of ACYP

This chapter reports on the first case study, an embedded study of the organisation referred to as ACYP. Data was drawn from intensive interviews and focus groups from key staff, as well as an examination of the organisation's risk assessments and policy documents.

This chapter explicates the background and context of ACYP's young people's projects in the two cities known as Northtown and Midtown. The research participants are also introduced, before a discussion of the key contextual issue of funding. The theme of the perceived value of outdoor education to the participants is explored, finding that outdoor education was seen as a valuable tool for building different types of relationships, as well as offering learning opportunities. The issues around the conceptualising and processing of risk in outdoor education are discussed at the end of the chapter.

Background and Context

The Association for Communities and Young People (ACYP) is an organisation with projects in England and Wales. ACYP was set up in the second half of the twentieth century in an attempt to provide opportunities for volunteers to work with individual young people. ACYP now runs some 40 projects nationally and employs around 135 staff. Recently, ACYP merged with another charity that focuses on providing support to those experiencing issues around homelessness, alcohol addiction, domestic violence

etc. ACYP kept its name and charitable status but the merger with the other charity has had some repercussions, in terms of its focus and modus operandi.[17]

As ACYP is a charity, it relies on often ad hoc funding, making its existence particularly fragile, with funding being very much 'hand to mouth'. The ACYP managers were challenged by the necessity of working to different, and even competing, targets, as they relied on a variety of funders to fund their core work. The impact of the difficult funding situation (see Chapter One for further discussion of this context) has been particularly hard for organisations like ACYP (LBFEW, 2016a, 2016b).

I carried out an embedded multiple-case design (defined in the methodology chapter) within ACYP (Yin, 2014), examining three different projects in two different geographical locations – Midtown and Northtown. The details of these different projects are reported next.

ACYP Midtown

Midtown had a population of approximately 250,000 in 2011, representing a considerable increase since the previous census. Some 25% of its inhabitants were defined as BME with the Pakistani community being the largest of that group, making up some 6% of the population.

ACYP Midtown gained its income from a variety of funders to offer support to families and young people experiencing difficulties; the focus of their work usually emphasised

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[17] I have chosen not to reference this section in order to preserve the anonymity of ACYP.

crime reduction in one way or another. It shared a large, rambling, and rather run down, town centre building with another organisation. The building doubled as an office space and project base for ACYP. On site they ran a crèche, a playgroup, offered one to one support to young people through a network of trained volunteers, and ran trips, activities and outings for families.

Midtown employed a project manager and a small team of workers who supported the volunteers and offered direct support to their 'clients'. There were two main projects in Midtown during the period of the research; the Priority Families project and a Mentoring Programme for young people. The funding mechanisms were complex and the organisation has to bid for short-term work through the local version of the so-called 'Troubled family' programme (HM Gov., 2015) and various others, such as health initiatives, to keep going.

In the case of ACYP Midtown, the family was the focus of their interventions. This had been a relatively recent change; young people were now seen as the focus only in as much as they were part of a family unit. Midtown had previously run projects that worked exclusively with young people and outdoor education, but the funding for this had finished. The use of outdoor activities at the time of the research was primarily as a tool to build family relationships.

There was, however, still some one-to-one work with young people going on, where volunteers engaged young people in work designed to promote their self-esteem. Some of this work involved outdoor education activities. In many ACYP projects, and

certainly in the case of Midtown, a core part of their modus operandi was the use of volunteer mentors, who worked one-to-one with young people (and adults) to develop positive relationships with their 'clients' and followed young people's interests in pursuing activities that were developmental for them.

ACYP Northtown

Northtown has an estimated population of 575,000 residents; some 20% of the population are from BME backgrounds, the vast majority of the latter category being Asian or Asian British.

ACYP Northtown had a number of projects and project bases within the city. There were some mentoring schemes for young people and offenders, an appropriate adults scheme, which trained volunteers to work with young people caught up in the criminal justice system, and the two projects, which the research participants worked for, anonymised here as the Positive Opportunities Project (POP) and the Open Access Project (OAP). These projects worked with a mixture of young people, who were care-experienced, young people with impairments and 'mainstream' young people.

ACYP Northtown offered activities 'just' to young people and had much less emphasis on family intervention work than Midtown. The core funding for the Northtown projects came from the local authority and Children in Need to carry out its work with looked after children.

The Research Participants

The participants from Midtown were: the project manager of the family intervention focused project, Sandra, who was an experienced youth work / community work manager and who had worked for ACYP for a number of years; Tom, a project worker, with a background in the manufacturing industry, quite different to the person-centred 'industry' that ACYP represents; and Rachel, who was relatively new to the organisation but who had some experience of work in other parts of the youth work / community work sector.

In Northtown, for the pilot I initially interviewed Anne and Ben. Anne was the safeguarding manager for ACYP and a very experienced practitioner, who had been both teacher and youth worker in a former career. Ben was a project worker for the Positive Opportunities Project (POP) within the city. POP offered, amongst other things, a 'drop in' for young people in care (YPC). Ben was a care leaver himself, who started as a volunteer at ACYP having been a service user and worked his way up through the organisation to managing projects. Ben had been with ACYP for a number of years. His role was a substantial part time one and he also had another job in an unrelated sector to supplement his income.

Finally, in Northtown, I interviewed the project co-ordinator of the Open Access Project – Will – an experienced and recently qualified worker. Will's project worked mainly with looked after young people, young people with learning difficulties/ disabilities and 'mainstream' young people, but it is labelled here as an open access project, as it did open its doors to anyone who wanted to attend.

ACYP Participants' Summary Table

Project location	Participants		
Midtown	Sandra (project manager)	Tom (project worker)	Rachel (project worker)
Northtown	Will (project coordinator – Open Access Project)	Anne (safeguarding manager ACYP)	Ben (project worker – Positive Opportunities Project)

In terms of ethnicity, four members of staff were White British; two were from other ethnic backgrounds, the detail of which has been withheld due to the potential for identifying participants.

Funding

As argued in the introductory chapter, since 2008 the funding cuts for youth work activities in England have been devastating (for example, Wylie, 2015). Eighty to one hundred per cent cuts to youth work budgets have been widely reported (Unison, 2016). The difficulties for projects, such as ACYP, in keeping 'afloat' are challenging and well known (LBFEW, 2016b, 2017). Justifying any expenditure over and above the basics of staff costs could be hard to do in this environment. Outdoor education could have been considered to be an 'unaffordable luxury' in this situation, but interestingly there was less talk of this aspect of things in ACYP than at Hillshire CC, perhaps because the scale of the cuts was not as immediately obvious in ACYP, with its

tradition of a somewhat 'hand to mouth' existence. Ben, from Northtown, wryly hinted at this penurious, precarious existence:

> *We do get some bits of money…[but] through [the] summer holidays [especially] you [h]ave to be really inventive. An[d] over years I've got quite inventive!*

He then went on to describe how he had negotiated setting up a fishing project by using his connections to broker an incredibly cheap deal with a local club. Even this couple of hundred pounds though had to be found externally, through a Prince's Trust grant.

The impact of the funding restrictions in ACYP was twofold: firstly, there were the issues of surviving on a restricted budget; and secondly, there were the complications associated with managing short-term funding.

Will, in Northtown, was acutely aware of managing on a restricted budget. Like Ben, he was also aware that he needed to source very low cost or free activities; the stress of this necessity leaked through his comments:

> *…A lot of my time is spent trying to source free or really low cost trips and activities, whether it's a game of football in the park or a walk. I've also accessed other services where they offer free like outdoor [activities]… on that week when we did that trip… some of them went rollerblading, so it was like an additional activity what someone found really low price and we also got a deal with the lady that worked there as well to get it even cheaper. So like a lot of young people have got their own travel passes to get free travel and some of them have got it where they're allowed a carer as well, so that's something … trying to keep things really low cost.*

Will experienced difficulties in getting the young people to be realistic in their aspirations. In this example, the young people were enthusiastically reciting what they would like to do, but he had to tell them what that would mean for the Centre's finances:

> *Let's go bungee jumping, then paintballing, then Alton Towers, yeah,*
> *we can do that but our youth club's shut for the rest of the year.*

In contrast to Midtown, Will's projects had not yet felt the impact of the tighter squeeze on finances because their core funding, through the local authority and Children in Need has been relatively stable for two years. However, the sense of the precariousness of this situation can be seen easily below the surface:

> *We've not felt the cuts, but we should have gone for tender for this*
> *contract two years ago and then we got extended for another few*
> *months… It's [the funding of the Centre has] been up in the air for, well*
> *since I started, because when I started we were coming to the end of*
> *the three year contract we were given, got extended for a few months*
> *and then got given for that year and then same again, so then this*
> *year… I think we've got to do the tender process now… If we don't get*
> *the main funding we'll probably have to give the Children in Need*
> *funding back.*

The outcome of the current funding situation, outlined above, was having a profound impact on how work was delivered, whom it was delivered to, and what was being delivered.

The second related issue was about managing short term funding and its associated targets. For the Midtown project, there was no choice but to 'chase the funding', that is change, stop or modify direction of the whole project in order to find funding to continue *some* sort of provision. For example, the project previously had a very

successful track record of delivering work with young people - outdoor education activities were a successful part of this - but the demise of that funding regime meant that they had to refocus all their efforts on work with 'priority families'. However, the new funding was not even sufficient to keep this (small) project going, despite its reliance on a large number of volunteers. Other funding had been applied for, but that came with separate targets.

There were three main issues associated with relying on these different sources of income: firstly, there were gaps in provision that the workers could identify but could not manage to find funding to cover; secondly, they sometimes had to stop doing work they saw as successful, as it was no longer valued by a new funder; and/ or lastly, they had to balance approaches to work and targets that might not sit comfortably together. Sandra, the manager describes the efforts they made to 'plug' a small gap in the provision:

> *After the Engage Project has finished, Dave from Sporting Bodies has applied for an Awards for All bid, combined with ACYP we've done a joint bid for him to continue doing the Thursday night sport sessions with those families. I know there's a gap now, a gap in service.*

The funding was frequently very short term; one of the consequences of this was that the funding regimes did not lend themselves to doing long-term work, often, ironically, in situations where individuals needed that long-term support. Sandra described the current funding situation thus:

> *Yeah, it is really difficult… it is for small pots of funding and it is short-term, there's not a lot of funding out there at the minute that is for*

> *two/three years and continuous, it isn't out there, so it's more about the pilot kind of stuff at the minute.*

Another outcome of the complex funding structure was that the manager's time was frequently consumed by applying for funding, monitoring and evaluating funding regimes and ensuring that the project hit its various targets. Sandra described a new process to bid for small amounts of money:

> *[We had to bid for work with] referred [young people] through the Dynamic Purchasing System through the Midtown council. We have to bid for individual lots…so if it was 12 weeks at two hours a week, we have to put in and say how we're going to achieve those outcomes of why that [individual] young person's been referred and how we're going to work with them, what we're going to do with them over that 12 weeks. We have to do that for every one that comes through, it's a nightmare, it's so time-consuming.*

She gave examples of the current major funding regimes that were 'propping up' her projects:

> *So we've got the PCC running, the Priority Families running, the healthy eating one with Canalbank running and we've also quite soon got, we're just waiting to hear what we've kind of been awarded with Transform and Rehabilitation and CF03 and that's working with adult offenders in prison and then out of prison into resettlement… [it] changes from day to day at the minute, it's just a nightmare… We're looking to do another Big Lottery project with an organisation called REAL in Centraltown, and that's hopefully, we're in the process of writing that at the minute and we'll hear an outcome in September for that and that's supporting 14-16 year olds in education and providing mentoring support and engagement to get them on the courses and to keep them in education.*

In Midtown, they found that to be successful in attracting funding, they increasingly had to work in partnership with other organisations, but this in itself made a difficult situation even more complex:

> *With ACYP in Midtown and myself, we're in quite a lot of consortium bids, so rather than bidding for individual lots, bidding more as partnerships, so you have got a better chance of getting a bit of something, rather than nothing basically and that's working quite well.*

All of these complexities and restrictions meant that the use and prioritisation of outdoor education activities was potentially problematic as there were so many other pressing issues at hand. The situation described accords with assertions in recent reports that show that charities now have to fight harder to gain commissioned work and undergo convoluted processes to gain access to pots of money (LBFEW, 2016a, 2016b &2017).

The Value of Outdoor Education?

Across the ACYP projects, there was some accordance that the value of outdoor education was in its ability to develop relationships and to provide learning opportunities. The detail of the different ways outdoor education could achieve this is discussed in more detail next.

In ACYP Midtown particularly, there was an emphasis on the pragmatic, on what works. Outdoor education was seen as just one of a range of other activities - in this example, Sandra cites cooking - that could facilitate an effective outcome:

> *You know it's not just about the cooking, you get everything about that family member, you know they'll offload on you, they'll talk about letters they've had, you know their benefits...so it's a bit of counselling, a bit of mediation as well, a bit of everything else and support and a bit of direction.*

Further, the rationale for the use of outdoor education activities was frequently 'client' led, so the decision whether or not to utilise outdoor education activities often focused on the ways that staff members – and some of those staff members were volunteer mentors – saw the needs of the young person. The manager, Sandra put it like this:

> We look at, okay, we've got 12 weeks, you're going to meet once a week for two hours, what are we going to get out of this, what do you want to achieve and we make a list and hopefully by the end of it we've touched on a lot of those things, we've improved you know behaviour at school, at home, you know raised self-esteem, with confidence, you know rather than looking on the floor, they're now looking [at] you, you know, so we're moving forward.

In practice, this balance of assessing the needs of the young person meant negotiating activities, relationships and approaches, and perhaps encouraging the young people to try something new. Outdoor education was seen as neither something that was the most important nor indeed the only tool in the worker's kit bag, it was seen as something that was useful in certain ways but not a more useful or more important approach than other approaches. Outdoor education was, however, seen as being effective in building relationships and providing learning opportunities. These two aspects of its perceived value are explored next.

Outdoor Education for Relationship Building

A major issue for the youth workers I interviewed in ACYP was outdoor education's ability to foster, or further foster, meaningful and productive relationships between workers and young people. This could be seen as the outwards section of Greenaway's framework, where young people make connections with others (Greenaway, 1998).

For example, Anne from Northtown talked of using the length of time taken by outdoor education activities in a very specific way:

> *If you're walking, if you've sat on the bus next to them…You've got that one to one conversation time… The reflection time… Before and afterwards and <u>during</u>. [her emphasis]*

The issue of time came up again and again. Outdoor education was viewed positively and in a way that was different to other types of activities, partly because the enactment of it required substantial amounts of time. The need to deploy substantial amounts of time in its enactment was seen to be one of the factors that led to the building of positive relationships.

An example of this, from ACYP Midtown, was fishing; it was seen as an effective tool to build positive relationships. Fishing is by its very nature a slow sport, it's pace could be slow but more importantly was the Slowness that involved taking substantial 'chunks' of time away from the usual rushed and busy centre-based activities (Pool, 2014; Siebers et al., 2014). The activity was seen therefore, to be a useful means to a relationship building end, especially given the nature of the activity demanded relatively high staffing ratios, so staff had more opportunity to engage in one to one or very small group interactions, this finds accord with the youth work literature where relationships are foundational, and effective relationships are those built over time (Davies, 2015a; Mason, W., 2015; Yates, 2009). Tom summarised the approach thus:

> *We get some people who say you know they want to go fishing and some people they've never been fishing, so we'll just say, well come and try it once, if you don't like it, don't come again, you've got to introduce people to things and nine times out of ten because of the*

> *environment we've provided…we put tea and coffee on, there's staff members there, there's volunteers, the atmosphere is good, we've provided transport, so there's whole host of needs that have been met and then they think, oh yeah, we like that, that allows them then to take part in the activity.*

Fishing was also referred to specifically in ACYP Northtown. Ben talked of the very particular attractions of fishing as a vehicle to help develop young people:

> *I feel they get a sense of calmness… thee get, they've got to sit and wait, they might not catch nothing. They, they've got to learn… [to] be at one with nature in a sense, touching a fish, if they don't want to touch a fish, they've still got to touch maybe a maggot, they've got to work out, how to get out pole together, cos we use poles to make it easier… –they've got to have patience with all that.*

The nature of what was meant by that relationship-building activity was sophisticated. For the ACYP workers, there were five key aspects of relationship building that emerged from the data. These are discussed next.

The first was that of relationship building between worker and young people. In ACYP, only Anne (an ex-teacher and youth worker) talked explicitly and consciously about using outdoor education as a tool to build positive relationships between worker and young person, but there was tacit acknowledgement of this elsewhere, as can be seen above. As Anne said:

> *Plus the other side of all those activities is, it's a chance for you to work alongside that child, for them to get to know you, you to get to know them…*

So the importance of having both 'quality' time and time in quantity to spend with young people was significant to Anne in its own right, and outdoor education was an ideal tool for such an end. Ben, from the same project, talked about his deliberate use

of a walking activity to try and develop a relationship with a young woman who was

experiencing difficulties in her life:

> *Call her Sarah, naw [now] she's only being coming to the drop in a reet*
> *[very] short space of time but she…when we first met her at the Drop*
> *in she was really boisterous, loved everybody, then she told us she*
> *hated everybody, really all over, she was going through the mill a bit[18].*
> *And then we went on these walks, what you did is, you dropped back,*
> *you're still with the group but there's like space is that cos it's big*
> *enough to walk, different paces and she sat telling me about her own*
> *life and what she'd been through, there were so many brothers and*
> *sisters and they'd all gone in care, and she weren't with her mum and*
> *dad…*

For the other ACYP staff, there were several points when the workers referred to the

need to develop some sort of relationship with a young person. Tom, from the

Midtown project, for example, put this in a typically pragmatic manner:

> *So we get a referral, but just because somebody's referred it doesn't*
> *mean to say they want to come… part of the home visit then is to try*
> *and let them know who the project is, who we are, why they were*
> *referred to us, what kind of things they are interested in, because we*
> *used to offer several different courses from cooking, hair and beauty,*
> *fishing, sports… What are you interested in and then try and formulate*
> *a relationship with them where we can get them in, because before we*
> *can do any work with them around the specific referral like building*
> *their relationship or confidence, we've got to actually get them here*
> *first, so that was the purpose of the home visit.*

He alludes to the importance of building positive relationships to improve the young

person's confidence about attending the project – so a positive relationship with a

worker (the purpose of the initial home visit) was three-fold: it was about 'selling' the

referred young person the idea of the project; establishing what interests the young

person might have so that a (volunteer) mentor could be matched with them; and

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[18] Having a difficult personal time.

building the young person's confidence so they felt comfortable accessing the project. Outdoor education activities could be part of the offer to the young person post-referral.

The second aspect of relationship building was the issue of developing young person to young person relationships. To the ACYP workers, an espoused benefit of outdoor education was its efficacy in building more positive relationships *between* young people from within and across friendship groups. For ACYP Northtown project worker, Will, the activities he provided allowed young people with disabilities and non-disabled young people to learn about each other. Outdoor education was one of a raft of positive activities that enabled him to facilitate the development of good relationships between young people:

> *… [They provide] somewhere where they can go and socialise, whereas like mainstream provisions don't have as much support for young people with these backgrounds, whereas our provision does and also it's got a mixture of young people with and without difficulties and disabilities, so it's like more realistic…*

I took this to mean that the opportunities provided at this Northtown project were particularly sensitised and attuned to the needs of looked after young people and young people with impairments. These young people could find a place to go that understood their needs but one that also allowed them to mix with 'mainstream' young people. Their centre was based in a shared facility that was not particularly well adapted physically for the needs of those with a range of disabilities, however, the staff group were aware of the range of needs and there were some specialist facilities.

The third benefit of outdoor education, in terms of relationship building, was that it was seen as a tool to build family relationships. ACYP Midtown was not a traditional youth work project in that its focus was on the building of effective family relationships, not one necessarily focused solely on the promotion of relationships with young people. Whilst it is increasingly the case in other parts of the youth work world that youth workers offer support to families, most youth work projects focus on building relationships with the young people as an entity in their own right, rather than young people as part of the family unit (NYA, 2014a). However, the facilitation of the building of family bonds was seen to be a central and legitimate core activity of the Midtown ACYP project. Outdoor education was seen here as an effective tool in promoting, or indeed rebuilding, positive family relationships. As Rachel put it:

> *And you often think about outdoor activities as benefitting the young people, but you know in terms of the confidence and self-esteem, but not necessarily about the knock-on effects with the wider family network either.*

Sandra, in Midtown, saw outdoor education as part of a range of positive activities on offer in her project. She saw outdoor education as a tool to help improve interaction and communication between family members, a tool that could be used to improve family dynamics with a 'spin off' benefit of building the confidence of individual young people. One of ACYP's project workers, Tom, gave a clear example of this in action, when their fishing project had helped do just that:

> *…There was a Dad, he'd had no contact with his three daughters for a long time, very contaminated relationship between Mum and Dad as it had broke down and over the period of time, the fishing weren't, I mean the girls love the fishing, three girls and they love the fishing,*

> *their Dad wasn't too bothered, but it was good contact time for him…*
> *it actually levelled the playing field for them… it got him*
> *communicating with his ex-wife again, because the kids were doing*
> *stuff, some would want to do it one week, some wouldn't want to do it*
> *the next and he met them on different levels…*

Sandra, from the same project, talked of a different example, but one where fishing was an equally effective medium there too:

> *And it's all about again, improving relationships, communication, you*
> *know helping you know improve that kind of relationship if mum and*
> *dad aren't getting on. We had a session where dad and daughter*
> *went along to the fishing because they didn't get on at home, they*
> *didn't speak to each other, you know the daughter was all mum and*
> *they felt that as a family it was nice for dad and daughter to spend*
> *that quality time together all day fishing.*

Sandra seems to suggest that her project's intervention in putting on the fishing activity was to improve the daughter's relationship with her father, as their relationship had not been good. The fact that the experience was brokered by Sandra's project and consisted of daylong sessions was seen to be positive, with benefits that could almost be described as therapeutic, this had some echoes of the wilderness adventure type literature which asserts its more formally understood therapeutic benefits, including that of family therapy (Bowen & Neill, 2013).

Fourthly, outdoor education was also seen as a tool to build relationships between young people and significant others. As we have seen, in ACYP, outdoor education activities were seen as a tool to build effective relationships. However, the workers also stressed the benefits to the young people of meeting others and building relationships with other individuals, not just the project workers or other young people/ family members. Tom gave a good example of this:

And they're not forced to fish, it's not all about the fishing, it's about the socialising, meeting other people, meeting friends, [we've] …got two or three club members that...[would] be on hand and they made their skills very, you know some mature old gentleman who has spent years on the riverbank fishing would love to see nothing more than young people getting involved in the sport. So there was people that had got patience there as well, where perhaps some people wouldn't have the patience when they've worked with them all week or something.

In this example, and this is echoed strongly in the literature about youth work and fishing (Pool, 2014; Siebers, et al., 2014), young people were introduced to positive role models. In this case, the fishing club's senior members were able to relate well and build effective relationships with the young people, the suggestion being that this offered a different dynamic and set of relationships to the project workers. These were community members, who were patient and keen to engage young people in their sport.

Finally, the ACYP workers acknowledged the importance of the environment in two ways, both of which related to the ability of the workers to build positive relationships with the young people and for the young people's learning to be enhanced. Tom talked about the importance of a pleasant physical environment having a positive and calming influence on the young people who participated:

So by taking them out to a quality fishing venue, they're experiencing, you know, well what's the word, quality, we can all go fishing on the canal or whatever, but when you go to these your chances of catching fish is better, that environment's nice, I mean there's wildlife there, things that they don't actually see in the town and I think just that environment has a calming effective.

Rachel added to this by speculating that the removal of the young people from their normal environment and from the physical proximity of their friends was a useful thing to do, in terms of the young people and the workers being able to relate in a more effective way:

> *I think that's a key thing though that you said about having their friends around them, they are different when you remove them from a certain environment.*

So, whilst there was an acknowledgement that the physical environment was important, workers also pointed to the importance of the 'atmosphere', the non-tangible, affective environment in fostering good relationships with young people

Outdoor Education and Learning Opportunities

Workers talked about outdoor education as providing a range of learning opportunities, from learning about the environment and the beauty of the outdoors to more personal learning opportunities, a key tenet of traditional literature of the benefits of outdoor education (e.g. Rickinson, et al., 2004 discussed in Chapter Two). In ACYP, there were two main ways in which outdoor education was perceived to foster learning opportunities; this was through personal development and through the opportunity to do new things.

Anne, from Northtown, talked enthusiastically about how outdoor education could be an effective vehicle for young people's personal growth, in ways that were reminiscent of Greenaway's four points of growth. Here, she refers to the upwards section of the

framework, the section that relates to achieving individual potential (Greenaway, 1998):

> *It builds up confidence, and once we convince them – "have a go"...it*
> *builds up confidence...And they succeed...By seeing that child just*
> *grow and flourish... It's, it's such a tremendous confidence builder.*

Anne first raised this issue when she focused on the benefits of outdoor education for confidence building amongst the very marginalised young people she worked with. Convincing the young people to 'give things a go' was frequently difficult and time consuming. However, Anne felt it was not just about building confidence; many of the young people she worked with were carers themselves, or had issues which in some ways made them miss out on 'ordinary' formative experiences:

> *It [outdoor education] allows the young people to be young*
> *people...You know, there's enough space to scream and let off, and*
> *just scream for the joy of being alive...it is just that, whole freedom*
> *and achievement and space.*

Terms such as personal development were not explicitly used, rather they were often implicit; however, there was specific reference to outdoor education developing young people's confidence. The related idea of broadening horizons was mentioned by most of the participants in some way, shape or form, and, in fact, Anne referred to that phrase explicitly when she talked of the benefits of outdoor education, "*for the young people it's a chance to widen their horizons…*"

Outdoor education, then, offered learning opportunities, in terms of widening horizons, of offering opportunities to engage in new experiences. This was cited explicitly at ACYP Northtown, and the idea of outdoor education offering plentiful

opportunities for this is one that finds widespread accord in the literature (Loynes, 2007). I was keen to see if other participants echoed what Anne had attested:

> *They [the young people] don't realise they can access it. It's not when they lived with their families, that was outside their experience.*

The countryside Anne referred to here was less than 10 miles from the centre of Northtown, where most of the young people lived, but travel to the local countryside was not something that these young people had the opportunity to do. This idea of engaging young people in activities that they would not otherwise have the chance to do found resonance with Will, based in the same city as Anne. Here, he refers to the relatively mundane activity of going to the local cinema:

> *Some people look forward to it and with some of the backgrounds as well like that's the only chance they ever get to go to cinema… [they] don't have many opportunities to do things.*

This theme of making available to the project's young people those everyday experiences that other, more privileged, young people accessed as a matter of course was clearly important to the workers. They saw the benefits of the young people embarking on new experiences (in this case getting on a train) as positive, even if the focus of the trip (a local museum) was not as popular with them:

> *Like when we went to the X Museum that was the first time getting on a train for a lot of them and it's like little things like that what, comments what I got about the museum were really negative, but they loved going on the train. (Will, Northtown).*

Managing Risk in ACYP

This section covers four key themes generated by ACYP staff; the themes relate to ACYP's formal and informal practices of risk assessment and risk management.

The risks involved in outdoor education activities were deemed to be considerable from the workers and managers' perspectives but not always the risks that might immediately come to mind when planning a trip. An example of this is Sandra's description of a trip to a zoo with 52 participants. Families were responsible for their own children but, even so, staff had clearly anticipated the key risks as being losing children/ family members at the venue itself, and the possibility of family members drinking alcohol and, consequently, leaving their children unattended. Some of the parents were alcohol dependent. Sandra describes the processes they went through to ensure that neither of these potential risks were realised:

> *… Sign in at the beginning on the bus and we did a midway point at 11.30, we all had a meet up and if people didn't come it was on the phones, where are you, why aren't you here and then again 2 o'clock, another check in and then last thing to get everybody back on the bus.*

> *…There is a place where you can get alcohol, so that was an issue for us because some of the family members that we had to just monitor and keep an eye on and make sure that they weren't in there when the kids were you know-*

The more mundane (but statistically more dangerous risk) of a road traffic accident (Fulbrook, 2005) en route to or from the zoo was not mentioned by the manager. Despite these risks, the Midtown project according to Tom, who dealt with risk assessments, claimed that:

> *In nearly seven years, we've never had anybody fall in, we never had*
> *anybody go missing, we had very little behavioural problems, so there*
> *was not much that we felt uncomfortable over.*

Clearly the project was a successful one, in terms of managing risk, given the complex

needs and behaviour of the young people / families it worked with, but it is also clear

that identifying and managing the risks were major sources of concern to the workers

involved.

Aside from the risks that may be posed by an activity, transport to and from an activity

and other such 'everyday' risks, workers were keen to point out that the complexities

'clients' brought significantly increased the level and type of risk for any activity. In

Midtown, Sandra talked about one of their projects that worked with young people

who have been referred from a range of agencies, such as social care. She alluded to

the project's approach to managing the activity by what she described as "*cherry*

picking'', given there were extra risks and complexities that went beyond the usual

need to manage behaviour and safety:

> *We have to be very mindful of some of the young people and some of*
> *the, doing the activities in relation to some of the young people that,*
> *with some of the referrals through the Priority Families some of the*
> *young people can't mix with the others, so we have to do, we do have*
> *to kind of cherry-pick a little bit on who we can bring to what. But it is*
> *you know open to all eventually, but not necessarily, on our Laser*
> *Quest last night only the ones interested were fine to take part, but if*
> *some of the others wanted to come, we'd do like a separate event, so*
> *it caters for all if you like, but they can't mix.*

I asked for further clarification, which was illuminating:

> *… some of it it's about breach of their Order and some of them it's*
> *where they can't go into certain areas within the city, so it might be,*

> *we just have to just be a bit mindful and see how we can keep it open*
> *to all, rather than only subject it to some.*

The breach of a young person's anti-social behaviour order could cause serious consequences for that young person, so staff had to be aware which areas of the city were likely to be 'out of bounds' for some of their young people, adding to the complexity of planning. The risk to the young person of engaging in an activity in the 'wrong' part of the city could have implications for their liberty. This was not perhaps a risk frequently associated with engagement in outdoor education trips.

Occasionally, the frustrations of working with some individuals who displayed challenging behaviour spilt out in the interviews. Sandra, as the manager at Midtown, had clearly had to deal with the fallout from a trip that went awry; her normally positive, upbeat tone sounded strained:

> *We're not allowed back in at xxx venue at the minute, just because of*
> *the behaviour of some of the families and the children, but we have to*
> *look at that and go with that and obviously we learnt from that,*
> *having to put more staff in place, more volunteers, you know think*
> *about the families, lowering the numbers a little bit so we can kind of*
> *keep a bit more of an eye on it…*

The response from her and her colleagues had been to regroup, to rethink and to increase their staffing ratios. This was clearly not the only incident where she had had to deal with an outside agency, however, given the complex needs of many of the project's young people and other clients, they seemed to have had very few serious incidents. They had never had a reportable incident, based on the Health and Safety Executive definition of such a thing; however, there were issues and high staffing levels were seen to be absolutely crucial to maintaining 'order'. An exception to this was an

incident at their Centre itself, a Centre that had a large number of security cameras. Sandra described the incident as follows:

> *One of the families was, one of the young lads, with another young lad from a different family, they'd gone into the toilet, he'd got a coin, he was taking the toilet door off and they was kicking the toilet door, this was literally, he'd said he'd just gone to the toilet and then Tom came out and saw him and he was taking the door off, this was what they just, if they're not being watched and monitored, this was just while he was going to the toilet, you've got to be, they're a nightmare.*

Sandra's sense of frustration was palpable in the recording. She underscored the fact that staff had to be incredibly vigilant at all times, even when the young people claimed to be engaging in 'ordinary' activities at the Centre, such as going to the toilet. Tom talked of staff having to be aware of the sort of behaviour that the young people were likely to bring and to expect that behaviour, but he was also aware of the importance of creating a positive atmosphere.

This aspect of vigilance and thoughtful attention to staffing ratios did not necessarily find its way onto the formal written risk assessments that I examined. These artefacts were very variable, with some focusing far more on the tangible hazards of trips and falls and much less on the supervision ratios/ approach needed to minimise the likelihood of these issues arising. Similarly, the organisation's policies in this regard tended to be compliance-focused, rather than offering detailed guidelines, leaving practitioners with a sense of confusion when it came to clarity as to whether they were doing the 'correct' thing or not. This anxiety was evident in Sandra's response, when I asked her some in-depth questions about the mechanics of undertaking risk assessments in particular circumstances: *"I hope I'm saying the right things here?"*

In Northtown, Will, a project coordinator, was keenly aware that the behaviour of

individuals influenced the staffing ratios significantly, so, when I asked him how he

worked out staffing numbers to be 'safe' for an activity, he responded thus:

> *It depends how many people we have, I've got a ratio of them*
> *upstairs, which I did have to create that, like a ratio to staff, but you*
> *kind of have to judge it on like individual young people and I'll have a*
> *discussion with some members of staff before the trip to say, we've*
> *got this person on and their current behaviour's been this or that*
> *person, these two young people don't work together really well, so you*
> *can't write it down.*

He too was keenly aware of the need to sometimes 'pick out' young people, whose

behaviour could be more easily managed, for specific activities. This could have a clear

impact on the staffing ratios needed:

> *…It's really difficult because I could cherry-pick 20 young people who*
> *one member of staff could deal with.*

In a similar vein, when preparing for a trip to a local town, he:

> *Went there first and did a risk assessment, looked at the bus routes*
> *and that coming up from [a different] town and when I went around it*
> *I were thinking like the young people and attention span and I noticed*
> *it weren't as great as it could be, but the traveling bit were good for*
> *them and for that trip we did cherry-pick young people who I thought*
> *would benefit from it and would enjoy it and would behave as well,*
> *because some young people it would have just been like a licence to*
> *climb the plane [in the museum and cause damage/ hurt themselves].*

In his project, when young people's behaviour was particularly challenging, Will

occasionally felt that named individuals needed adding specifically to the risk

assessment:

> *Sometimes we'll include individual young people on the risk*
> *assessment, but I've not that done that for a while…last year, I did*

*some last year, there were a couple of girls what really didn't get on
with each other, it were part of them both not being able to
understand each other's learning difficulty or disability and there were
just conflict and it were really hard to manage … high maintenance
young people and I did include those on one, that's the last time I think
I did it, last year.*

Similarly, Tom from Midtown was very aware of the need to know what to do in the

case of individual's behaviour becoming physically or verbally aggressive and ensured

that this was specifically included in a risk assessment for a given activity:

*Like I've put things in there about clients being verbally or physically
violent towards people and at which point I've just said you know the
volunteers are trained, they're covered by our training, because we do
health and safety, in our training it says that if a client does become
verbally or physically abusive to remove yourself from the situation,
contact the staff, or worst case scenario phone the Police, but on them
activities a member of staff would be there, so that would apply to us
as well.*

However, prevention of poor behaviour was the key to the workers' approach. Their

knowledge of individuals and the dynamics of group/ family relationships enabled

them to manage potential issues. Most of this would not find its way to the official risk

assessment proforma; it was part of the informal planning, sometimes part of dynamic

('on the spot') risk assessment, and sometimes part of the informal planning

discussions that took place within the staff team, prior to the official paperwork being

completed. As Rachel put it:

*I was just thinking about actually when we've done an outdoor
activity, well any activity, that the prep, the planning and prep before
where you've got, you know fortunately myself and Tom have worked
in Midtown for a long time so we know any clashes between families,
so when you do get the referrals in you are aware that you wouldn't
put two families together in a minibus you know, but that's part of the
experience of working within Midtown for such a long time, but then*

> *it's how do you pick who's going then, but fortunately in the past*
> *we've had different courses running different days.*

Both workers at Midtown acknowledged that not every eventuality could be covered but that this had to be backed up with ground rules that were tightly adhered to. Tom summarised this effectively:

> *There is that element of the unknown, that you all get on this minibus*
> *and all of a sudden you find out two families that we didn't know had*
> *history, you know in that then where that has happened we'll just*
> *remove one of them from the minibus, they're given clear guidelines,*
> *that that code of conduct is not tolerated and if anybody breaches*
> *that, one or both partners will be taken off the course. So we've*
> *factored something in there to not, well to reduce and eliminate it.*

The importance of having experienced and knowledgeable staff who knew what the potential issues were likely to be was key to the successful planning of an activity. That knowledge led Rachel to claim that these experienced staff had some sort of 'sixth sense' of what was likely to happen and how to handle difficulties when they did arise:

> *I don't know, you kind of have, not a feeling because you can't always*
> *do things on feelings, but you know being around a lot of young*
> *people and knowing what they feel was unfair or you know they've not*
> *had the right to have their say, a situation can be blown out of all*
> *proportion, so having like you say that experienced staff around.*

All of these approaches to risk management were built on the knowledge, expertise and experience of staff members, a process that took considerable time to build.

The third issue risk issue in ACYP was what I have characterised as the youth work approach. This incorporates relationship building and boundary management. One of the issues that the ACYP workers were acutely aware of in managing risk was, as Tom put it:

> *…Just because somebody's referred it doesn't mean to say they want to come.*

So the workers, with this in mind, did home visits to try to 'sell' their project to the young people and their families, and to try to match the young people's interests and aspirations to ensure that their engagement in the project was a positive one.

Further, these visits were an opportunity to start to build the positive relationships between the project workers and the young people. Rachel pointed to what she saw as being the secret to the success of managing risk:

> *Yeah, so having that hands-on approach as well enables them to come out [from home to the project], so I think for them the risk is lessened, you know there's less risk there for them knowing that there's a lot of people to support them.*

This approach could be described as a youth work one – that is, that the relationship between worker and young person was being absolutely central (Davies, 2015a) and that relationships may take time to develop (Yates, 2009).

A further example of what could be seen as a youth work process is that of the formulation of ground rules in managing risk (although clearly both these approaches are not unique to youth work). Rachel, and other workers, all pointed to the importance of putting firm boundaries in place and sticking to them, but they were also acutely aware that this could be an uphill struggle:

> *You know we put in those boundaries, but we know we're working with a client group that's not necessarily, I know this sounds horrible because we say it quite a lot that aren't used to you know really firm boundaries, but we work through it with them, because you know they would usually expect somebody to turn round straightaway and say,*

right, that's it, gone. But we have behaviours to change, these are engrained behaviours that have probably been there for years and years, but we do have you know that code of where we will talk to you about it, if we see it again, then you know I'm sorry we've got to like, say take into consideration the other people in the building… so they know that it's not acceptable.

So, whilst there was some scope for negotiation, of being concordant, and the need to "*start… where young people are starting*'' (Davies, 2015a, p. 100), workers had also to be clear about what was and what was not acceptable behaviour – to have ground rules that were agreed and adhered to, as a key component of risk management.

Finally in terms of risk, the question of what formed an acceptable staffing ratio was problematic. Nationally, from sports governing bodies or the DfE for example, there is some guidance on ratios and qualification if a specific type of activity is undertaken; however, for more general activities, neither ACYP's local policies nor national guidance was necessarily explicit. Workers were aware of the need to have the *appropriate* number of staff depending on the activity, the client group and the training/ qualifications/ experience and expertise of those staff. Deciding on what was *appropriate* necessitated considering staffing ratios, client need and the type, experience and qualifications, in short the competency, of those staff, but it was not necessarily clear what competence might mean in a particular instance. In the case of Northtown, volunteers were seen to be 'extra' members of staff who may or may not be there, whereas, in Midtown, the volunteers were seen to be a more fixed (perhaps reliable?) component of the staff team. According to Tom:

We have, the rule of thumb was about one member of staff volunteer to every six people, but we had it where we probably have six/seven

volunteers and the minibus would only hold 12 people with two members of staff, so we were like near enough one to one support. We provide all the equipment, so the equipment's in good order, so we know they've got no worries around that. Food, volunteers have got health and hygiene certificate, so if we're handling food. Our volunteers are all trained, they'll be DBSM [police checked/ cleared], they do two days of core skills training, what it is to be a volunteer, they do their safeguarding, so they're quite aware of all what they're looking for if there are any… and then they do the actual mentoring bit, that's specific to that client.

Further, several workers raised the issue about the needs of the individual 'clients' that they worked with – this was a factor when deciding on what was the 'right' staffing ratio. As Tom put it:

That's a bit difficult really, it depends on what the nature of the group is, if you've got some nice young people and they're well behaved and you trust them, then obviously you'll only need a couple of staff, but if you've got like some of our children, we've had six people and we'll have probably four staff, so it's about staffing up to make sure you've got, and then having like a code of conduct, so if there's any form of misbehaviour you know that that's it, you'll be turned straight home.

There had been some issues at the project when trying to manage the diverse needs of those young people and trying to get it 'right' in terms of staffing. The other tension was between trying to balance the desire to make the project available to as many people as possible (and to hit as many quantitative targets as possible to appease the funders) versus the need to staff an activity safely. Sandra described this tension well:

Yeah, I mean when you start something you kind of say, yeah, come along, it's brilliant, because you want as many people, but then when you actually get as many people it's just you know, you just need to be mindful of what support you've got and you know that you are managing the families and giving the support on the right level to the families, rather than just having the numbers, you've got to be, because like at the sports I mean because it was so successful and the families, a lot of the families have been coming for quite a long time, a

lot of the families got on well and it was really good and those kind of high numbers, that worked, you know because it was outdoor, it was lovely, we had some lovely evenings last year and it stayed light till quite late on in the year and that worked really, really well because a lot of the families and a lot of the children really enjoyed the activities that were being put on, it worked well, but when it doesn't work well and you've got those large numbers, it's-...so you have to kind of manage it with who you've got and the families you've got really.

The Midtown project staff did not appear to adhere to any minimum guidelines; it seemed to come down to the worker's judgement as to what 'felt right', given the type of clients and the experience and qualifications of the staff. Sandra gave an example of how this often worked in practice:

…there's Erika, another volunteer in tonight as well, so that's the kind of, there's always plenty of us and I feel that's plenty really, because Gemma's a trained crèche, NVQ trained in relation to her job in Nottingham and also we have a teacher who's a volunteer, she's a primary teacher, so she comes in as well, so it's like a bonus.

However, vigilance was always needed, especially for Centre-based activities in Midtown, given the rather rambling physical layout of the building. According to Sandra:

…A lot of the families are from priority areas and in this building we have to be really careful because there's upstairs, there's upstairs and they're everywhere and if you just haven't got the right staff ratio to, yeah, you just need to be careful because we don't want to lose someone in this building. We've got cameras downstairs and you can see all the movements in all offices, so if they do disappear, none of them can get out of this building and nobody from the public can get in, because you need a pass and a code to get in. We're mindful on breaks and things like that, that staff go out with mums, dads and kids if they go out for a smoking break or a bit of fresh air, so that's all monitored and none of the kids can get out through the doors and things like that.

The staff members did not specifically mention the ethnicity of the groups and individuals they worked with. Staff did; however, stress that the young people they worked with were largely from marginalised communities and had a range of diverse needs.

Summary

This chapter has highlighted the responses gleaned in relation to the embedded cases

of three projects from ACYP.

It has outlined the background and context to ACYP, and specifically to the ACYP

projects in Midtown and Northtown. It has set out how the ACYP projects operate, in

in terms of their funding situation, given that this is very significant contextual

information. The funding situation meant that workers had to manage all of the

activities, including outdoor education ones, on a very restricted budget and that they

had to manage what little monies they did have through complex, short-term,

precarious funding regimes and their associated targets.

This chapter has highlighted findings in relation to why outdoor education was used in

the ACYP case study projects, with particular attention to relationship building and

learning opportunities. Outdoor education was seen to support building relationships

between workers and young people, between young people, within families, and

between young people and significant others, such as the volunteers at the fishing

lakes. Outdoor education was effective in this sense partly because the enactment of it

took time. Finally, the environment was seen as an affective impact on young people

that could support both relationship building and learning. The other value of outdoor

education was seen to be its ability to enhance learning opportunities for young people. This had two aspects, the first being to support the growth of confidence, for example, and the second being the chance for young people to engage in new opportunities.

The chapter highlights the perceived risks associated with outdoor education from workers' and managers' perspectives and looked at risk processes in ACYP. It examined the processes workers and managers undertook in order to risk assess and manage activities. It also explored how workers manage challenging behaviour, particularly through staffing levels.

The next chapter explores the second case, that of Hillshire CC, in a similarly structured way.

Let's call her Chris

She was 14 when she came into the youth project involving young people in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. I can't remember whether she ever completed her Bronze or not, but if she did it would have been the only qualification she had at that time. She was unkempt, unloved, uncooperative. But she kept coming back. It took me years to work out why – she kept coming back because it was the only safe place for her to go, the only place where love did not mean abuse. Expedition skills were more than a source of amusement to Chris. She could cook now on a trangia, handy when you live on your own in a place without electricity. First aid was more than just interesting; it was needed for her baby. On the hill, keeping going when it hurt, others helping, was a lesson in hope that life had not yet taught her. I bumped into her some years after she stopped going to the project. She looked well, had a job, still had her son and some sort of relationship with her mum. She was OK. *"Do you remember when…"* she asked and we both laughed remembering tales of sun and rain and light and people.

Chapter 5. The Case of Hillshire County Council

This chapter reports on the holistic case study of 'Hillshire' County Council (CC) based on intensive interviews and a focus group with two Hillshire youth workers and the county's outdoor education advisor (see methodology chapter for further information). It begins by setting out background information about Hillshire CC as well as the research participants. The subsequent sections outline the key contextual issues for the Hillshire workers: the educational landscape; the marketised outdoor education sector; and funding. Following this, participants' understanding of outdoor education and its perceived value are reported. The chapter concludes by examining issues related to risk assessment and risk assessment processes.

Background and Context

Hillshire County Council is a geographically large, rural county local authority in England that has some directly run youth services. It was formed as a county council in 1974 and that reorganisation brought together some disparate administrative districts. It was a deeply divided area with parts of the county being affluent and much visited by tourists. In contrast, in other parts of the area, poor white working class marginalised communities struggled with the decline of previously dominant local industry. The area as a whole is very ethnically homogeneous, with over 90% of the total population being White British. The local youth services tended to focus their work on the young people from those marginalised communities, who often had low

aspirations and academic achievement rates but high rates of illicit substance misuse, criminal activity and teenage pregnancy. [19]

My participants in the case study were:

- *Fred, the county's outdoor education specialist adviser;*
- *Mary, a youth worker of over twenty year's standing and with a vast experience of taking young people on trips and residentials; and*
- *Paul, a youth worker who had completed his youth work training relatively recently.*

Both Mary and Paul had experience of working at an outdoor education centre in a youth work capacity prior to working for the council; both their working careers had been predominantly in the Hillshire CC area. Mary had also worked for a national voluntary organisation as a youth worker. Paul had six years' experience of youth work; mainly with 'targeted' young people (defined in Chapter Two) in the Hillshire CC area and ten years' experience in youth work overall. Fred's career in outdoor education was very substantial; he had worked as a teacher and then in the outdoor education sector for a number of years, prior to being made the county's outdoor education adviser, a post that he had held for some ten years at the time of the research. All the Hillshire participants were White British, although this is not necessarily how they would self-categorise.

The Hillshire participants raised three contextual issues that they felt were particularly pertinent in the current climate. The first was the educational landscape, that is, who had responsibility for outdoor education in the council given the academisation of the

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[19] I have chosen not to reference this section in order to preserve the anonymity of Hillshire CC.

formal education sector. The second concerned the ramifications for outdoor education providers working in a post-neoliberal environment (McGimpsey, 2013) with its emphasis on the market, cuts and competition (Bunyan & Ord, 2012, see Chapter Two for further discussion). The third and final contextual issue raised by the participants was funding. These contextual issues are discussed in this section, before the specific outcomes from Hillshire, regarding the value of outdoor education and the management of risk, are detailed in subsequent sections.

In terms of the educational landscape, Fred spent a great deal of time negotiating relationships with stakeholders and trying to disentangle who had responsibility for outdoor education provision in any given setting, given his role as outdoor education adviser for the Hillshire. A key issue was **who** held responsibility for outdoor education in a setting; for example, who should authorise a particular trip or visit. This is significant from the point of view of assessing risk, as there was a question as to what sort of advice and support certain types of settings could actually access. Could a voluntary group not affiliated to the Council receive support from Fred in developing their risk management practices, for example? Fred did say that he would not withhold advice from such a group but the shifting educational landscape made the status of Fred's role and responsibilities unclear. This was also the case in schools, mainly academies, which had 'opted out' of local authority control.

The second contextual issue was that of working in post-neoliberal times (McGimpsey, 2013). Hillshire participants talked extensively of the outdoor education 'market' and about the perceived quality issues of some private providers of outdoor education.

Fred pointed to the rise of private providers, who focused on delivering activities solely

on site to help them achieve economies of scale:

> *It's cost efficiency, the large private outdoor providers are looking for venues that are 400 bed plus and the economies of scale that that provide and also the economies that operating entirely on site provide- Well the staff they employ aren't old enough to drive for them, they can't get insured to drive the minibuses.*

Fred pointed to his frustrations with this focus on economies of scale, in terms of what

he saw as a diminution of a 'quality' staffing base for delivering outdoor education:

> *There has definitely been a dilution from a trained professional specialist teacher in outdoor education, or a youth worker with that specialism, then move towards a more vocationally trained outdoor education instructor and that then sadly has deteriorated to gap year students and so that has been reflected in the experience that the young people get… young people should be involved in a journey, they should be involved in the decision making and planning of that journey, they should be allowed to have opportunities to fail, learn from that failure and then apply that learning later on in the journey. You can't do that on a two day, three day residential run, where the entire programme takes place on site, where there's no interaction with a wild place…the entire programme takes place…on site… [even]the caving takes place [on site] in a wooden garden shed with different flashing pastel lights and these are venues that are within a stone's throw of beautiful rivers-*

Paul alluded to the same issue when he said: "*My experience and belief is that you get*

what you pay for."

Fred pointed to what he saw as examples of good practice. These examples were not

of 'technical' outdoor education work but of high quality work that was staff intensive:

> *So some of the work I'm most proud of, that's happening in the county, is work that youth workers and teachers are engaged in on an almost daily basis, which might be environmental work, it might be*

> *personal and social development in the outdoors, but you'd be using*
> *bush craft, using a whole range of issues, rather than the very*
> *technical activities, which obviously by their nature are more*
> *expensive to provide.*

He contrasted this type of work, which he deemed high quality, with the type of

outdoor education centre work where staff were young, inexperienced, and trained

more or less exclusively for delivering a narrow curriculum on site:

> *…If somebody said to me you know can you highlight an area of good*
> *practice, it would be to take you to a school and it's the staff in the*
> *school that's leading that. Whereas conversely and ironically I think*
> *the quality of the provision, the baseline quality of provision in outdoor*
> *centres is really suffering from the private model.*

Fred, in particular, was very aware of the pressures on outdoor education providers to

offer experiences that were within affordable budgets, he claimed that the only way

many providers could make money was to work to economies of scale by running

large, multi-bed operations, offering experiences that were mainly on site, and run by

young, inexperienced and, therefore, cheap to employ members of staff. In these

examples, the providers offered little more than what Fred claimed to be ''an

unrelated series of fairground rides''. This statement echoes Chris Loynes' ominous

warning some twenty years earlier, when he foretold of the commercialisation of the

Outdoor Adventure sector by using Ritzer's concept of McDonaldisation of society

(Loynes, 1998, discussed in Chapter One). Loynes' assertion that the rush to marketise

outdoor education means that its value and deep learning are lost (Loynes, 1998).

What, if any, relation this had to risk needs further exploration but the suggestion was

that young people's experiences were being diluted by an experience that was of

lower quality.

Paul was concerned with a related issue. He felt that he was not appropriately qualified to commission a provider to run an outdoor education package. He put it like this:

> *I am not experienced or qualified enough to buy cheap outdoor education. I need someone with significant experience that lets me focus on individual young people, whilst they focus on their health and safety specifically.*

Hillshire had, however, moved to a commissioning model that made practitioners like Paul responsible for making decisions as to which form of outdoor education to buy. As Fred summarised:

> *…In a commissioning model you're at an arm's length so you don't have the hands-on attachment to the process from start through to finish, you're commissioning a provider and relying on them and hoping that happens, they'll have their quality assurance model, but capacity wise you haven't got capacity to see it through the whole, and you're not the provider.*

So, the commissioning model that was being promulgated by the county had, in the participants' view, a negative impact on the experiences of the young people. This was partly due to flaws in the setup of commissioning pieces of work, and the gap between the commissioner and end user; this led to concerns about the quality of the work. Further, there were particular concerns about the quality of the provision, where this was taking place in privately run outdoor education centres, because of their reliance on economies of scale. The economies of scale were needed to ensure a profit was made, but the Hillshire participants felt that this had led directly to a diminution in the quality of provision.

The final contextual issue for the Hillshire practitioners was that of finding funding to carry out outdoor activities given the age of austerity (McGimpsey, 2013). The participants felt strongly that there was much less money for outdoor education activities, even though there was no clear evidence for the number of such activities being in decline at county level, this is explained in the sections that follow.

The participants had different perspectives on the impact of the funding cuts on outdoor education provision. Mary, who had previously worked at an outdoor education centre and moved into council provision, acknowledged the difficulty of finding money to undertake activities from core local authority monies. She recognised that any such activity in the current climate would have to be found externally:

> *Well I can see, I mean I was fortunate that I used to work for [an]*
> *Outdoor Centre so it was just a natural available resource to use there,*
> *but now that I work at the council and there's obviously a greater cost*
> *implication I think our use of [outdoor education] … will be extremely*
> *limited, from our core funding I don't think there'll be any opportunity,*
> *I think if we do want to use residentials we'll have to put forward a*
> *funding bid... I think the opportunity just to use it in the way we have*
> *done just as a more focused way of working I think actually will be not*
> *available.*

In a way, this was not new to her as she had previously worked in the third sector, where funding was, in her experience, more limited anyway, even prior to austerity:

> *When I worked in the third sector obviously we just sought all of our*
> *funding for residentials from either funding that we got through the*
> *UK Social Fund, because we were in priority area for young people… I*
> *got funding for two groups to go to Romania through the Leonardo*
> *Funding which now is Erasmus Funding now and the Sri Lanka trip that*
> *I was involved with we got money for that from local businesses… So*
> *I've always looked at funding, I've always been happy to look at*

funding outside of the norm and I will continue to do that even though I'm now with the local authority I'm still looking for opportunities…

For Mary, undertaking outdoor education activities was something she was committed to. However, she could only do this in the current climate in a local authority setting if she was entrepreneurial, by sourcing funding over and above any core funding she had access to. There was recognition, and acceptance, by all the participants of the spending cuts in a way that was almost casual. As Mary summarised:

Yeah, I'll definitely be doing less because of finance, not because I want to do less, I think financially I just won't have a budget to do that and I probably could try it and be very imaginative, but it would be to the detriment of a lot of other activity happening that I would be able to do it. I might have to look to source some money from a different place altogether.

Paul was, of course, aware of the cuts but was more removed from their immediate impact, due to his particular role as a participation worker. This work was relatively well funded, as the local authority was prioritising this work; indeed participation work has been relatively protected nationally despite cuts (NYA, 2014b). He was, however, aware of the imperative of focusing on low budget activities:

I can only work within the remit of the budget that I've got really…so yeah, things like…ball juggle with a tennis ball, human knot activities where young people have to untangle themselves and they're sort of high impact, sort of medium impact, but very low in cost.

Further he saw the cuts in funding as being an on-going situation and not likely to change in the near future:

My experience is that you get what you pay for and actually generally what I can pay for is based on the money that I've got and my experience is in the last few years that's getting less and less.

Fred's talk of the funding cuts was somewhat contradictory; on the one hand, he fully

recognised the impact of the cuts. Talking about another local authority, he stated:

> *Organisations like [name] local authority… which had a world-class*
> *outdoor education service, has basically just [been] decimated and cut*
> *the whole service…*

He also mentioned that, in Hillshire CC, there had been some 700 jobs cuts from the

already small Children and Family Services department of the local authority. This was

almost a 'throw away' line. The apparent contradiction was that, despite this, he was

less pessimistic about the impact of these cuts on the quantity of outdoor education

activity still taking place in Hillshire. Fred had an overview of the totality of outdoor

education activity across Hillshire CC, stating that, since 2011, there had been 30,000

visits recorded on Hillshire CC's online risk assessment system (Evolve). He recognised

that this was a significant number of trips and visits but, given many trips and visits

may well not been have recorded prior to the introduction of Evolve in 2011, it was

hard to determine whether or not there had been an actual drop in numbers of

activities taking place, as there was no real base line data. However, he asserted that

the main issue in his view was the impact the cuts had on the *quality* of the activities,

rather than the *quantity* of trips and visits, as discussed earlier in this section:

> *So I don't think [schools and youth centres are]… doing less… it's about*
> *quality and I think that they're going for cheaper options, which mean*
> *that the level of adventure and the quality of the staff is reduced.*

Having discussed the contextual situation in Hillshire, I now turn to the various ways in

which the participants saw outdoor education as being useful.

The Value of Outdoor Education?

The Hillshire participants articulated wide-ranging conceptions of outdoor education, its purpose and its efficacy. For the Hillshire participants, they saw the purpose of outdoor education principally as a tool for effective relationship building and for learning; however, both of these areas were complex. There were issues for the participants as to what 'counts' as 'legitimate' outdoor education. As discussed in the preceding section, this was, for them, absolutely entwined with questions of quality, that is, the perceived quality of the providers, their staff, and of the overall experience for young people. All the Hillshire workers were enthusiasts about outdoor education and their involvement in it; this may be linked to their focus on the quality of provision. Paul captured this sentiment as follows:

> *It is a privilege…particularly with someone else's precious cargo you know.*

Outdoor Education for Relationship Building

An important issue for the Hillshire youth workers was outdoor education's ability to foster, or further foster, meaningful and productive relationships both between workers and young people on the one hand, and intra group on the other, that is, between young people themselves.

In relation to this first aspect, the Hillshire workers saw the key benefit of outdoor education as being an opportunity to learn more about the young people with whom they were working; outdoor education's central project being to develop positive

worker to young person relationships. One of the advantages that outdoor education

was seen to have was that many of the activities took a long time to undertake. This

was perceived as a positive thing, as it gave the workers more time to learn about their

group and/ or the individuals within the group. For example, Paul said:

> *Because you're with them a longer length of time and because, yeah, I*
> *think particularly the length of time, I think being with a young person*
> *for a good amount of time like that is, you know it's a bit like going*
> *fishing and giving your line a long soak isn't it, sooner or later you're*
> *more likely to catch something [more information about a young*
> *person's behaviours] …Yeah, so for example behaviours like maybe*
> *promiscuity or something like that, you know.*

Mary saw one of the benefits of residentials in a similar vein. It was an opportunity to

learn more about the young people in her care; this highlighted the importance of the

relational aspects of youth work from her perspective, which finds accord in the wider

youth work literature that stresses the foundationally relational nature of youth work

(for example, Davies, 2015a; Mason, W., 2015).

Mary felt that the case of the residential was different to other types of outdoor

education experience, as it necessitated being away from home, being away from the

day-to-day 'normality' of life. In Mary's estimation, it was this difference that led to

disclosures by a young person about themselves and their situation. These disclosures

formed the basis of future work with young people as individuals or as a group, **if** the

workers were sufficiently aware of what the young people were indicating, and could

pick up on non-verbal 'clues'. So, for Mary, another of the benefits of residentials was

that they presented unprecedented opportunities to learn more about the young

people. She was conscious of facilitating the activities and whatever followed, in order

to capitalise on those unplanned outcomes, and to be able to respond appropriately when, and if, disclosures were made:

> *And for lots of other young people it's been an opportunity for them to do all sorts of things, including revealing quite personal things about their lives and that's something that I've always been very conscious of in residentials is that sometimes there are disclosures and you have to be prepared for those disclosures.*

Planning for this type of unknown was clearly an important part of Mary's approach, and this would be entirely in accord with mainstream youth work traditions, where, as Ord put it, workers would plan for opportunities rather than specific outcomes (Ord, 2016).

The accretion of such knowledge could not be planned for; in that it was not possible to accurately 'second guess' what form these disclosures might take in advance. Relationships needed to be properly formed before disclosures could be made, this formation took time to develop; time that was afforded by outdoor education activities and helped by the affective atmosphere of a residential and being away from 'normality'. These disclosures were seen as opportunities – opportunities to 'seize' upon young people's needs, to understand more about 'where they were at' at that moment in time (Davies, 2005, 2015a). This knowledge could then be used to develop work appropriate to a particular individual(s) in future. This would be seen as good youth work practice, as it is was focused on young people as young people (and not as a targeted group), understood the young people's starting point and built a 'curriculum' around their needs (Davies, 2015a; Ingram & Harris, 2001). The exact nature of the opportunities that would come from these disclosures could not be

anticipated or planned either, but it was clearly part of Mary's rationale for

undertaking such activities:

> *…It's when you're away from that normality it gives people the*
> *opportunity to make that disclosure and that could be… anything from*
> *relationships, to financial issues, to not feeling good about themselves,*
> *having concerns about siblings, it can be all sorts of things actually,*
> *you know you can never really tell... So I think the benefits of*
> *residential are just absolutely tremendous and it's that whole*
> *serendipity, you know it's what you set out to achieve is not always*
> *just what you've achieved, there's lots of other things and if you're*
> *astute enough you can pick up on that and you can develop it and*
> *work with it.*

In summary, the first benefit of outdoor education for relationship building was that

workers consciously used outdoor education as a tool to build positive relationships

and experiences with young people. Further, they used such experiences to learn more

about individual young people and to foster positive relationships with them. This

knowledge would then be used to scaffold further learning/ developmental activities.

This approach goes beyond the focus of Greenaway's framework. Here, one aspect of

his framework sees personal development as a young person working outwards to

make connections with others, but this was a much more deliberate and specific youth

work approach.

The second key benefit of outdoor education, in terms of relationship building, was its

efficacy in building positive relationships *between* young people from within and

across friendship groups. Outdoor education was seen as a powerful way to build

young person to young person relationships. Mary focused on the possibilities of

introducing new dynamics to the relationship building process, and developing new

understandings of other people's perspectives. She gave an example of what had happened when two diverse groups of young people, who had not known each other well previously, had taken part in a residential:

> [It gave them] you know a greater understanding and empathy of other people's situations to those that have traditionally have been a bit sort of harum-scarum, might suddenly find themselves working with somebody who's got a disability and suddenly they think, blooming heck, you know they're really good, they're brave and they're courageous and they can get on with this… I think some people have quite a narrow view of the benefits and maybe look at some of those more traditional tangible things that they can hang onto, like you say about confidence building and all of that, but I think there's a lot more interesting things go on.

Taking aside the apparent stereotyping of young people with impairments as being 'brave' and 'courageous', which can be read as an example of ableism (Mallett, 2009), the focus for the worker is on the positive building of relationships *across* friendship groups; the discovery of the positives in other young people, and the learning of new things about other young people that would have not have been possible (or as likely, perchance) in other situations. The focus for Mary here was not so much on those more individualised personal development conceptions of outdoor education but on learning about others; perhaps the outward part of the personal growth framework advocated by some outdoor educationalists, where one makes contact and encounters others (Greenaway, 1998).

Outdoor Education and Learning

Aside from relationship building, Hillshire workers talked about the value of outdoor education as providing a wide range of learning opportunities, from learning about the environment and the beauty of the outdoors to more personal learning opportunities, sometimes dubbed personal development (see section above). As discussed in Chapter Two, a broad conception of personal development is central to much of the outdoor education literature, with the idea that participation in outdoor education helps broaden young people's horizons. This general idea of learning through personal development was one that the Hillshire workers knew about, of course; Paul alluded to this when he talked about the benefits of outdoor education in terms of:

… just generally developing a team spirit and pushing one's efficacy.

Workers stressed that learning in outdoor education had to be carefully planned and skilfully facilitated, otherwise it could become, in Fred's words, *''a series of unrelated fairground rides,''* which, in his estimation, was all that happened in some of the privately run outdoor education centres. The learning opportunities that the Hillshire workers referred to were nuanced and sophisticated and more specific than just personal development. Here I have used and added to Greenaway's four ways of reviewing personal development sequentially (upwards, outwards, inwards and downwards, Greenaway, 1998) to categorise the Hillshire view of outdoor education and learning.

Firstly, Greenaway's model points to an upwards connection, where young people realise their individual potential. For Fred, outdoor education at its best offered

experiential learning opportunities, where young people were offered high quality

training and were then left to carry out their expedition with minimal direct input from

staff. This would help them reach upwards to realise their potential:

> *…The best examples that I currently see of what I would describe as
> quality outdoor experiential learning…with the Duke of Edinburgh's
> Award in the best places whereby the training is of a high quality, so
> you're up-skilling the participants and then the participants genuinely
> plan a journey and undertake an independent journey and [are]
> supervised remotely.*

He contrasts this type of learning with what he sees happening in many outdoor

education centres:

> *Now that level of engagement isn't happening on what I describe is an
> unrelated series of fairground rides of sometimes a 90 minute session,
> sometimes an hour and a quarter session, trying to get six, seven,
> eight sessions in a day, the sessions are unrelated to each other,
> there's no progression, there's no differentiation. All the quality, all
> the language and quality assurance that you would use in education
> about proportion of time on task, an appropriately challenging task,
> differentiation within the group, the proportion of time on task, as
> opposed to the proportion of time setting up and dismantling and
> getting kit on and kit off is a huge mismatch. Whereas historically lots
> of residentials would be five days, some were seven days… even a
> three week class experience [It should all be about centres] having the
> capacity and expertise to be able to meet the needs of young people.*

Fred echoes Kurt Hahn's famous phrase (Hahn, 1965), when it came to what he

conceived of as positive learning:

> *[Good provision should] impel them to experience, to get them to
> achieve more than they think they could achieve.*

For Fred, this type of approach was in direct contrast to a provider who offered a

series of *''unrelated fairground rides''*:

*Good providers start where young people are at and have a more
positive approach and look at young people's individual needs and a
slightly different approach to the way they go about impelling young
people to experience...*

Leading on from the discussion about the cost of providing good quality provision, his

view was that:

*[Good] providers - do they have clear educational aims and objectives,
do they review the experience, what's the pre-course and post course
for?*

However, for the Hillshire workers, this upwards connection was more nuanced than

individuals looking to achieve their *individual* potential. Mary, for example, talked

about a residential she had organised, which was seen as being a central part of an

anti-bullying initiative:

*...We just wanted to get this big group together which consisted of two
different youth councils geographically and Children in Care council
Group and other young people who had been identified as needing
early [intervention]...we went through all the material ... we went to X
Outdoor Centre to do that, but because we also wanted to do an
outdoor activity we spoke with X Outdoor Centre about what our aims
and objectives were for the residential and that we would also like an
activity, but also sticking very much to this about building emotional
resilience, looking at trust, looking at supporting each other, how we
can help each other. So we chose for that reason a lot of the high
ropes work... and things like which needed a lot of working together
with the team, but also a lot of like support, verbal support to get
people to do the activity as well.*

Mary, in this example, was very clear that there were specific objectives for this

particular residential – building resilience, building trust and developing supportive

relationships - as part of the youth council group's development in an effort to combat

bullying. These specific group goals had been identified through earlier work, so

Greenaway's 'upwards' aspect of individual potential in this youth work approach had to be balanced with achieving specific group aims linked to addressing group needs.

The other aspect of achieving individual potential, of growing upwards, was that of identity. For Mary, the learning that took place in outdoor education settings was about taking young people away from their home environment:

> *Well for me I feel that taking people away from their natural environment actually offers lots of benefits, depending on the group, because some of them, in fact if I looked at the group for example who have got either physical or learning disabilities, quite often are quite cosseted at home and …not given a lot of space to develop themselves.*

This formed part of another opportunity that outdoor education afforded young people; it allowed them to adopt a new identity, to escape their home environment where their labels sometimes constrained their choices:

> *I've worked with all young people who've been excluded from school, the thing I found with that, very much for that was that they had this anonymity on themselves, that they were just another fell walker like anybody else, they weren't 'the naughty kids'... So that for them was the first opportunity they've ever had to just be, you know sort of accepted for who they are, which are young people doing a 72 mile walk with no sort of previous baggage and for a lot of them that was a very good personal stretch for them to be able to do that and to help them reflect on their life...*

Outdoor education, therefore, created the conditions in which young people could be seen differently, and offered the possibilities for young people to see themselves differently, to learn about different possibilities for themselves. This could be seen to go well beyond the 'upwards to achieve individual potential' of Greenaway's framework (Greenaway, 1998), with its focus on self-actualisation (see Chapter Two

for more details of Greenaway's framework). This aspect could be seen as adding

critical conscious raising to the upwards part of the framework.

The second aspect of this framework - growing outwards, of making connections with

others - was seen as a learning opportunity in a very specific way. As Hillshire had

many outdoor education centres within its boundaries, and much beautiful scenery,

workers were aware that pragmatically engaging local young people in outdoor

education could offer opportunities to make connections with others for employment.

As Paul put it:

> …There's a reasonably big outdoor industry in those hills just over
> there for young people to be employed in, and Hillshire is an area that
> is, has less people with a Level 4 qualification than the national
> average and is short on jobs. So introducing young people,
> introducing students to it is kind of relevant from potentially an
> economical point of view, although no outdoor instructor or associate
> professional makes big money.

For both Paul and Mary, there was something of a moral imperative to ensure young

people had access to the sort of opportunities that others were getting:

> But just because, you know I think personally it's right for young
> people to get out there and explore their county and there's this
> culture in Hillshire, particularly if you're from a slightly impoverished
> background and your sort of understanding of self doesn't really go
> beyond a couple of estates in [your home town which]… is probably
> one of the most impoverished towns in the county. There's loads of
> kids [there who] don't go beyond [there]…

These workers were proactive in encouraging their young people to get out into the

countryside, as a way of redressing some of the inequalities that they faced. This

offered them experiences and connections, social capital if you will, that their other,

wealthier, peers accessed as a matter of course. That was why Mary was so determined to find external funding to carry on offering such opportunities, despite the lack of core funding to do this. This adds a social justice dimension to Greenaway's outwards framework.

Thirdly, the inward growth (to increase self-awareness) aspect of Greenaway's framework could be seen in the Hillshire workers' ideas about outdoor education and learning opportunities. This was the idea of outdoor education facilitating young people's reflection and developing their self-awareness. This conventional idea was one that was echoed by all of the Hillshire participants. Paul put it like this:

> *I believe that once you choose to tune in, so the outdoors can be a catalyst to tune into your own awareness…Actually build in time where young people have some time where they go and reflect and kind of gaze out onto the landscape and then come back to the group and talk about what they saw…I've also seen it used where young people go out and explore the grounds of a centre and go and find something from nature, like a leaf or a pinecone or something like that and use that as a tool for reflection…*

Fred pointed to his perception of good providers being those that built opportunities for reflection and evaluation into their programme:

> *…A lot of sort of encouragement and reflection on what they've done and you know celebrating their…sometimes [the young people would]… only get so far up and come down, there was no sort of anger or disappointment by the technician, it was just like, right you've challenged it, what are you going to challenge yourself to next? … And that transition of that learning into the next session, the next evening, the following day and obviously a lot of work has been done on the pre-residential experience and post residential follow-up, because if the residential is just an isolated event, we're only just sort of scratching the surface of the potential impact of that…*

Mary also highlighted the importance of reflection for workers too, on their learning, on their reflections about individual young people's learning, on critical incidents and their evaluation of those incidents amongst the staff team:

> *We constantly reflect on, you know that reflection doesn't end just when you come back, like since that residential the three workers that went on that we talked a lot about it, we talked about you know some of the incidents that happened.*

This has potentially important implications for learning about risk management and learning from 'near misses' too, of course. The important thing in the participants' view was that the event, whether it was a residential or a day out, offered learning for both staff *and* young people and did not stop when the activity did. The activity was just part of the pre- and post-event learning experience, otherwise it could become just a ''*series of unrelated fairground rides*''. This focus on staff learning (and, by implication, risk management for future) offered another dimension to that aspect of Greenaway's framework (1998) that concentrates on the individual participant's learning rather than the worker's.

Fourthly, Greenaway's framework (1998) suggests a downward connection, where individuals touch the earth and are grounded by their experiences and their proximity to the outdoor environment. This could be seen in Hillshire when participants referred to the impact of the environment, of the different aesthetic experiences that outdoor education offered. For example, Paul said:

> *Sometimes it is just about being there in terms of, you've got an inspirational landscape in front of you that is possibly, so if I was an inner city young person from Birmingham and I've never seen sheep on*

the hill, you know so that in a way can trigger an emotional response
in its own right and can kind of bring up feelings and thoughts that are
perhaps different to the feelings and thoughts I have in a more urban
context for example.

Fred took this further to talk about young people having the opportunity to see

"Heron, oystercatchers, migratory trout, migratory salmon…" in their native habitats.

In the best examples, experienced outdoor education staff offered young people a

wide curriculum inspired by the landscape. This curriculum included:

Flora and fauna, about ecology, about geology, about the natural
history of the area…

This description of being grounded by the environment would not be an unusual

application of Greenaway's (1998) framework; however, Paul, who had significant

experience of working with young people labelled as risk takers, articulated a further

aspect. He saw one of the main purposes of outdoor education as offering a healthy

alternative to his groups' particularly unhealthy risk taking activities. Young people

could learn that there was an alternative way of being and, by being 'grounded' by the

activities, make more positive choices about the types of risk taking activities to

engage in. This had echoes of the adventure/ wilderness therapy type of interventions

that are deemed to be particularly effective with older young people and adults

(Bowen & Neill, 2013). As Paul put it:

Number one for me would be the idea of exploring risk taking in a
controlled and safe way, or a risk assessed way. Knowing that
historically a lot of the young people I've worked with have been risk
takers and have looked for experiences that give them a rush of
adrenaline and other chemicals that kind of leave them with a feeling
of positive experience…So you know perhaps there's something

around the outdoor education context and helping people to challenge themselves by saying look there are natural highs.

So for this particular group of young people, outdoor education, in Paul's view, offered a better alternative and a positive challenge to meet their specific needs:

So the idea of, yeah, taking risks in a controlled manner, you know to jump off a telegraph pole harnessed up to the hilt, there's still a risk in that isn't there, you've got to trust the fact that the harness is going to hold your weight, you've got to be brave enough to get to the top and then you've got to push yourself to step off the top.

In summary, I have used Greenaway's four aspects framework to analyse what the Hillshire workers saw as being the key points of learning through outdoor education. Participants gave examples of individual and group potential being realised in the upwards aspect but added another dimension to it by highlighting the possibility of alternative identities for young people. In the outwards aspect - to connect with others - workers suggested alternatives to the 'standard' connections; here, they saw connections with employment possibilities as offering opportunities for young people's social capital to be enhanced. The inward part of the framework, of self-awareness and reflection identified by the Hillshire workers, is well known in the literature, but they added to this by stressing the importance of the staff reflection and awareness, not just the young people's, which had positive implications for risk management. Finally, in the downwards connections part of the framework, participants talked about the aesthetics of outdoor education, again well known in the literature, but added a further aspect to this by talking about the options for risk takers.

Having discussed the value of education from the point of view of relationship building and learning, I turn to the Hillshire participants' views of risk.

Managing Risk in Hillshire

This section primarily addresses the perceptions of the Hillshire staff, in terms of what they saw as being the main risks, how they went about managing the risk process, and how they mitigated any significant risks. The section starts with a brief overview of the perception of risk, in relation to outdoor education and young people, and the context of the regulation of the outdoor education sector.

Fred was clear that, whilst the outdoor education industry was a relatively safe one, he was aware any incidents were likely to become major news:

> *If you say as an industry relative to industries like the construction industry, it's a very, very safe industry, but with it being young people, if young people are hurt or killed then obviously that's high profile, so different to a construction worker's been killed on a construction site.*

Fred's acknowledgement finds echoes in the risk literature in the theory of the Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF) (Pidgeon, Kasperson, & Slovic, 2003). The SARF postulates that risk events are amplified or attenuated relative to their seriousness according to public perception (as opposed to the 'real' seriousness of the event), and that from this there is likely to be a ripple effect with a wider impact. The ripple could take the form of economic, social or symbolic consequences – in this case, perhaps, leading to illogical castigation of an individual or a profession (Pidgeon, Kasperson, & Slovic, 2003). For further discussion of the SARF, see Chapter Two.

Allied to this, Fred also attested to the significant level of responsibility that came with these potentially high profile incidents, particularly for the third sector, due to their lack of resources compared to a statutory organisation:

> *If there are then incidents where young people are hurt, that is a big responsibility for the voluntary sector and charitable organisations because they haven't got the funding to do things properly.*

In terms of risk management/ assessment processes, a significant contextual issue was that the regulation of the (outdoor education) industry was at something of a crossroads, as the statutory external body – the Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) - faced a very uncertain future. One report suggested it should go and the industry should become more self-regulating, relying on other 'badge' systems; another stated that it should be moved from the Health and Safety Executive (Cabinet Office, 2010; IOLNE, 2016, for further background, see Chapter Two). Fred alludes to the uncertainty that mirrored his own like this:

> *I'm undecided about the self-regulation of the industry, because there needs to be some regulatory function that has teeth. Now you can argue that health and safety law is so well written that if they're in breach of their duty of care and they hurt someone, then the law is already in place to deal with that person, but that is retrospective, rather than being proactive…I mean no one's ever been prosecuted under adventurous activity, like young children and persons safety act, they always get prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work Act, so you can argue that that law is in place and so do you need the regulation on top…perhaps … regulation is not the best.*

As far as the specific risk assessment processes were concerned, staff were well aware of the demands of bureaucracy. Mary, as a youth worker, was very committed to outdoor education, and determined not to let any bureaucratic issues stand in the way

of her planning and delivering of outdoor education activities. She was only too aware, however of the difficulty of planning such ventures in this regard:

> *I would never like risk assessments to become something then that*
> *stops people going away and having these wonderful experiences and*
> *I know in an environment where you're already stressed and you're*
> *already under pressure at work, when you start to see that you've got*
> *to fill in six risk assessments which are to do with your travel, to do*
> *with your activity and then to do with young people, you know it's so*
> *easy sometimes to just say, 'do you know what let's not bother' and I*
> *hope I don't ever get like that, but I can understand why people do and*
> *that saddens me in a way because I think we're missing so many good*
> *things if that is the case.*

Planning outdoor education activities, therefore took time, partly because the bureaucratic processes required substantial amounts of planning time to complete. Risk assessments had to be completed for groups, specific activities and, sometimes, individual young people, so in this sense Power's assertion of an all-pervasive focus on risk could be seen (2004, 2007). For the Hillshire participants, managing risk had two key aspects: dynamic risk assessment and ensuring an effective staff team.

Mary referred specifically to the importance of having enough experience to make appropriate dynamic risk assessments when necessary, that is, to make 'on the spot' risk management decisions in light of rapidly changing conditions (British Canoe Union, 2014). Formal written risk assessments and processes were dealt with through the Evolve system (an online system for planning and authorisation, used by Hillshire and many other councils) but she was acutely aware of this only being part of the picture:

> *The thing is you do these risk assessments, but you never know what's*
> *going to come to … do you and it is about having that experience to be*
> *able to make the judgement call at that moment and I always would*

> *use that phrase, you know I did the best I could, at the time I could,*
> *with the information that I had.*

Paul gave a good example of dynamic risk assessments and saw his responsibilities

with regard to risk like this:

> *… My job really is because I've got the knowledge and awareness of*
> *that group of young people specifically, so it's to control the attitudes*
> *and behaviours that they might display, to control the fact that we*
> *might be travelling in poor weather or good weather... So you know I*
> *might write things like, young people have been instructed to bring*
> *waterproof coats and boots, if they choose not to do that and turn up*
> *in a 'onesie' and some summer pumps, then that is their choice and I'll*
> *manage that through sort of reflection in the moment...*

So, formal risk assessments through Evolve were seen as necessary, as were dynamic

risk assessments, but workers were particularly cautious about specific activities in a

way that was sometimes over and above what Evolve or their other policy/ guidelines

dictated. For example, Fred was cautious about only using 'known' providers for

transport – the latter being statistically the most dangerous part of outdoor education

activities (Fulbrook, 2005):

> *So you know I'm not using X's Minibus Services that I don't know much*
> *about, I'm using, X might be an extremely safe driver, but if he's an*
> *unknown quantity to me I'm not going to touch him.*

Mary was also very aware of the dangers of transport and her own practice was very

cautious in this respect – she used Evolve to record parts of journeys

> *We say, right six young people are on the bus setting off to the next*
> *point. We probably do it overzealously in a way, but … if there's going*
> *to be an incident it's probably on that to and from [journey].*

Mary's practical experience also meant that she was very clear about ground rules

with the young people, about what was and what was not negotiable, and the

importance of revisiting these 'rules' as and when necessary. The negotiation of some

parts of the ground rules was a vital part of the risk assessment procedure; young

people were given some degree of agency in what they deemed acceptable behaviour.

It was made clear which of the rules were imposed upon them, where, for example,

the rules were those of the centre they were using. This would be an example of

concordance; where negotiation and agreement between workers and young people

as equals, built on pre-existing positive relationships, was used to support the

management and mitigation of risk.

Knowledge of one group's interaction with another at a centre may not always find its

way onto a formal risk assessment, but it was clearly at the forefront of her mind as

part of the assessment of risk, and as part of the planning process:

> *We always start every residential with ground rules which the young*
> *people, we have non-negotiables and negotiables, we always have it*
> *on display throughout the residential, revisit it as and when is*
> *appropriate…we have other things that we want to put on that list and*
> *sometimes that's based our risk on prior experience of either a venue,*
> *so potential of what can happen in that particular venue because of its*
> *location or it might be because of the group of people in that we know*
> *there's some history amongst some of them.*

Knowledge of individual young people's behaviour meant that Mary always gave every

young person in her group the opportunity to take part in an activity. She managed

any potential poor behaviour with a mixture of pre-emptive action, the use of a firm

behaviour management approach, and a number of back up plans:

> *I will talk individually with that young person beforehand and I'd make*
> *it quite clear that I would have no hesitation to take them*
> *home…because of bad behaviour. People are always clear, we always*

> *take additional transport with us if we go on a coach that we have got*
> *access to get off site to take people, remove people, you know we*
> *have all the contact details from parents, from foster carers and*
> *everything else and I would never hesitate to do that, but I always like*
> *to give people the benefit of the doubt and take them in the first*
> *instance, because if you never give them that chance to stretch*
> *beyond, they never will you know.*

Knowledge of individuals and their behaviour, as well as intra and inter group

relationships, was an important aspect of the informal risk assessment processes, so,

in some cases, Mary actively orchestrated a situation where some groups did not come

together, she was effectively managing the situation by way of a pre-emptive strike:

> *It might be because of the group of people in that we know there's*
> *some history amongst some of them.*

Finally, good staff team cohesion was seen to be vitally important for managing risk

both before and during the activities. Staff experience and knowledge was highly

prized. Mary felt that being safe was not just about filling in the paperwork and making

the 'right' judgment call if an incident arose[20], but about being very careful in the

choice of venue, for example, and ensuring that the whole team were involved in

assessing the risks:

> *I think the whole idea is to get young people doing things that are*
> *adventurous and fun and experiential isn't it and developing a system*
> *and a culture that lets people, whether it's adults or young people,*
> *explore those opportunities. But you know it takes a team of people to*
> *think carefully about doing that… so I take young people to third party*
> *venues in Liverpool, Manchester and things like that, so every time I do*
> *that you know I do it extremely carefully, so to do it safely.*

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[20] This is an example of a dynamic risk assessment where the decision to manage risk in a particular way
took place in situ, effectively reflection in action (Schön, 1983).

Paul too saw the importance of involving at least one other colleague, to ensure that

the assessment of a venue – formal or otherwise - was carefully done:

> *Having a peer with you to bounce ideas off and that was about*
> *evaluating life experience really as well. So yeah we did, we went and*
> *did that reccie and you know young people could have a great time*
> *there, you know there's open space, there's a barn to get under if it's*
> *wet, there's a couple of meeting areas and I can get it for a couple of*
> *hundred quid. So you know, and there's suitable parking and it's rural*
> *enough to not lose a young person.*

For Mary, having a supportive team who shared the same sort of approach and being

open to learning were a crucial part of the running of a successful venture. Knowing

the team's strengths was also important for that cohesion:

> *We talked about how you know we might do things differently at a*
> *different time… we did the best we could, at the time…But that's*
> *because we were a **tight team**, we were confident with each other's*
> *skills and abilities and I think that's also important on residentials that*
> *you feel confident with your co-workers, that you know you're going to*
> *use the same sort of, not exactly the same approach, but you*
> *ultimately have the same aims and objectives for that visit. [my*
> *emphasis]*

Achieving that "*tight team*" was, however, another time consuming and lengthy

process, so, when combined with the necessity of building positive relationships with

young people prior to a venture, and the time taken to fill out the Evolve paperwork,

risk assessments and so on, planning for a venture was overall a lengthy affair.

Managing risk in Hillshire was a complex business but, despite this, staff engaged with

the bureaucracy, as they were committed to giving every young person the

opportunity to engage in activities. Dynamic risk assessment and having a cohesive

team were considered vital to effective risk management, as was the active

involvement in the risk process by the young people through concordance, as instantiated by the ground rules. Staff did not mention the BME background of any of the young people they worked with in the interviews. Mary and Paul were keen to emphasise that the groups and individuals they worked with were from marginalised groups and communities, often labelled as 'at risk' young people.

Summary

In this chapter, I set out to report on the key themes that arose from the case study of Hillshire. The introductory section set out a background and context to the Hillshire CC case and offered an introduction to the research participants. The context section briefly explored the educational landscape in Hillshire, the marketisation of outdoor education provision, and the funding issues in Hillshire. The chapter then explored the value of outdoor education from the perspective of the workers. Outdoor education was seen to be an effective tool for relationship building, specifically between workers and young people and between young people. The value of outdoor education was also seen in relation to its ability to provide learning opportunities for young people's personal development. The learning opportunities were compared to, and added to, Greenaway's four-aspect framework. Hillshire participants saw the management of risk as being primarily about good planning processes, involving young people in a concordant way, in combination with the use of dynamic risk assessment and having an effective staff team.

The next chapter offers an exploration of the similarities and differences between the

two cases of ACYP and Hillshire and discusses the findings therein.

Passing on the Love

'Sarah' was bright, bubbly, hyperactive, frequently aggressive, not achieving at school. We had spent months building relationships with her and her peers. It was really hard work. Daily sessions frequently ended in serious reviews of our approach. Were we getting anywhere? Our group got to leave school sometimes; sometimes we went on trips; sometimes we undertook activities that looked like fun, an alternative curriculum before such ideas were labelled so. Some of the school staff did not feel we were doing the right thing. Weren't we just rewarding bad behaviour?

Gradually we got to understand Sarah, she told her story. It was heart breaking. The aggression and hyperactivity made sense. When we took her home after a trip, we saw her house didn't have interior doors, just filthy floors. After several months, Sarah started to become less aggressive, less hyperactive. She attended school more. She had more friends. She gained an ASDAN[21] award, took part in arts projects, started to go to the local youth centre. A couple of years later, she started to volunteer at the same youth centre, she said she wanted to become a trainee youth worker because she loved youth work.

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[21] An informal, non-exam based Award focused on learning for life.

Chapter 6. Tales from ACYP and Hillshire

This chapter sets out to compare the 'tales' from ACYP and Hillshire, through an analysis of their differing contexts, and the similarity and contrasts in the landscape they inhabited. The chapter then offers an analysis of the findings from the two case study organisations, by summarising what they perceived to be the value of outdoor education. This value is discussed in terms of relationship building and learning opportunities. The final section of the chapter explores the issues of managing risk in outdoor education in a youth work context and compares the formal and informal risk management processes.

Context

The tales from ACYP and Hillshire were of contemporary UK organisations that worked with young people on a project basis. Both recognised a broadly conceived youth work approach, although this looked different in each case, as discussed below. Both organisations used outdoor education as a tool to facilitate some of their work. There were, however, differences in the way the organisations approached their work, and in their 'take' on the educational landscapes that they inhabited. These differing issues are discussed in this section, before the specifics of each case's view of the value of outdoor education and management of risk assessment are delineated. The differing contextual issues are that of the primary 'client' group in the case study organisations, their different approaches to work and the difference in the educational landscapes they inhabited.

ACYP worked with adults as well as young people. In fact, the number of projects that focused on 'just' young people was the exception rather than the norm. Two of these young people focused projects were in ACYP Northtown. In ACYP Midtown, work with families was central to the project's raison d'être. For Sandra, the manager there, the decision to use outdoor education activities was based on the efficacy of those activities in building better relationships within the family. Outdoor education was seen as just one of many other activities that could also facilitate effective outcomes.

This was in contrast to the Hillshire youth service, where young people were seen as being *the* central focus of intervention, rather than that of the family unit. In Hillshire, any work with families would be seen as being peripheral rather than central to the core focus of their work. Indeed, in line with established youth work practice, developing relationships with the whole family could be seen to be actively damaging to a core focus on relationships with young people, given that the youth worker's role is as an advocate for a young person. The primary 'client' for the youth worker should be the young person, not another family member (Sercombe, 2010). Further, the workers interviewed in Hillshire were in their different ways more experienced, and invested in, outdoor education than were the ACYP workers.

In Hillshire, there was more of an emphasis on the delivery of group work (by paid youth workers not volunteers) in young people's naturally occurring friendship groups; a common approach to mainstream youth work (Davies, 2010). There was much less emphasis on the one to one work that was found in many of the ACYP projects, where staff, who were often volunteers, forged mentoring-type one to one relationships. In

many ACYP projects, and certainly in the *case of* Midtown, a core part of their modus operandi used trained volunteer mentors, who worked one to one with young people (and adults) to develop positive relationships with their clients. These mentors followed their client's interests and used activities as a springboard to develop clients individually, rather than in groups. In this sense, the Midtown approach was closer to a personal adviser role than a youth work one (Davies, 2015a; Yates, 2009). The use of volunteers was not central to Hillshire youth service.

The term 'client', frequently used in ACYP Midtown, would not be seen as acceptable in Hillshire – youth workers from the Hillshire tradition would baulk at the idea of the notion of a clinical type relationship and the power/ status differential the term implies (Banks, 2010). In Hillshire, in common with many youth services, the term 'young person' rather than client would be deemed much more acceptable, implying a more equal power differential between the youth worker and the young person (Fitzsimons, 2011), although this notion is a contested one (Sercombe, 2010). This difference may be reflective of the fact that participants from ACYP Midtown and Northtown were experienced in youth and community work but not necessarily fully qualified youth workers, in contrast to Hillshire where all the participants were professionally qualified.

Both the ACYP and Hillshire staff had to negotiate complex and rapidly changing landscapes. For example, Fred from Hillshire was concerned with the significant changes that had taken place, shifting responsibility and power for the statutory education sector and outdoor education. For the ACYP staff, negotiating the ever-

changing funding regimes was the main focus of their attention. Negotiating changing

funding regimes in a historically underfunded third sector was very much what ACYP

managers were used to doing, even though funding levels were at a historically low

level (Unison, 2014, 2016). Sandra, from ACYP Midtown, attested that managing the

funding regimes was ''*a nightmare*''. The difficulty for organisations in continuing to

offer outdoor education (or any other type of) provision in such a fast changing

landscape was particularly challenging: budget cuts, rapidly changing funding regimes,

short term funding, and increasing reliance on working in partnerships, meant that the

landscape in which workers and their managers were operating was not just changing

but moving significantly. The stress that this regime placed on ACYP as a medium-sized

charity, finds accord with some recent reports (LBFEW, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Mason, P.,

2015). This is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Why Outdoor Education?

Participants in ACYP and Hillshire articulated wide-ranging conceptions of outdoor

education, its purpose, and its efficacy*;* however, both saw outdoor education as

having two main purposes - building relationships and fostering learning. The former

was absolutely critical to good youth work practice (Davies, 2015a; Mason, W., 2015);

the latter is also very much in line with what the traditional view of outdoor education

would support, that is, that outdoor education could impact positively on attitudes,

beliefs and self-perceptions and interpersonal/ social skills (Rickinson, et al., 2004).

There were, however, significant differences between what the participants emphasised in this regard.

In this section, four types of relationship building are discussed, before two aspects of outdoor education and learning are explored, specifically personal/ social development and, particularly, broadening horizons, in relation to marginalised young people.

Meaningful Relationships

The participants from the two case study organisations had different ideas and placed different emphases on the types of relationships that outdoor education should and could be used to facilitate. Both ACYP and Hillshire workers saw relationship building as being a significant focus for, and use of, outdoor education, but they had different ideas about what was most important in this regard. There were four aspects to the relationship building. Firstly, the most important aspect for the Hillshire workers was outdoor education's ability to foster effective relationships between workers and young people. Secondly, in contrast, the ACYP Midtown workers saw the development of familial relationships through outdoor education as being vital. Thirdly, both case study organisations saw the promotion of inter and intra group relationships as being important. Fourthly and finally, the ACYP workers emphasised the development of relationships with significant others.

A key issue for the youth workers interviewed was outdoor education's ability to foster or, further foster, meaningful and productive relationships between workers and

young people. This was most explicit in Hillshire. Outdoor education was seen to be a useful means to a relationship-building end, especially given that the nature of the activities demanded relatively high staffing ratios, so staff had more opportunity to engage in one to one or very small group interactions. This was in contrast to many of the youth centres where the participants normally worked. Relationship building between worker and young person was an explicit reason, perhaps *the* reason for Hillshire staff, for using outdoor education activities.

Some outdoor education literature points to its efficacy in terms of improving child/ young person and relationships with adults (e.g. Malone, 2008), but this goes well beyond Greenaway's outwards connection, where outdoor education is seen to help (young) people make connections with others to increase sociability (Greenaway, 1998). Here, the focus was not only on what a young person might get out of the outdoor educational activity there and then, but on the professional's intention to gain knowledge and build relationships with individuals and groups of young people, in order that appropriate work could be undertaken then and in the future. This makes outdoor education as a youth work method part of a holistic package, going beyond Rickinson et al.'s (2004) exhortation that effective outdoor learning must be well facilitated and carefully prepared designed and linked into a 'curriculum' back at base.

The ACYP interviewees made only passing explicit references to the use of outdoor education to build positive relationships between the worker and young person. This seemed to be a taken for granted aspect of their use of outdoor education. The exception to this was Anne, the experienced safeguarding manager (an ex-teacher and

youth worker), who talked specifically and consciously about using outdoor education to build positive relationships between worker and young person.

The second aspect of relationship building - developing more successful relationships within families - was stressed in the case of Midtown ACYP. This was the main focus but was not one that was mentioned at all in Hillshire, given its more traditional youth work heritage (see the context section earlier in this chapter for an explanation of this). Elsewhere in practice, there is a long-standing tradition of family groups using the outdoors to promote better relationships (for example, the Woodcraft folks and the Scouts' 'Lads and Dads' type activities) but this is little referred to in the literature. The difference in ACYP was that workers deliberately used outdoor education to help repair damaged relationships within a family, such as the fishing examples cited in ACYP Midtown, with workers facilitating those encounters. As Rachel put it:

> *…You often think about outdoor activities as benefitting the young people… but not necessarily about the knock-on effects with the wider family network either.*

In this example, Rachel talked about a fractured family where the father had lost contact with his daughters, as mum would not let the daughters see their father. Through a long process of building trust with the ACYP workers, mum eventually allowed the workers to support dad and the daughters to go fishing on ACYP projects, healing relationships between father and daughters, father and mother and mother and daughters.

This is an important aspect of outdoor education that is largely ignored and certainly not thoroughly theorised in the literature; the latter tends to emphasise the development of individual character traits, the ability to withstand adversity, to work in groups of peers and/ or to appreciate the environment (Stott, Allison, Felter, & Beames, 2015), rather than the development of familial relationships, although the development of the latter is mentioned in Stuart & Maynard, 2015 which offers a case study of the Brathay Trust, a youth development charity and its work. Although ACYP Midtown was the only project in the research to actively engage in this particular type of relationship building, this aspect of their practice was an intriguing one and worthy of further exploration.

The third aspect of relationship building was intergroup relationships (two or more groups). The outdoor education literature tends to focus on intragroup relationship building (young person to young person *within* a single group, for example, Malone, 2008). However the data from both case study organisations suggested possibilities of relationship building *across* different groups of young people - intergroup. This issue of intergroup awareness raising was articulated by participants from both case study organisations, specifically by Will from ACYP and Mary from Hillshire. Both pointed to examples of young people from one group getting to know young people in other, perhaps targeted, groups, and vice versa for the benefit of both. This aspect is strongly echoed in the literature, which talks of outdoor education's efficacy in terms of building positive relationships between young people as individuals and as groups (Rickinson et al., 2004), and to develop stronger connections with others. This would

be an example of Greenaway's (1998) outward connection with others to increase

sociability and understanding, but also, perhaps, as encouraged by the youth workers,

of an inwards connection to promote reflection and self-awareness (see Chapter Two

literature review on outdoor education).

The fourth aspect of relationship building came from ACYP, where workers stressed

the benefit of young people building relationships with significant others, such as the

fishing club volunteers that Tom from ACYP Midtown talked about (further discussed

in Chapter Four). In contrast, the Hillshire workers did not stress this aspect of

relationship building, as they were much more focused on what might be deemed to

be the development of professional relationships between worker and young person.

Both cases raised the importance of having both 'quality' time and time in quantity to

spend with young people. Time was seen as being one of the factors that led to the

building of positive relationships between workers and young people. This focus on the

utility of outdoor education for building relationships was echoed by the ACYP staff,

but made much more explicit by the Hillshire workers. The issue of time came up again

and again; temporal space and place were seen to be vitally important in facilitating

the building of these effective relationships. Outdoor education was viewed positively

and seen to be different to many other types of activities, partly *because* the

enactment of it requires substantial amounts of time; you cannot climb a mountain,

for example in an hour's session.

This was exemplified in ACYP Northtown and Midtown, where fishing was seen as an effective tool to build positive relationships. It is by its very nature a slow sport, involving taking substantial 'chunks' of time away from the usual rushed and busy centre-based activities in Midtown ACYP. This time factor is mentioned positively in the literature around fishing and youth work (Pool, 2014), but it is not a central theme in this sense in the outdoor education literature, although the concept of slow is used in different ways (for example, Payne & Wattchow, 2008; Prince, 2014).

Practitioners often talked about using outdoor education to build positive relationships with young people, of creating positive shared memories, but also of using such experiences consciously to find out more about individual young people. For example, Paul from Hillshire's assertion, that '*It's a bit like going fishing and giving your line a long soak',* pointed to the importance of workers using the generally prolonged nature of outdoor education activities purposefully, to get to know young people, in order to develop work with them to understand their starting points and use this knowledge to build work at that moment and in the future. Outdoor education, in this sense offered an opportunity for both planned and reactive work.

This approach to working with young people is very much in accord with a mainstream youth work perspective (Davies, 2005, 2010, 2015a; Jeffs & Smith, 2011, as discussed in Chapter Two), however, it is not one that receives as much attention in the more traditional outdoor education literature. The focus here is sometimes more on the activity, how to do the activity safely, on developing individual cognition and learning, perhaps emphasising the aesthetics of the outdoor education experience, the

enjoyment of the outdoors, the importance of the adventure, that is, on the things in themselves (Hunt, 1989). This idea of a worker slowly and deliberately over time cultivating a relationship with young people has long been associated with a youth work approach, since such classic texts as Brew's 1943 'In the Service of Youth' (Smith, 2001) but, in post-neoliberal times, the importance of building solid relationships can be overlooked (McGimpsey, 2013), given the speed of liquid modernity demanding ever *faster* practice (Bauman, 2007).

I have dubbed this notion 'Slow practice' as a useful way to capture this approach, that is, the idea of a practice that is deliberately paced over time and space, a practice that takes place in accordance with a pace dictated by the young people who lead it (Davies, 2005, 2015a). This is discussed more fully in Chapter Seven. This is a different type of 'slow' to the call for outdoor educators to value 'slow' outdoor experiences, for example, one that encourages written reflection (Prince, 2014); this is 'Slow' with a capitalised S, following Ulmer, where practitioners focus on developing a Slow ontology.

So, time was a theme that arose strongly in the data across the project. It was a theme that was first raised by Anne, the ACYP safeguarding specialist:

> *… It's a chance for you to work alongside that child, for them to get to know you, you to get to know them…if you're walking, if you've sat on the bus next to them…You've got that one to one conversation time…*

None of these relationships could develop, however, without the core element of trust – trust that the project and its workers were going to be trustworthy in their dealings

with the participants. Trust was clearly a very significant element of allowing the workers access to participants – possibly even more so with disaffected families/ individuals, who would perhaps be suspicious of other types of intervention in their lives. Rachel from Midtown pointed to the importance of trust in an intervention:

> *[We] had a lot of success there in terms of, you know right okay, well you know us, Mum knows us, so she felt that the girls was in really safe hands and to go fishing… then after that it just kind of snowballed didn't it and they was coming here and doing Zumba, sports and it really did take off didn't it. So I think that was, you know it was a really good thing to have happened and the whole family kind of benefited from it, it was good.*

Clearly this sort of trust building activity did not happen quickly, it took considerable time for these trusting relationships to develop. The example Rachel gave here was one that developed over a period of several months, if not years. So time, in the temporal sense, was central to developing positive, trusting, effective relationships between the project workers and clients and outdoor education activities were ideally situated to offer the gift of time.

'Pushing one's efficacy' - Outdoor Education and Learning Opportunities

In the case study organisations, there were two main ways in which outdoor education was perceived to foster learning opportunities. The first of these was through personal and social development, defined in Chapter Two. This nebulous term is oft cited in the outdoor education literature as being a key benefit for participants (see literature review - Chapter Two, Stott, Allison, Felter & Beames, 2015). Whilst the workers did not necessarily use the exact terminology of personal and social development, they

were, I feel, at the heart of the worker's assertions: for example, when Paul from Hillshire talked of "*… Just generally developing a team spirit and pushing one's efficacy"*, or when Mary, also of Hillshire, talked of choosing to do a high ropes course, as it would help in *"Building emotional resilience, looking at trust, looking at supporting each other, how we can help each other."* Rachel, from Midtown ACYP, talked of the benefits of character building in outdoor education as taken for granted assumptions (Brookes 2003b) – *"You often think about outdoor activities as benefitting the young people, but you know in terms of the confidence and self-esteem."* In this case, she was contrasting this 'well known' benefit of outdoor education to the wider potential benefits to family relationships discussed earlier, but she demonstrates a clear awareness of the oft cited benefits of outdoor education for building self confidence and self esteem (Greenaway, 1998; Malone, 2008).

The second and related way the case study organisations referred to the development of learning was through the idea of widening or broadening horizons. This was specifically alluded to by workers as one of the attractions of outdoor education, and is one that finds widespread accord in the literature (Loynes, 2007). Many of the project workers from both ACYP and Hillshire expressed a similarly strong sense of 'moral purpose' in working with young people and taking them into the outdoors. Workers felt that involvement in outdoor education helped young people achieve a sense of normality in their lives. The first example of this came from Ben when he talked about his personal struggles. He was someone who had been through both the criminal

justice and care systems. Here, he explained how he used that experience to relate to the young people he worked with, particularly in outdoor settings:

> *Even though I'd made great… changes in my life. Not to reoffend, not to get in trouble, not to go down same path as some of ma relatives… I always sey [say] to other people, for you even to be, I'm not saying OK, you as a care leaver, your struggle to get to, even where I'm at naw [now], where I feel I'm just at a normal level, to maybe just try and do something that normal young people [do],[it]… dunn't [don't] mean I can't still do these things….*

This has some echoes of Mary from Hillshire's comment about the young people she worked with, who appreciated being able to escape their labels as criminalised young people when undertaking a charity hike. This formed part of Mary's endeavour to provide the young people in her care with opportunities they would not otherwise have had. Will, from ACYP Northtown, also expressed his desire to give 'his' young people opportunities that helped level the playing field a little through trips and visits, opportunities that they would not have had in other circumstances, unlike other more privileged young people.

Will, from another project in ACYP Northtown, explicitly referred to his role in broadening young people's horizons, even in the use of what may be seen as more mundane activities. Young people looked forward to the outings he planned as "*…That's the only chance they ever get to go to cinema…*" and, on another venture "*That was the first time getting on a train for a lot of them.*" Similarly, in Hillshire, broadening young people's horizons might mean getting young people, who were, according to Mary, "*Quite cosseted at home,*", space to develop. The links between social justice and broadening of horizons are clear, as in Mary's examples of young

people whose engagement in outdoor education was an issue not only of enabling the broadening of horizons, but also of promoting social justice. For a group of young people in the youth justice system, she claimed:

> *That for them was the first opportunity they've ever had to just be, you know sort of accepted for who they are, which are young people doing a 72 mile walk with no sort of previous baggage.*

She also talked specifically of using outdoor education to redress inequalities, in order to improve young people's:

> *Understanding of self [that] doesn't really go beyond a couple of estates in [your home town]…*

This idea of broadening horizons relates closely to the idea of outdoor education as a tool of social justice too. Outdoor education was used by the case study practitioners explicitly and implicitly as a way of achieving what they dubbed social justice for individuals and groups at a micro level, by proffering opportunities to those marginalised individuals they worked with, so that they might have some of the same opportunities that their other more advantaged peers already had.

Social justice is an ambiguous and contested concept (Boylan & Woolsey, 2015) but practitioners were clear that by providing outdoor education opportunities they could work towards their conception of social justice; it was clearly part of a moral imperative. For example, Will from ACYP Northtown talked about consciously using trips/ visit opportunities available to the young people he worked with, as they:

> *Don't have many opportunities to do things. Like when we went to the… Museum that was the first time getting on a train for a lot of*

> *them and it's like little things like that what…they loved going on the train.*

Mary from Hillshire talked in a similar vein, this time of work with young offenders on a long hike:

> *They were just another fell walker like anybody else, they weren't 'the naughty kids' and they loved that being able to do the … just like anybody else that was out on the fells that day. So that for them was the first opportunity they've ever had to just be, you know sort of accepted for who they are…*

Social justice as a theme in the outdoor education literature is growing (for example, Humberstone, Brown, & Richards, 2003) but, as Rose and Paisley (2009) attest:

> *Outdoor education has only recently begun to focus on issues of social justice in practice, curriculum, and in theoretical context. (p. 1).*

Social justice is discussed amongst outdoor education practitioners, but often in terms of diversifying the range of practitioners who engage in outdoor education, to better represent the types of students who go on outdoor ventures (Warren, Roberts, Breunig, & Alvarez, 2014) rather than seeing outdoor education as an emancipatory tool with which to '*do*' social justice. The literature does not explore outdoor education in a youth work context as a *way* of 'doing' social justice, although the wider outdoor education literature does discuss environmental social justice (Cooper, 2016).

Warren claims that social justice is a key tenet amongst the founding fathers of experiential education – namely Dewey and Hahn (Warren, 2005), but it is not one that still appears to be at the heart of current outdoor education practice, which is often

criticised for being predominantly male and privileged (Warren, Roberts, Breunig, &

Alvarez, 2014, and discussed further in Chapter Two).

This approach to working with marginalised young people could be seen as beyond

broadening horizons; projects that opened up life chances that would otherwise not

have been available to those young people. For example, Mary from Hillshire saw the

opportunity for young men on a long hike to escape their labels; Paul, also from

Hillshire, saw engagement in outdoor education as offering job opportunities in the

local area; Will from ACYP Northtown talked of his group, who:

> *…Don't have many opportunities to do things. Like when we went to*
> *the X Museum that was the first time getting on a train for a lot of*
> *them and it's like little things like that...*

Workers in ACYP also explicitly talked of the importance of a positive environment, in

the literal and non-literal sense, which enabled the fostering of good relationships with

staff. As Rachel put it, *"they [the young people] are different when you remove them*

from a certain environment."

This is very different from the Hillshire staff's references to the environment; they

focused more on the social justice benefits & widening horizons opportunities of

young people being removed from their home environment, as well as the aesthetics

of being in the outdoor environment (see Chapter Five for further details).

Fred, from Hillshire, firmly believed in the power of experiential learning, learning

which has a clear focus on educational aims, which in itself has a rich pedigree back to

Dewey and beyond (Ord & Leather, 2011). The idea of experiential learning was not

really discussed by the ACYP staff, nor was outdoor education seen to provide a healthy alternative to other forms of 'deviant' risk taking behaviour. Paul, from Hillshire, raised the latter issue explicitly as being one of the advantages of outdoor education.

Paul also referred to the power of outdoor education in encouraging young people to reflect on their experiences, as he thought, "*…The outdoors can be a catalyst to tune into your own awareness…".* This finds resonance in outdoor education literature as well, of course, as amongst such icons of the broader literature on experiential and reflective learning as Kolb and Schön (Kolb, 2015; Schön, 1983). This aspect did not feature heavily in the data from ACYP.

Fred, from Hillshire, raised a concern about the quality of learning opportunities being diminished in the privatised outdoor education sector and claimed that many outdoor education centres were only able to offer "*An unrelated series of fairground rides".* This finds echoes in Prince's (2016) call for more research into the commercialisation and privatisation of outdoor learning; a cry that goes back some twenty years ago to Loynes' use of Ritzer's work to warn of the 'McDonaldisation' of outdoor education (Loynes, 1998), concerns that have also been aired recently by Beames & Brown, (2014) and Prince & Loynes, (2016).

According to the Hillshire staff, in the better examples of outdoor education provision, young people could be inspired by the natural landscape, which has the potential, according to Fred, to offer a wide curriculum. Paul, also from Hillshire, pointed to the

way the landscape could *"Trigger an emotional response in its own right"*. This perception of the outdoors provoking an aesthetic reaction has a long history in the literature, from the age of the gentleman [sic] Victorian mountaineer (BMC, 2012) right the way through to 'classics' of the modern era, such as Drasdo (Tobias & Drasdo, 1979). The ACYP staff made only passing reference to this aspect.

Avoiding Your 'Head being chopped off' - Managing the Risks in Outdoor Education

There were two types of risk management discussed in the cases, those of formal and informal processes. These are compared and contrasted here, followed by a discussion of accountability vis à vis risk management.

Workers in both case study organisations saw the formal requirements of managing risk as being a complex and time consuming affair. ACYP and Hillshire workers made reference to the need to write multiple risk assessments to support identifying the risks inherent in an activity and/ or when working with particular groups/ individuals. A young woman from Hillshire, who was eight months pregnant, exemplified this need for individual risk assessments. Sometimes site-specific assessments were needed, as were reconnaissance visits, if the venues/ activities were new to the project. All this was in addition to the 'normal' planning of the events. As Mary from Hillshire highlighted, the risk assessment process involved a number of different forms that all needed completing:

> *Well we obviously have individual risk assessments for young people*
> *where there's a medical or a physical condition, other than that we*
> *just use a generic risk assessment…*

Sandra's example of the risk assessment carried out for a specific fishing venue accords with this process:

> *…The fishing's [risk assessment is] done, but if an aspect changes in*
> *relation so they've built another pond or they've built another seating*
> *area, then we'll do, we'll refresh it and do a new, so if there's anything*
> *subject to change, but they are reviewed and looked at.*

It is easy to see how, as Castel asserts, that the subject could become lost in the discourse of risk (discussed in Chapter Two), that is, that one to one relationships between the care givers and those receiving care (in this case youth workers and young people) have been displaced by risk assessments, by a range of abstract factors (Castel, 1991). Mary acknowledged that the strictures of the paper trail could mean that some workers were put off by all of this, but this was something she was determined not to let happen to her:

> *I know in an environment where you're already stressed and you're*
> *already under pressure at work, when you start to see that you've got*
> *to fill in six risk assessments which are to do with your travel, to do*
> *with your activity and then to do with young people, you know it's so*
> *easy sometimes to just say, 'do you know what let's not bother' and I*
> *hope I don't ever get like that.*

This has echoes of Power's (2004, 2007) claim that the all-pervasive nature of risk, together with a bureaucratised system, could mean that workers felt resentful of the system and would be driven to inaction by the demands of bureaucracy. However, nobody espoused overt resentment of the system and, in fact, Mary talked of some of

the processes involved (in this case an electronic system called Evolve) being a helpful

planning tool:

> *The Evolve system, which is actually just a sort of checklist of things*
> *that helps us in a way formulate a letter to the parents and for the*
> *young people about the expectations of the visit.*

Whether this lack of complaint owed something to participants not wanting to be seen

to complain about their organisational strictures to an outsider, such as myself, or

whether this was indicative of a worn down resignation to the inevitability of

paperwork was not clear. Perhaps their compliance was indicative of an acceptance of

the phenomenon of risk, of the all pervasiveness of risk in contemporary society

(Power, 2004, 2007, discussed further in Chapter Two).

Alternatively, there were distinct advantages in utilising the systems that were in

place. Evolve, the electronic system used by Hillshire, offered structure and support, as

Mary pointed out:

> *It also allows other people to access it, so if you're away and you*
> *haven't got a good signal or contact, you can ask people to look on the*
> *system for you for anything, it's obviously very good in case of*
> *emergency, because what they have is like a helpline and you can just*
> *literally phone up that person and they contact an adviser, you know*
> *so if there had been an incident anywhere an adviser would then take*
> *that on board and deal with it.*

Perhaps workers recognised that these processes were there to protect their 'clients'

and themselves and thus accepted them as good practice. The analysis of the data did

not suggest a conclusive answer to this question.

Alongside the formal requirements of risk assessment and other planning procedures, participants highlighted two processes that were not necessarily prescribed by their organisation, but were nevertheless crucial to positive planning. These could be typified as informal risk processes. The first was that of dynamic risk assessment. Workers in both case study organisations recognised the importance of dynamic risk assessment, in addition to carrying out the formal pre-event planning processes. There was widespread recognition of the importance of being able to make reactive judgements about events that were beyond the ken of any formal, proactive planning processes. Mary, from Hillshire, summarised this as follows:

> *The thing is you do these risk assessments, but you never know what's going to come to…do you [?] and it is about having that experience to be able to make the judgement call…*

Paul saw such events as opportunities to promote reflection in the moment (Schön, 1983), reflective practice being a core youth work tenet (Beck & Purcell, 2010), and gave the example of a young person turning up for an activity inappropriately dressed in a 'onesie' and seizing that opportunity as a worker to encourage the young person to reflect.

The second informal risk management tool was that of ensuring appropriate staffing levels. This was not the straightforward staffing ratio as might be recommended in their organisation's policies of, for example one staff member to ten young people. The 'right' staffing levels were far more nuanced than that for the case study participants. For example, in ACYP Northtown, completing risk assessments, and getting to know young people as individuals, was all-important, before any decisions

about staffing ratios or the needs of the young person could be made. For Ben, risk was diffuse, in that it covered whether the young person was at risk as an individual from a safeguarding perspective, but also how they might behave at any one time. Constant (informal) awareness of the individual was needed, but this took time and experience:

> *[For the] first few weeks, you might be getting to know young person*
> *… and then you've got to be risk assessing them and even risk*
> *assessing the young person when you see her... think, yeah I saw them*
> *at that NEET group and they were alright.*

In Hillshire, the importance of having a supportive staff team, who were confident of each other's skills and abilities, were fully involved in the planning of ventures and had the same vision and same consistent approach, was vital to success – this was the ''*tight team*'' that Mary spoke of.

In the ACYP projects, staffing levels were similarly seen as being crucial, however, the emphasis was slightly different - volunteers were sometimes seen as being part of those ratios, although this varied according to the ACYP project. The staffing levels started with a 'rule of thumb' of one to six, according to Tom, but then varied depending upon the behaviour/ types of client, type of activity, venue. There was also an instinctive approach to staffing ratios, depending on what 'felt' right to the experienced staff. There was also a perceived issue about managing an activity safely, ensuring it was open to all and ensuring good numbers to please the funders but also ensuring safe staffing levels. This was a fine balance and, as Sandra pointed out, it can go quickly wrong:

> *We're not allowed back in at xxx venue at the minute, just because of the behaviour of some of the families and the children, but we have…learnt from that, having to put more staff in place, more volunteers, you know think about the families, lowering the numbers a little bit so we can kind of keep a bit more of an eye on it*

Both Hillshire and ACYP staff saw the prevention of poor behaviour as being vital to positive risk management. ACYP staff stressed that knowledge of group/ family dynamics was central to that prevention. Rachel, from ACYP Midtown, saw herself as being lucky because she had worked in the area for a long time and, therefore, had knowledge of the issues so:

> *You are aware that you wouldn't put two families together in a minibus…*

However, that was not always fool proof. There was always, as Tom put it, *"That element of the unknown."*

Rachel, from ACYP, referred to the importance of having experienced and knowledgeable staff. This had echoes of Hillshire's *''tight team''* but, other than staff knowledge of family dynamics, the importance of the experience of the staff team was not emphasised as much in ACYP. For them, it was more a question of having a high enough staff ratio to be vigilant. Mary's *"tight team"* referred to having a staff team, who: used the same type of approach, were working to the same aims and objectives, and knew each other's strengths and abilities. Confidence in each other as a staff team was important for Mary.

The formal processes of risk management were similar in both case study organisations and workers were aware of their legal and organisational

responsibilities. Their approach to risk assessment went well beyond the compliance of filling out multiple risk assessments. The formal processes of risk were fairly standard, for example: planning through Evolve (in the case of Hillshire), gaining consent, and getting risk assessments signed off. The extent to which workers relied on informal processes to manage risk was enlightening. Various types of dynamic risk assessment were utilised by workers, as Mary put it:

> *The thing is you do these risk assessments, but you never know what's going to come to…do you [?] and it is about having that experience to be able to make the judgement call…*

All these factors came together to form the basis of the formal and informal risk assessment processes.

Finally, in terms of risk management and accountability, there was some evidence from the case study organisations that workers perceived they were being held increasingly accountable for the actions of others – responsibilisation (discussed in Chapter Two), that is, the shift from state responsibility to responsibilisation of workers (Peters, 2016). This responsibilisation sentiment, that is, of being hyper-accountable, was admirably summarised by Will, from ACYP Northtown who felt that any incidents on trips/ visits, whether his fault or otherwise, may result in his "*head being chopped off*".

At the same time, there was something of a counternarrative where young people were being made more and more helpless and childlike, in that they are not allowed any degree of agency in terms of undertaking sole travel, for example, or engaging in

adventurous activities by themselves. This was described by Mary as young people

being '"*quite cosseted at home*". This trend could be seen to be a 'civilising spurt', a

term borrowed from Elias's notion of how trends can be seen to emerge over the

longer term (as discussed in Chapter Two). Dunning, a protégé of Elias', exemplified

this idea through boxing, which eventually became more 'civilised' by becoming

apparently less violent over time. The employment of the concept of the civilising

spurt to outdoor education is a useful lens through which to view societal and parental

anxieties, which have, over time, given rise to the idea that young people need to be

protected and not exposed to any risk from outdoor education activities (Gill, 2007,

2010; Humberstone & Stan, 2009; Prince et al., 2013). Young people are thus kept in

an artificial state of dependence and one that is longer than would have previously

deemed to be appropriate, whilst those who care for them face more scrutiny than

ever.

Workers, caught in the middle of these competing trends, found that the heavy burden

of responsibility for taking young people into the outdoors manifested itself in a

plethora of risk assessments and other bureaucratic processes and an acute awareness

of not '*wanting to get their heads chopped off*'. At the same time, those who were

trained and qualified youth workers were also aware of the ethical imperative, through

their professional guidelines, to expose young people to risk so that they might later

be able to manage risk successfully for themselves (NOS, 2012). Demands from parents

for a risk-free environment for their children, exemplified through the 'civilising spurt'

of protective parenting, put workers in an invidious position, meaning that, for one

project (ACYP Midtown), new activities/ venues were rarely used. The ACYP project in Northtown chose not to put on its own transport, and ''*cherry picked*'' participants for visits; while the Hillshire workers only managed to continue to deliver outdoor education given their steely determination not to let the bureaucracy get in the way and continue offering these opportunities, *despite* the considerable difficulties. This finds some resonance in Power's work, in which he claims workers can be socialised into particularly unhelpful ways of working, that focus – to the exclusion of all else - on secondary risk management and not first order, more significant issues (Power, 2004).

Summary

This chapter has explored the similarities and differences between the two cases of ACYP and Hillshire, by contrasting the context of the two cases and the differing landscape each case operates in. Hillshire and ACYP utilised different youth work approaches and had different preoccupations with their educational landscape but both were organisations that embodied precariousness, due to funding and the state of the sector.

The value of outdoor education in both organisations was seen to be its ability to foster effective relationships between workers and young people, partly because of the need for substantial amounts of time to be deployed compared with other youth work methods. I have termed this concept Slow practice (discussed in more detail in the next chapter). Greenaway's framework was adopted and adapted and extended to analyse the ways in which outdoor education was used in Hillshire and ACYP.

For the ACYP workers, outdoor education was seen to support healing relationships within families, this is not explored extensively in the youth work literature. In terms of outdoor education's ability to promote learning, there was agreement that it enhanced personal and social development, and helped broaden horizons through a broadly conceived notion of social justice. Risk management in both organisations relied on both formal and informal mechanisms; worker responsibilisation (Peters, 2016) was a concept that found resonance in both case study organisations. Power's assertion that risk is an all-pervasive phenomenon similarly found some echoes in the case study organisations, but workers also found ways to work round the bureaucracy and to 'keep their eyes' on the first order risks through a combination of vigilance, knowledge of the young people, effective staffing and negotiated ground rules.

Desertion

I received my new staff identity badge for the university and looked at it suspiciously. Had I done the right thing? The atmosphere at the university seemed so laid back, great, but so quiet. The phones hardly ever rang, team meetings were rare, and I discovered there was no team, just a collection of individuals trying to pursue their own intellectual pursuits, squished beneath the quiet pressure of the order of teaching. Lovely people, but I missed the buzz of practice; the exhaustion of projects that emerged from what was the right, the interesting thing to do. You never knew what would happen next. I missed those collaborative projects, the ones that the young people got so excited about, that our lives were consumed by them (''*Hide your car round the back, if the kids see it, you'll never get a minute's peace''*). Ofsted had just inspected us and the camaraderie forged by a common enemy had resulted in glowing judgements. I was high on the dynamic energy of practice, of the practical, of fire fighting, of those youth workers who loved their work and put their heart and soul into fighting for the underdog. I looked at my new badge again. Had I done the right thing? Had I deserted what I loved?

Chapter 7. Precarity, Slow Practice and Risk

Here, I discuss the findings and implications from the case study data in more detail. The context of the prevailing post-neoliberal situation is explicated, in particular the effects of linking funding to marketisation, competition and austerity. This is explored by use of the notion of precarity. There follows a section on the concept of educational triage. The last section discusses the concept of Slow practice in relation to the case studies.

Precarity and Post-neoliberal Times

The case study organisations were surviving in the competitive, post-neoliberal world of austerity (defined in Chapter Two, McGimpsey, 2013). They had to fight through complex funding regimes and displayed entrepreneurial zeal, in order to compete with other third sector and statutory organisations in the 'market place' for what was increasingly short-term funding (LBFEW, 2017; McGimpsey, 2013). Sandra, from Midtown, described the lengths she went to for small amounts of money as: "it's *a nightmare, it's so time-consuming"*. Sandra's description of the complex world of the funding regimes exemplifies some of the issues:

> *We're looking to do another Big Lottery project with an organisation called REAL in Xtown, and that's hopefully, we're in the process of writing that at the minute and we'll hear an outcome in September for that and that's supporting 14-16 year olds in education and providing mentoring support and engagement to get them on the courses and to keep them in education... With ACYP in Midtown and myself, we're in quite a lot of consortium bids, so rather than bidding for individual*

lots, bidding more as partnerships, so you have got a better chance of getting a bit of something, rather than nothing basically and that's working quite well. And like I said with the Canalbank, that's why we did the Canalbank with the joint PHE, you know it's more successful because obviously you've got their expertise, they can give us all the referrals, we can deliver.

This was a landscape where 'sinkholes' were fast appearing where there was once more stable, certain ground. These sinkholes had been magnified by the logic of the short-term contract culture (LBFEW, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Ravenscroft, 2017).

This situation can be analysed by turning to Standing's use of the term precariat. He popularised the term and utilised it to define a swathe of individuals, a class or sub class, who are characterised by a lack of economic security, and a precarious outlook, where control over key assets is held elsewhere (Standing, 2011). Similarly Castel talks about a fear of the future brought about by globalised aggressive economic dynamics, and refers to the precariat as a strata of the division of labour, a set of people who are *"a sort of infra-wage-earners level situated below the wage-earners represented by the classic employment statute"* (Castel, 2016, p. 162). The notion is a contested one, but used here as a tool to help explore issues of organisation and people in the contemporary youth work situation.

My assertion is that, particularly as instantiated by ACYP Midtown, there were organisations, not just individuals that belong to the precariat. These were precariat-organisations. These organisations, like the case study organisations, found themselves in a state of precariousness, their very existence turning on the knife edge of post-neoliberal logic; their entire approach to their work – that is, who to work with, how to

work, what to counts as 'legitimate' work - bounded by the strictures of the latest government pronouncement, a type of performativity that drove every part of the organisation (Ball, 2003; Ord, 2011).

In the case study organisations, workers and managers found various ways of resisting this type of performativity. All the participants were aware of the fragility of the funding situation, but Ben, from ACYP Northtown, for example, pointed to a resistance and a resilience that had an established history:

> *We do get some bits of money…[but] through [the] summer holidays [especially] you [h]ave to be really inventive. An[d] over years I've got quite inventive!*

Sandra (ACYP Midtown) acknowledged the "*nightmare*" situation of funding, but her entrepreneurial zeal often allowed her to find ways through, and her projects kept going. Sometimes the short-term 'solution' meant partnering with other organisations, as highlighted above, even if these partnerships were potentially problematic. The work did not always continue as they wanted though, they often had to change what they did, so Sandra was acutely aware of when funding holes opened up and "…*led to a gap now, a gap in service.*"

The case for ACYP being a precariat-organisation was particularly clear. ACYP's situation meant that staff were frequently on short-term contracts and, therefore, unable to plan their own or their work's medium- or long-term futures, as the future was **so** uncertain. Clearly, this could have been detrimental to the worker's individual personal situation(s), as they tried to cope with the impact of short-term contracts,

poorly paid work (de St. Croix, 2017; NCIA, 2015) and/or redundancy. This exacerbated the difficulties of workers building relationships with young people and their other 'clients' (the core business of the organisation), as some workers may not have been clear as to whether their roles/ jobs would be the same or even exist in the medium/ long term, so their emotional and practical investment in the organisation may have been diminished. This may well have had an impact on their ability to work effectively with young people and their other 'clients', as workers struggled to focus on the work at hand. Given that youth work is, at its heart, foundationally relational (Mason, W., 2015), anything that damaged a worker's ability to build relationships could be fundamentally damaging to their role (as discussed in Chapter Two).

The data from the case study organisations, however, was not absolutely clear-cut in showing this particular potential issue of the precariat-organisation. Despite this situation, workers found different ways, where they could, to 'slow things down', despite the focus on the short term. Indeed, this was one of the attractions of outdoor education activities as these activities, as they afforded *"…that one to one conversation time…" (Anne, ACYP).* The importance of *"…actually build[ing] in time where young people… go and reflect and kind of gaze out onto the landscape"(Paul, Hillshire)* was also acknowledged. Workers clearly saw outdoor education as a way of modelling and fostering resilience, and supported this in the young people they worked with: *"… [its] about building emotional resilience, looking at trust, looking at supporting each other, how we can help each other…" (Mary, Hillshire).*

In the precariat-organisation, the type of work they undertook sometimes had to change as the targets associated with the funding regime(s) changed, and the organisation had to prioritise different things. An example of this was in Midtown, where they had to rapidly change the focus of their work from young person centred to family work. Whether the workers were experienced or qualified or skilled in this type of work, perhaps work that was new to them as individuals was yet another potential issue for both the organisation and the individual, and a risk to the organisation.

In typically resilient fashion though, the workers in the case study organisations showed how their 'people skills' had adapted to this particular type of work. Here, Sandra offered an example of how cooking was used as a tool to work not only on practical and health related issues but also:

> *You know it's not just about the cooking, you get everything about that family member, you know they'll offload on you, they'll talk about letters they've had, you know their benefits…so it's a bit of counselling, a bit of mediation as well, a bit of everything else and support and a bit of direction.*

Similarly, when things went wrong on a family venture, resulting in the project being banned from a particular venue, staff saw this as an opportunity to reflect, to learn, to adapt, rather than be defeated by the different kinds of challenges the new client group brought: *"…obviously we learnt from that, having to put more staff in place, more volunteers, you know think about the families, lowering the numbers a little bit so we can kind of keep a bit more of an eye on it…"* (*Sandra, ACYP*).

Despite these acts of resistance and resilience, in the precariat-organisation the funder effectively makes the decision about *how* the organisation should perform many of its functions and *what* the organisation's purpose should be (who to work with, what constitutes success). Control lies elsewhere, just as it does for the precariat as a social class. This has a number of effects.

Firstly, most commentators agree that to be effective, work with marginalised young people needs to take place over time: short-term targets may not be desirable, realistic or meaningful (for example, de St Croix, 2016, discussed in Chapter Two). Meeting short-term targets is, however, the success that funding is usually predicated upon. Indeed, any 'payment by results' (PbR) funding necessitates achieving targets to gain **any** funding, with the funding being retrospective, so this poses difficulties particularly for smaller organisations, who do not have the resources to support the delivery of this kind of work 'up front' (Wylie, 2015). Aside from the question of equity to smaller organisations, there are real issues associated with being able to set and measure outcomes effectively and set timeframes for the work to be completed (Mason, P., 2015). Whilst the data did not offer conclusive offer examples of the specific difficulties associated with PbR funding, the issues associated with funding and targets more broadly were certainly highlighted.

Secondly, one of the consequences of the issues associated with the funding was that workers knew that, for engagement to be successful, they needed to work with young people over the long term, however, it may not have been in the organisation's interest or ability to do so (this is further discussed in the next section). The precariat-

organisation had to undertake work that it may not otherwise have chosen to do, for fear of losing its funding and its workforce, jeopardising its entire future. Workers and managers were left stranded in the middle of the competing tensions of needing to develop relationships that take place over a long period of time and trying to survive in a 'quick win' culture. As Sandra from ACYP Midtown attested *"…[it] changes from day to day at the minute, it's just a nightmare…"* Further, these funders all wanted a lot of information from the hard-pressed provider; the funding came with many strings attached. Sandra said:

> *They want a lot more of you… they're wanting you know monitoring, they're wanting what evaluations you've done so far, your Impact Stars, you know how many have you, they're wanting that information all the time and it's very time-consuming for the money that you're getting in and you have to reflect on that sometimes, you think God, this is hard work…*

Despite these difficulties, Sandra's pragmatic entrepreneurial zeal and creativity often meant that a way forward was found, against the odds. She did what was necessary to comply with the funding regimes but then, where they could they 'subverted' those regimes to benefit their clients and to maximise the monies that were available: *"…that's why we did the Canalbank with the joint PHE, you know it's more successful because obviously you've got their expertise, they can give us all the referrals, we can deliver."*

Thirdly, the sinkholes that appeared in this new landscape meant that even the short-term work had to stop, change or refocus, with little notice period for the staff to adjust what they were doing, or plan forward/ exit strategies for those with whom

they worked. Their clients, the precariat, could have found that even those sources of support left open to them were in a state of precariousness themselves. This scenario was particularly acutely felt in ACYP Midtown, where the manager described a situation in which staff switched between roles as children's workers, play workers, youth workers, family workers, and offender specialists by turn, depending on the funder's priorities. The manager was clearly aware of the holes appearing in provision as this happened, as discussed above, "…*[there's] a gap now, a gap in service.*"

This picture of complex funding regimes finds support in a recent report by the Lloyds Bank Foundation that heavily criticises the current commissioning culture and the adverse impact it has, particularly on small and medium size charities such as ACYP (LBFEW, 2016b). An example of this would be the situation where ACYP delivered short-term mentoring to young people; Sandra outlined what they had to do for *every* young person they wanted to work with:

> *We have to bid for individual lots, so if a lot comes on the dynamic purchasing, we have to bid for that young person, so if it was 12 weeks at two hours a week, we have to put in and say how we're going to achieve those outcomes of why that young person's been referred and how we're going to work with them…*

Fourthly, the precariat-organisation's willingness to invest in the fostering of long-term relationships with young people and/ or try new ventures could be damaged. Indeed, in the example above, the difficulty of getting funding for even short-term work with these marginalised young people was clearly shown. Hard pressed workers, however keen they might have been to develop outdoor educational activities, did not prioritise new developments. This perhaps helps explain why workers in the two ACYP projects

elected to stick to 'tried and tested' activities that they were confident about using, so as not to place an extra burden on their already overstretched projects.

Finally, for the precariat-organisation, the necessity of partnering with other organisations – sometimes dictated by the funding regimes, sometimes dictated by pragmatism - meant that they could be working with another partner whose culture/ approach might be quite different. The ACYP Midtown project manager, Sandra, exemplified this by talking about the various funding regimes and partners her project was working with at any one time:

> *So we've got the PCC running, the Priority Families running, the healthy eating one… we're just waiting to hear what we've kind of been awarded with Transform and Rehabilitation and CF03 and that's working with adult offenders in prison and then out of prison into resettlement…We're looking to do another Big Lottery project…*

These other organisations may or may not encourage the type of work that ACYP, particularly valued; they may, in fact, dilute or be at odds with ACYP's particular approach, but working in partnership like this was the only way ACYP Midtown could continue **any** sort of work. Sandra saw that consortium bids were the more likely way to achieve any funding success, despite potential issues. As she put it:

> *We're in quite a lot of consortium bids, so rather than bidding for individual lots, bidding more as partnerships, so you have got a better chance of getting a bit of something, rather than nothing basically…*

This concept of the precariat can be taken beyond individuals/ classes of individuals and individual organisations, to the swathe of organisations working with young people within the public and third sector – represented here by ACYP and Hillshire - I

have dubbed this the precariat-youth work sector. It is not difficult to see the sector as a type of 'class' in its own right, marginalised and targeted for funding cuts, particularly since 2008, and working in disadvantaged conditions.

Youth work could be seen as the proletariat of the organisational superstructure, although, of course, that is not to deny that much of the public sector has faced similar decimation to the youth work sector, since the global recession of 2008 in England. The impact on the youth work sector, however, has been particularly marked (Unison, 2014; Wylie, 2015). What is evident here is the irony of these organisations, themselves in a state of precariousness, working with those most in need of stability – those marginalised young people and families who Standing (2011) terms the precariat; the precariat-youth work sector is left to work with the precariat.

Some commentators have suggested that recent cuts amount to the demise of the welfare state in England (McGimpsey, 2013; Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015). Certainly, the impact of the cuts on youth services was and still is, serious and disproportionate, given that the expenditure on other parts of the public services, like the NHS and schools, is ring-fenced, and home care and related services protected by other means (Jeffs, 2015). In the case study organisations, particularly as instantiated by ACYP Midtown, their especially fragile 'hand to mouth' existence meant they had to rely on short-term, complex funding regimes, complex monitoring processes and partnerships, borne of necessity rather than principle. The public sector as a whole, of course, has been hard hit since the 2008 recession, but in youth work, since 2010, 140,000 places for young people have disappeared, as have more than 3,600 youth work jobs, leading

to the closure of more than 600 youth centres (Unison, 2016). It is easy to believe

Jeffs' (2015) assertion that:

> *...little is likely to remain of the once thriving statutory youth sector. A rump may linger here or there but overwhelmingly it, like the once flourishing statutory and university based adult education service, will become a fast-fading memory. (p. 77)*

Any money that has been invested in youth work has been limited to the controversial

and underperforming National Citizen Service, which offers a limited, one off type of

work with young people (de St. Croix, 2011; Mahadevan, 2011a; Public Accounts

Committee, 2017). It is left to the precariat-sector to work with those marginalised

members of society – the precariat – those young people who are the ones most in

need of stability and support. McGimpsey (2013) summarises the post-neoliberal

impact thus:

> *Successive phases of neoliberal and post-neoliberal policy making have disconnected youth workers from relations with local places and communities, and emphasised project forms of working that shorten relationships and formalise interactions with young people. Post-neoliberal policy is distinct in legitimating marketising reform in terms of return on social investment, driving forms of evaluation that support impact investing, and, in the context of austerity, creating a state of heightened insecurity around employment. (p. 2)*

Educational triage

One of the impacts of the precarity caused by the post-neoliberal context was the

question of who had access to services and what those services looked like. In the

data, all the workers espoused a strong desire to work with **all** their young people and

not to exclude anyone from outdoor education activities. However, there were

instances where, due to potential or actual behaviour, this was not possible. This rather contradicted the idea of social justice that workers wanted to promote.

To support the analysis of this, I have employed Youdell's (2004) concept of educational triage – itself taken from the world of emergency medical intervention, where a system of well-established protocols decides who does not need treatment (as they will survive anyway), who receives treatment, who receives treatment first as they are 'worth' a medical intervention, and, in some situations, who is not treated as they are 'hopeless cases' and will die anyway.

Youdell applies this to the landscape of formal education – in this case, schools – to describe which young people are targeted for particular types of intervention, or otherwise. As such, young people who are seen as safe are those who are progressing well with their studies and likely to achieve high grades. Their cases are deemed non-urgent, unlike the under achievers group, who are deemed suitable cases for treatment – in this case educational intervention (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000; Youdell, 2004). There is a third, distinct group; those who are without hope, 'hopeless cases' who do not merit/ deserve educational intervention. Youdell (2004) further observes that the various groups are often split on lines of gender, ethnicity and class.

I have utilised the idea of educational triage as a conceptual tool to help understand the contemporary youth work situation. At a micro level, this analysis can be seen as having resonance in the individual case study projects, particular in ACYP, where respondents talked about which young people got to go on trips and visits – that is,

which young people had the various (informal) educational opportunities open to them. There was talk of *''cherry picking''*, suggesting that the young people who were perceived to be the 'safe' group got to access trips as they were performing well and could be trusted to comply with staff requests. There was some suggestion that, in some cases, the rationing of opportunity took place, so the 'deserving' young people got to go, which would place the individual concerned in the 'hopeless case' group of Youdell's analysis (2004).

As suggested above, this ambiguity presented something of a contradiction to the theme of social justice that workers talked about as one of their reasons for using outdoor education in the first place; occasionally, the idea of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' leaked out of the conversations. An example of this came from Will at ACYP Northtown: *"her behaviour at the time wasn't the best, so she didn't deserve to go on the trip"*. Talk of "*cherry picking*" could be seen in the same way, as the youth work values of inclusion conflicted with the pragmatic realities of managing behaviour. Different workers handled the issue differently. Mary claimed she would never deny a young person the opportunity to take part, her approach to managing behaviour was particularly robust and focused on a cohesive staff team approach and the strict application of sanctions if ground rules were broken.

Whilst staff talked extensively about not wanting to exclude any young people from trips and visits, the behaviour of some groups and individuals meant that, in practical terms, the 'hopeless case' group would often not be allowed to participate and all staff were clear that ground rules had to be adhered to for everyone's safety. The manager

of ACYP Midtown (Sandra) talked ruefully about their whole project being excluded from particular venues in the town centre, in one case because of the strictures of some of the young people's Anti-Social Behaviour Order, in another because of the behaviour of some members of the group, resulting in the ACYP project being 'barred' from that particular venue. So, the 'hopeless case' group had further opportunities denied them.

At meso level, this concept of educational triage is particularly useful as, for the institutions in the case study, the interplay of various policies meant that organisations had to make strategic decisions about who to work with. Could they afford to work with 'hopeless cases', if such young people were unlikely to engage well with the services provided and achieve the targets that the organisations were increasingly measured by? Are youth organisations (albeit reluctantly) opting more to work with young people who are deemed 'safe' or 'under achievers', as they will offer more quick wins as far as achieving targets is concerned? Certainly, the lack of funds in the sector is making organisations think twice about providing outdoor education opportunities that cost money, preferring to spend resources in a way that gives the maximum potential for achieving the targets upon which they are measured. This is in accordance with de St Croix's (2016) critique of the Youth Impact agenda, which she claims supports the promotion of the post-neoliberal project:

> *…The impact agenda is not simply a benign intention to improve the evaluation of young people's services, rather it is a key enabler in the intensification of market mechanisms in public services. (p. 2)*

The data did not suggest a conclusive answer as to whether this meso level of exclusion was taking place, but the overall lack of funding was raised in relation to outdoor education on a number of occasions.

At a macro level, using the metaphor of educational triage, one could argue that the decision at government/ policy level has been to focus resources on the organisations that work with the 'safe' groups in the youth work sector and encourage those who are left to focus on the 'underachievers', who will not take much intervention move into the safe group. That is, young people who will, with fairly small amounts of effort, become EET (*in* education, employment or training) from NEET (*not in* education, employment or training), those young people who will engage and achieve certification without the need for long-term, expensive relationship-building activity that working with distressed young people – the 'hopeless case' groups necessitates.

Indeed, it could be asserted that the current and previous Government's decision to cut funding for mainstream 'statutory' youth work provision could be seen as an attack on the 'hopeless case' groups; those 'undeserving' young people who would need expensive and complex interventions from the youth service sector and beyond, if they were to really 'achieve' in the standard, prescribed understanding of this. Again, the data from the case study organisations gave no conclusive answer here, but there is clearly scope for further inquiry.

Slow Practice in Liquid Times

The context of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2007) is exemplified through the instability of the funding regimes, the reliance on short-term funding and the meeting of associated targets in the post-neoliberal world of youth work (McGimpsey, 2013).

In the case study organisations, the speed of change and the speed at which they were expected to respond to changes in the educational landscape was breath-taking. One of the outcomes was that workers and managers developed extensive entrepreneurial skills, and were constantly on the 'look out' for funding and other opportunities for those they worked with. For example, Mary talked about her previous experience:

> *[We got] all of our funding for residentials from either funding that we got through the UK Social Fund…[or] I got funding for two groups to go to Romania through the Leonardo Funding which now is Erasmus Funding now and the Sri Lanka trip that I was involved with we got money for that from local businesses, but we did it as part of a Young Enterprise Project…*

This could be seen as an example of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2007), where the pressures were felt in the speed at which these practitioners had to operate, if they were to succeed in getting funding to continue to do their day-to-day work with young people. There was no longer a solid base of funding that workers could rely on to be a starting point for their work. The funding was a merry-go-round of complexity, and they had to constantly look out for funding to keep projects going. This situation felt particularly strained in ACYP. They were used to looking for external funding but the situation was exacerbated by the lack of any medium/ longer-term funding being available. Sandra put it like this:

[There is only monies] for small pots of funding and it is short-term,
there's not a lot of funding out there at the minute that is for
two/three years and continuous, it isn't out there, so it's more about
the pilot kind of stuff at the minute….

So the previous situation, in which longer-term funding was available (defined here by Sandra as being over two years), was replaced by an even more liquid situation that demanded even faster responses by managers and workers to gain funding. Funding now needed to be found practically on a month-by-month basis, whereas previously the situation had been more stable.

Further, the outcomes that were associated with short-term funding regimes had to be met very quickly too. The pilot projects had to demonstrate they could produce 'results', if they were to prove their worth and to be in a position to attract future funding. Where the system worked on a payment by results model, successful outcomes were the **only** way to ensure any funding (Mason, P., 2015). The pressure to achieve results, to work faster, was immense. This is why McGimpsey (2013) describes the youth work situation as being post-neoliberal, rather than just neoliberal, as the fracture from the previous pre 2007/8 recession regimes for youth services is so great, so significant, that it signifies a new era, one that would perhaps be seen as an even more liquid stage of liquid modernity in Baumann's description of post-modernity (Baumann, 2007).

Recent reports testify to the wider third sector facing similar challenges and volatility to that of ACYP following the Global Recession, and show how the current funding regimes threaten the survival particularly of smaller charities (LBFEW, 2016a, 2016b).

Another recent report about the funding situation in the third sector has underlined the need for smaller charities to diversify and collaborate with others in an effort to stay afloat, just as ACYP was doing, but that, even so, approximately half of the charities were unsure as to whether they would survive over the next five years (Ravenscroft, 2017). From the data, ACYP, as an organisation, looked particularly vulnerable and events following the research (see the Epilogue for further details) underscore this vulnerability.

As previously discussed in Chapter Six, the issue of time arose in the data in different ways and on numerous occasions. What became clear was that practitioners had a concept of outdoor education practice that was deliberative, and they valued outdoor education **because** it was slow, given that most outdoor activities have to take place over a long period. The affordances offered to the development of relationships and learning opportunities because of the slow nature of the activities could be described as the youth work approach.

In a number of the ACYP projects, fishing was valued for its positive use of time (Pool, 2014) but, other than Pool's work, this aspect of youth work practice in outdoor education is not really elaborated or theorised in the literature. There is, however, discussion of slowness in the outdoor education literature; for example, Payne & Wattchow (2008), discuss slow pedagogy in the context of higher education. This idea of the slow and deliberate cultivation of relationships was captured by Paul from Hillshire in the research, when he talked of this slow building of relationships through outdoor education activities as "*it's a bit like going fishing and giving your line a long*

soak". Ben, from ACYP, gave an explicit example of the deliberate use of doing just this on a walking venture, when he talked about the following:

> *Call her Sarah…what you did is, you dropped back, you're still with the group but there's like space is that cos it's big enough to walk, different paces and she sat telling me about her own life and what she'd been through, there were so many brothers and sisters and they'd all gone in Care, and she weren't with her mum and dad…*

One of the four outcomes of Greenaway's framework for learning, used extensively in outdoor education, is making connections outwards, with others (Greenaway 1998). However, a youth work understanding of using outdoor education as a vehicle to build relationships between workers and young people does not necessarily find widespread support in the outdoor education literature, other than this more general idea of making connections with others and, in some cases, of outdoor learning being helpful in developing better relationships with adults (for example, Rickinson et al., 2004).

The idea of 'Slow practice' is a useful way to capture this approach, that is, the idea of a practice that is deliberately paced, practice which takes place in accordance with a pace dictated by the young people who lead it (Davies, 2005, 2015a). This is practice that runs contrary to the countervailing pressures of fast, target-driven 'performance', with its emphasis on quick results (Ball, 2003; Ord, 2011), that is, the pressures of the post-neoliberal climate (McGimpsey, 2015). This practice is needed to counter the pressures of liquid modernity and to make space for more effective practice.

The concept of Slow practice offers a space to re-examine the youth work approach to outdoor education and offers a youth work ontology of Slow. That is *being* Slow as a

practitioner, being *''differently productive''* (Ulmer, 2017, p. 201). Slow practice helps

the practitioner reclaim some agency, some autonomy, and some power in the face of

the pressures of liquid modernity. The latter's fast practice does not allow for the

successful development of relationships, particularly where young people are

marginalised and need more time to develop trusting relationships. These trusting

relationships, developed across the linear time periods necessitated by the

performance of outdoor education, are essential, if youth workers are to support

young people in making a positive transition to adulthood, and to enable them to

manage risk successfully. The building of trusting relationships over time is critical to

good youth work practice (as discussed in Chapter Two); the concept of Slow practice

offers a space to develop this in an outdoor education context.

Further, youth workers work with young people in a way that relies on the

development of a concordant relationship and again, this concordant relationship is

supported by Slow practice. The idea of concordance here is discussed and defined

earlier (in Chapter Two) and refers to the youth work practitioner and young person

negotiating and developing an understanding and responsibility for risk as equals (Bell,

Airaksinen, Lyles, Chen, & Aslani, 2007). It is this youth work approach, based on

concordance, that allows for effective risk management and, therefore, safer and

better practice, as young people are involved in the processes and more likely to

understand and take responsibility for risk.

Concordance is a term that is in line with a youth work approach, which seeks to tip

the balance of power in young people's favour (Davies, 2005, 2015a). This is where

workers and young people work together on an equal footing to discuss issues such as risk assessment. In an outdoor education setting, this would mean that concordance indicates significant risk mitigation[22] measures are in place, as ground rules, for example, would have been negotiated successfully. This makes it much more likely that young people's behaviour is appropriate and safe.

This is significant, given that young people's (poor) behaviour was raised regularly as being the cause of many issues relating to risk, rather than any technical hazards associated with a specific outdoor activity or external risks such as the weather. For example, Sandra pointed to being banned from a particular venue following the poor behaviour of their clients, Tom referred to young men taking toilet doors off in Midtown's centre, and Mary discussed her willingness to take young people home if they broke the agreed ground rules. High staffing ratios, knowledge of intergroup dynamics and effective staff teams were also important, but it was the building of effective concordant relationships between staff and young people that was needed as the basis to mitigate risk, and it was young people's behaviour that caused the most risk issues.

Because youth work is a precariat-sector, relying on short-term and reduced funding, there is an impact on worker's abilities to develop Slow practice and this means that the building of concordant relationships may be damaged. Youth work practice, through its distinctive approach to informal education, requires workers to support

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[22] Defined here all those steps youth workers take to reduce the adverse effects of risk (Herrera, 2013)

young people to develop their understanding of risk (NOS, 2012) and for this to happen successfully, and risk to be mitigated, a concordant relationship needs to be developed through the adoption of Slow practice.

Summary

In this chapter the impact of the prevailing post-neoliberal situation on the case study organisations and participants is discussed in more detail, in particular the effects of linking funding to marketisation, competition and austerity. I argue that this context means the youth work sector, and those organisations within it, are in a state of precarity and so can be considered as precariat-organisations. They are not sufficiently resourced to be able to effectively support young people, themselves members of the precariat.

The concept of educational triage is employed to explain an apparent contradiction, that of workers wanting to promote social justice but then excluding some young people from activities, arguably those who are most marginalised.

The notion of Slow practice is offered as an alternative way of being for youth workers and a way to realise the potential for outdoor education in a youth work context. Slow practice endeavours to make space, in the speed of liquid modernity, for effective practice. This effective practice is built upon concordant relationships, built over time, which support good risk management practices.

Grieving

I grew to love my university identity badge. I got to see student youth workers grow and develop and shine. Some ran brilliant projects that changed people's lives, some just shone, basking in the light of coming to university, first in their family. Several were care experienced, several more juggled families, endured terrible work conditions and unsupportive partners to attend. I thought I could see in many cases, what the students needed, and worked through the systems where I could, to ensure they got it. *''Could you offer that to all your students if this was a bigger course?''* The question of equity, no, of business, was never far away. However, I was a youth worker, and knew boundaries were there to impede not support progress, so the students always got more time and space than their entitlement, they got what they needed, according to their needs. But the decline of the youth work sector has been mirrored by the decline of applicants to youth work courses in England. The struggle to recruit students means that the youth work courses at my University have been suspended, so I am currently grieving for courses – and students, and a sector - that seem to have passed.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

This research focuses on the UK, specifically the contemporary English context. This chapter reiterates the rationale for the research, based on concerns for young people's and youth workers' ability to undertake outdoor education activities. It then offers a reflexive summary of the approach to the research, including a summary of the research's limitations and strengths. The research aims and questions are reviewed and there is a summary of the findings in relation to these questions. Policy implications are discussed and the chapter highlights claims to new knowledge. A section on recommendations for future studies concludes the chapter.

Services Past? The Research Rationale

This is, to my knowledge, the only case study research that has explored the intersection between outdoor education, youth work and risk in contemporary England. This research arose from my concerns as to the current and future ability of young people to access outdoor education opportunities in youth work contexts.

Access to outdoor education has been found to support young people's mental and physical wellbeing (Mind, 2015; ten Brink, et al., 2016), yet the austerity measures of the current and previous governments, since 2008, have had a negative impact on the amount and type of provision in both youth work and outdoor education (IOL NE, 2011; NYA, 2016; Unison, 2016). Youth work provision and outdoor education provision are closing at such a rapid rate that they can be characterised as sectors that are fast disappearing or have, in fact, already disappeared; this is the reference to

''Services Past'' of the thesis' title. This phenomenon has been described by some as tantamount to the dismantling of the welfare state in austerity Britain (McGimpsey, 2013; Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015).

The impact of this is that opportunities to support young people's physical and mental wellbeing are in jeopardy, just at a time when the need for such activities is growing, as exemplified by the rise of diabetes, obesity and mental illness in young people (Public Health England, 2015; Summers, 2017; ten Brink, et al., 2016).

Concurrent with those health contraindicators such as the aforementioned diabetes, obesity and mental illness, runs public concern over the exposure of young people to risk. This increasing risk aversion means that professionals are sometimes reluctant to engage young people in outdoor education activities because of a public perception of their apparent risk. Professionals are also concerned about the potential fallout if things do go wrong (Fulbrook, 2005; Gill, 2007). Risk can be seen as an all-pervasive phenomenon, which means that professionals' concerns are focused on the secondary issues of bureaucracy, rather than first order matters that actually support proper risk management (Power, 2004, 2007).

Love Letters – Approach to, and Limitations of, the Research

I carried out this small-scale case study research project on two contrasting English youth work organisations. I followed a constructivist paradigm (defined in Chapter

Three) and thematically analysed the data. This is in accordance with an interpretivist tradition, which looks to understand people's lived experience and the way they construct their social world (Grix, 2010). To that end, I have attempted to be transparent and reflexive throughout this research by: the foregrounding of my stance (Chapter One); recognising and using reflexivity as a tool to attempt to avoid researcher bias (Chapter Three); and offering snippets of personal biography, the epiphanies or 'love letters' that are to be found between each chapter and the vignette in the prologue. The use of the term 'love letters' represents an attempt to be transparent about my positionality, revealing my 'love' of youth work and outdoor education.

In a further attempt to mitigate any bias, I have quoted extensively from the research participants, worked towards participative member checking (Doyle, 2007) and sought out alternative perspectives and interpretations from critical friends both within and beyond the youth work sector. I recognise that researchers from other research traditions may have interpreted the data differently, but I have worked hard to honestly present and fairly analyse the data.

This case study research has been influenced by narrative and autoethnographic traditions (defined in Chapter Three) and by a belief that social research cannot be context free or 'perfectly' objective, but takes place in and through the subjective, lived experiences of all those involved in the research process (Barter & Tregidga, 2014). To that end, I make no claim for any generalisable 'truths' from this research, recognising the futility of such an attempt (ibid).

As discussed in Chapter Three, there are limitations to this study. This research has been deliberately small scale, with just two case study organisations examined in the very specific context of English youth work, so no claims for statistical generalisability were sought or made (Yin, 2014). However, some claims could be made for the applicability of, for example, Slow practice and concordance in outdoor education and youth work that could go well beyond the confines of this study.

This study did not explicitly explore the experiences of risk in relation to BME communities or BME workers, this was undertaken implicitly, in that workers in both case studies reported on their work with a wide range of minority communities and individuals, indeed some of the workers were from minority communities themselves. There is further scope for work here in terms of an exploration of BME workers' and young peoples' experiences of risk in this context.

As this research took place in a British (English) context, a further limitation to the work is the lack of an international comparator or international comparisons. Such an approach could offer an interesting opportunity for further study

In terms of my own limitations, studying part time and working full time has meant that I have not had as much time as I would have liked to engage in data collection and analysis to the extent that I would have liked in an ideal situation. I wanted to undertake small-scale qualitative research but would have perhaps preferred to look at a slightly broader range of case study organisations.

Having said that, I have despite all the difficulties of balancing research with other aspects of work and life, I feel as though I have learnt a tremendous amount during the course of my doctoral journey. For example, I feel that I have improved my critical understanding, reflexivity and knowledge of theoretical constructs as well as practical skills such as interview techniques and data analysis. There is always more to learn, I am a becoming researcher after all, but I feel now as though I have had a thorough grounding in aspects of research that will serve me well into the future.

Risk and Outdoor Education in Youth Work – Key Findings

This section offers a summary of key findings from the case study organisations. As a 'lapsed' insider to youth work practice (discussed in Chapters One and Three), I have not always found it easy to see the originality in these case studies, given my closeness to the data; however, I recognise the importance of bringing the stories of the organisations to life and offering this research as a "*public resource*", and of the moral grounding of educational research (Nixon, Walker, & Clough, 2003, p. 87). In doing so, these stories shine a light on an aspect of practice that is under threat; in what is hopefully an accessible and engaging manner.

The first of the two case study organisations, ACYP, was an English third sector youth work organisation fighting to survive on a restricted budget and relying on short-term precarious funding regimes. Workers saw outdoor education as being important, as it allowed for particular types of relationship building. Outdoor education activities tended to need substantial amounts of time to enact and this was viewed positively, allowing for relationships to be developed between youth workers and their 'clients', between young people, and between young people and significant others. In one of ACYP's projects, outdoor education was utilised to heal fractured family relationships. This points to an intriguing area for possible further study, particularly as the UK literature, with the exception of a brief mention in Stuart & Maynard (2015) does not privilege this aspect of practice. In ACYP, outdoor education was seen to support

learning, as it was seen to help the growth of confidence, resilience and the like, and it also gave young people the chance to engage in activities and opportunities that were new to them, activities that they would not otherwise been able to participate in.

Risk in ACYP was formally and conventionally managed through the use of risk assessment proformas, and adherence to company policies and procedures. Workers, however, were acutely aware of the need to go beyond the formal strictures of forms and often used 'instinctive' approaches to staffing ratios, which relied on their knowledge and experience of individuals and of groups of clients that did or did not work well together. Staff sometimes manufactured situations where they controlled who accessed some of the trips (*"cherry picking"*) to avoid conflict. Constant vigilance was important, as was the building of positive relationships between staff and clients. Workers were acutely aware of their responsibilities and liabilities in relation to their roles if things went wrong and expressed concern that, if anything did go wrong, it could result in their "*head being chopped off*".

In Hillshire, participants were concerned about the marketisation of outdoor education provision and the attendant impact on the quality of provision. Funding was also an issue for the participants, as was the changing educational landscape, in terms of who was responsible for trips and visits in the academised world. Outdoor education was seen as being a very effective tool for building relationships between young people, but also offered workers the chance to get to know young people over the necessarily long time period that the enactment of outdoor education activities demanded. This

knowledge then enabled workers to plan and develop further work with, and support for, young people in the future.

Outdoor education was seen to promote learning opportunities in very specific ways, particularly in relation to issues of social justice, with the idea of outdoor education to broaden young people's aspirations, even enhance their employment prospects. Greenaway's four aspect model was extended to help analyse these conceptions of the utility of outdoor education.

In Hillshire, workers saw the formal risk management processes as being helpful, but emphasised the informal processes of negotiating ground rules with young people, of having positive relationship but also clear boundaries, as well as a staff team who shared the same approach and goals, this was the "*tight team*" that Mary alluded to.

Research aims and claims to new knowledge

This research set out to explore an under researched area of youth work practice, that of outdoor education and risk, through an embedded multiple case study of two contrasting youth work organisations – Hillshire and ACYP. The research took place at a time of unprecedented funding cuts to public services and, as such, instantiates many of the difficulties, issues and complexities faced by such organisations in the current climate.

There were three primary research aims, discussed next.

Firstly, the research aimed to contribute to the debate as to the purpose and underpinning theorisation of outdoor education in a youth work context. This aim had two associated research questions:

- *What is the value of outdoor education from a youth work perspective?*
- *What are the perceived risks versus benefits of outdoor education from a youth work perspective?*

The exploration of the issues surrounding the first research question highlighted three key themes which have not previously been discussed to any great extent in either outdoor education or the youth work literature.

These are: Slow practice; outdoor education for specific relationship building; and outdoor education as a site of social justice. Slow practice, as the main contribution to the theorisation in this context, is discussed above. Here, the relationship building and social justice aspects are summarised. Thus, the research contributes to the debates about the purpose and theorisation of outdoor education in a youth work context.

Whilst the use of outdoor education for relationship building is well known, the potential benefits of outdoor education in healing and building family bonds is not well developed in the literature. ACYP Midtown used outdoor education deliberately as a way of reconnecting families. Rachel, from that project, talked about how outdoor education had helped heal a fractured family situation. Although ACYP Midtown was the only project in the research to actively engage in this particular type of relationship building, this aspect of their practice was an intriguing one.

In terms of risks versus benefits, practitioners had a well-developed sense of the range of benefits of outdoor education, from the well-known benefits of personal and social development, to the building of family relationships. They viewed the risks as worth taking and fought systems and bureaucracy, in order to ensure young people had access to opportunities, despite the difficulties of funding and planning. They also often went over and above the requirements of their organisations planning policy and practice to ensure that they had adequate staffing levels, for example.

Another aspect of the value of outdoor education in a youth work context was that of social justice. Whilst this is not the most prominent theme of the outdoor education literature, there is a growing body of work in this regard (for example, Rose & Paisley, 2012), but there is little that highlights social justice in outdoor education in a youth work context aside from a brief mention in Stuart & Maynard, 2015.

The participants in the research talked in different ways about using outdoor education as a way to promote social justice with young people. To many of the participants, outdoor education was a tool for social justice, in that it gave the (marginalised) young people they worked with access to the opportunities that their more privileged peers had as a matter of course. This approach opened up life chances that would otherwise have not been available to those young people. For example, Mary from Hillshire saw the opportunity for young men on a long hike to escape their labels. Paul, also from Hillshire, saw engagement in outdoor education as offering job opportunities in the local area. Will, from ACYP Northtown, talked enthusiastically about supporting his group to go on a train for the first time.

The second research aim was to explore the perceptions, approaches and understanding as to what constitutes acceptable practice in terms of risk in the outdoors in a youth work context. This had the following associated research question:

- *How do youth workers/ youth work managers come to ascertain whether risks are worth taking in this context?*

It was found that the formal processes of risk management were similar in both case study organisations and workers were aware of their legal and organisational responsibilities; however, their approach to risk assessment went well beyond the compliance of filling out multiple risk assessments. The formal processes of risk were fairly standard; for example, planning through Evolve (in the case of Hillshire), gaining consent, getting risk assessments signed off. The extent to which workers relied on informal processes to manage risk was enlightening. Dynamic risk assessment was utilised by workers frequently, as dictated by the situation 'on the ground', when their knowledge and experience suggested that they reformulate their plans. Further staff frequently orchestrated a situation, by a series of pre-emptive 'strikes', to ensure groups in conflict did not come together, and/ or by warning specific young people of the consequences of any potential lapses of behaviour at the forthcoming activity.

Formal strictures about staffing ratios were in place in both case study organisations but staff did not rely on these to dictate actual staffing levels. This was usually decided through informal mechanisms, where staff experience, 'client' need, status of staff - whether they were voluntary or paid - all played a part in determining what was deemed to be an appropriate staffing ratio. Tom summarised some of the vagaries:

…It depends on what the nature of the group is, if you've got some nice young people and they're well behaved and you trust them, then obviously you'll only need a couple of staff, but if you've got like some of our children, we've had six people and we'll have probably four staff… and then having like a code of conduct, so if there's any form of misbehaviour you know that that's it, you'll be turned straight home.

The concept of worker responsibilisation was used to support an analysis of the situation that the youth workers found themselves in. Public aversion to risk (Gill, 2007), combined with a shift of responsibility from the state to individual workers (Peters, 2016), meant that workers were acutely aware of their responsibilisation, summarised by one of the participants as the likelihood of him being blamed if things went wrong and having his *"head chopped off"*. This finds some resonance in Power's work (2004, 2007) that suggests risk is an all-pervasive phenomenon for workers.

The other aspect of this part of the research was how the staff team worked together. Mary, from Hillshire, talked about the importance of having a *"tight team"*, that is, of having a staff team who used the same type of approach, who were working to the same aims and objectives, and who knew each other's strengths and abilities. Confidence in each other as a staff team was important. All these factors came together to form the basis of the formal and informal risk assessment processes.

The third and final research aim was to see what, if any, impact there was on outdoor education from a youth work perspective, in light of the recent financial cuts to public services. There were two associated research questions:

- *How have the recent cuts to youth services impacted on young people's opportunities to engage in outdoor education?*

The public sector has been hard hit since the 2008 recession, with some £387m being taken out of youth service budgets (Unison, 2014, 2016). Some commentators have suggested that the recent cuts amount to the demise of the welfare state in England (McGimpsey, 2013; Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015). In the case study organisations, particularly as instantiated by ACYP Midtown, their especially fragile 'hand to mouth' existence meant that they had to rely on short-term funding regimes, complex monitoring processes and partnerships borne out of necessity rather than principle.

I have used the concept of the precariat-organisation to explicate this situation and suggested that the whole youth work sector could be seen as a precariat-sector, disproportionately marginalised and targeted for cuts. Further, the concept of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2007) was used to explicate the ever-faster world and more unstable landscape that the workers in the case study organisations were trying to negotiate.

There was little specific data in the research that pointed to a quantifiable reduction in the amount of outdoor education activities undertaken, but it was clear that all the participants were particularly mindful of having to undertake activities that were either very cheap or free. The funding for core work, as well as outdoor education 'extras', was a central concern. However, the Hillshire participants pointed to an aspect of the cost cutting that has not been extensively explored. Fred, particularly, attested to what he deemed to be a loss of quality in the outdoor education world.

The only way many outdoor education centres could now make money was by offering ''*a series of unrelated fairground rides*'' that more or less exclusively took place on site, with inexperienced (and therefore cheap to employ) staff in large 400+ bed centres, where economies of scale could operate.

In summary, this study contributes to the theorisation of outdoor education in a youth work context by offering the concept of Slow practice, and extending the notion of relationship building in a youth work context, through the use of concordance to support effective risk management and mitigation. I suggest that outdoor education can be used effectively as a tool of social justice and that, in some youth and community contexts, outdoor education is used to build family relationships. Youth workers' practices in regard to risk in outdoor education were summarised, as was their enthusiasm for continuing to provide positive experiences of risk through outdoor education.

Implications

This research showed that, for the case study organisations at least, the managerialist hegemony that exists had created a situation where projects were increasingly relying on short-term funding and its associated targets. This funding situation had a negative impact on workers' ability to craft and maintain positive relationships with young people, which is the basis of good youth work practice. Good youth work practice is, at its heart, relational (Mason, W., 2015) and so requires positive relationships between

worker, and young people to enable developmental opportunities to be identified and maximised.

I argue that youth work in an outdoors setting should take place through a Slow ontology and practice, and that this Slow practice allows for the development of concordant relationships (Bell, Airaksinen, Lyles, Chen, & Aslani, 2007). Concordant relationships, based on the development of trusting relationships between youth workers and young people rooted in equality, supports the development of effective risk management practices where young people are proactively engaged in risk mitigation. This approach leads to safer practice. Slow practice is discussed in more detail next.

A key argument in this thesis is that, following Ulmer (2017), Slow practice is vital to the performance of youth work in outdoor education. This is a practice that is paced at a speed dictated by the young people who lead it, in accordance with good youth work practice (Davies, 2005, 2015a). Slow practice is where a practitioner's ontology is about **being** Slow, not just understanding epistemologically that the slow building of relationships with young people is a productive way of working. It is, as a way of being "*differently productive*" (Ulmer, 2017, p. 201). Slow practice offers a space for workers to reclaim some agency, where the pressures of fast target-driven performance and quick outcomes, risk ethical and safe practice (Ord, 2011; Putnam, 2004). This idea of a worker slowly and deliberately cultivating a relationship with young people has long been associated with a youth work approach (Smith, 2001).

Here, Slow practice offers an alternative space; one in which the centrality of building solid relationships is the legitimate – and productive - focus of the work, as the combination of Slow practice, and therefore building positive relationships where trust and concordance has developed, means that risks are understood and negotiated by young people and, therefore, the significant risks associated with poor behaviour are mitigated.

For Slow practice to flourish, there needs to be a commitment from organisations and funders that projects will be funded over the medium and long term rather than the short term. There has to be a commitment to longer-term work for relationships between young people and workers to fully develop and for those relationships to realise their potential.

Even though austerity is still very much with us, national recognition, perhaps through a national campaign championing the long term benefits to young people's health of access to youth provision and outdoor education is needed. More work needs to be done to emphasise and perhaps quantify the longer term 'pay off' that investment would bring.

Whilst it is unlikely that there will be an end to austerity in the near future, and that properly funded, year round youth work and outdoor education provision will be sanctioned, there is much money being spent on the NCS projects nationally. Those projects have been criticised for their poor value for money (de St. Croix, 2011,

Mahadevan, 2011a; Public Accounts Committee, 2017); that money could be diverted to year round provision such as local youth work and outdoor education opportunities.

As a minimum, there needs to be urgent action on the funding arrangements. It is recognised that funding arrangements such as the Payment by Results models particularly disadvantage small and medium size charities (Wylie, 2015). However it is these organisations, like ACYP, that often understand their local community's needs very well (LBFEW, 2016a). There has to be commitment, therefore, to find alternative, fairer and less complex funding models.

These models need to empower organisations and practitioners to be able to respond and develop work according to local need and not be solely focused on targets and specific, pre set outcomes. In summary, what is needed is longer term, more flexible funding that allows organisations some agency in terms of how to work, funding that does not pay by results and that would allow for the conditions of Slow and effective practice to emerge.

If concordant relationships are to be developed, workers need to be committed to engaging with young people ethically, and tipping the balance of power in their favour through negotiation and compromise, in short of adopting a 'youth work approach'. This can be encouraged through appropriate training and educative practices.

In terms of practical implications, ACYP requested a brief summary that highlighted good practice guidelines for youth workers taking young people on outdoor education activities; this has been completed and can be found in Appendix K. A further report

has been requested that outlines key findings for ACYP, this will be presented to their

national senior management team in December 2017.

Future studies

The research revealed several themes/ areas that were worthy of exploration but constraints of word count militated against their inclusion in this study. For example, from the emergent findings, the building of family relationships through outdoor education is an intriguing area worthy of more study, particularly given the limited discussion of this in the UK literature.

The practice of risk in relation to dynamic risk assessment, of how workers make decisions 'on the ground', would also benefit from more exploration. Further, risk and its relation to the *''tight team''* described by Mary from Hillshire, could be the subject of interesting theoretical underpinning, as there was not the space to explore the dynamics of the staff team thoroughly in this work. The concept of Slow practice and concordant relationships, applied here to youth work in outdoor education, is one that I believe could be worthy of further exploration in the wider context of youth work practice, for example.

In addition to these areas of further research that emerged from the findings, there were two particularly interesting aspects that were highlighted in, but not central to, the focus of the original research. One was an aspect of the educational landscape and one a practice issue. Both stood out as offering opportunities for further work.

Firstly, in the current complex educational climate in England, Fred, the Outdoor Education adviser for Hillshire, pointed to an area of concern. One of the issues was who was responsible for 'signing off' trips and visits. As Fred pointed out, there is a:

*Very inconsistent educational landscape of schools and who the
employers are…*

Legally, the responsibility for trips and visits is with the employer and it is the employer

who is responsible for ensuring safe systems are in place to regulate activities, such as

outdoor education ventures (HSE, 1974). From a (local authority) youth work point of

view, or in community and voluntary controlled schools, it is clear that the local

authority is the employer and, therefore, ultimately responsible for trips and visits. In

third sector youth organisations, the picture was more complex, as indeed was the

remit of Fred's role in this situation. In voluntary aided and foundation schools, the

governors are the employers, whereas, in academies and independent schools the

employer is the Board of Trustees. What is less clear is the relationship between the

local authority and those schools/ organisations that they do not directly control. Fred,

again:

> *And so when a school becomes an academy they obviously can be led
> to buy into a whole range of services from the local authority through
> Service Level Agreements.*

This may or may not include some of Fred's time and support. Fred did state that he

would not withhold advice from an organisation that approached him, whether or not

they had a formal agreement with the local authority, but the issue of who is

responsible if things go awry is yet to be tested in court and is an area worthy of

further exploration. Fred makes the case for further work in this area:

> *The other issue is, we know from experience that periodically there are
> major tragedies involving one or more, multiple young people and
> obviously we've yet to see what happens if that then happens in an*

academy, particularly one has not thought through their legal responsibilities and their duties of care.

Secondly, the issue of outdoor education activities/ residentials being the site, or perhaps an opportunity, for young people to make disclosures (for example, of abuse, of problematic lifestyle issues), came up initially in one of the ACYP projects in Northtown. I was keen to see if this was an issue raised by other participants in other projects. However, the only specific mention of safeguarding in this context in ACYP came from Sandra, the manager from Midtown. She did allude to a safeguarding issue, but one that related to a vulnerable adult, not directly to a young person:

> *One of the mums, we was in the kitchen and one of the mums just blurted out in front of everybody else that her partner's started hitting her again, in front of everybody else…*

Clearly, this disclosure of domestic abuse could have very serious ramifications for her children, if they were witness to such events, and so this would become a safeguarding issue. The Hillshire participants were more forthcoming about the links between outdoor education and safeguarding, specifically with regard to residentials. As Mary testified:

> *…That's something that I've always been very conscious of in residentials is that sometimes there are disclosures and you have to be prepared for those disclosures.*

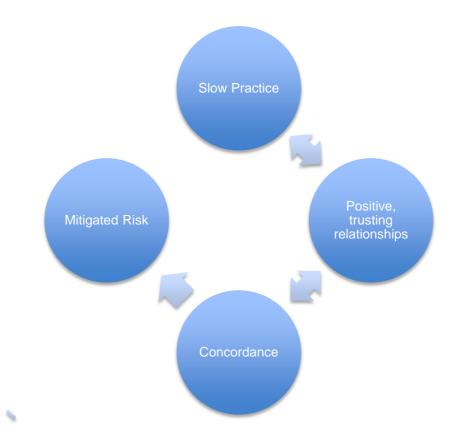There were hints in the data about how these opportunities could lead to disclosures. Mary, from Hillshire felt that something about being in a different physical environment, as is the case with residentials, could act as an enabler in this regard:

…It's when you're away from that normality it gives people the opportunity to make that disclosure…

However, Mary did say that the disclosures were not necessarily ones regarding safeguarding as we would ordinarily see it, more that the issues disclosed could be about any aspect of a young person's life. This is clearly an area worthy of further investigation, as this issue has not really been explored in the youth work or outdoor education literatures.

Concluding Thoughts

To summarise the benefits of Slow practice, this can be shown diagrammatically, (see below). Slow practice, that is, a practice that is fostered over time and space, is built on the development of positive, trusting relationships. This leads to the development of concordance, where young people are engaged as active partners in the understanding of risk given concordance is based on mutually respectful, equitable relationships. Concordance leads to more effective risk mitigation strategies for both the young people and the practitioner and therefore to safer practice.

This research is, to my knowledge, the only study to have documented the effects of austerity in the public sector in contemporary England through the lens of risk in outdoor education in a youth work context. It has highlighted the importance of young people having access to both youth work provision and to outdoor education opportunities to improve their mental and physical health. It has shown how outdoor education in a youth work context can be an important tool for the development of Slow practice. Slow practice fosters the development of concordance; concordance is important in supporting young people's understanding of risk and of effective risk management (see above diagram). Access to high quality youth work and outdoor educational opportunities are in jeopardy, as the precariat youth work and the privatised outdoor education sectors continue to face significant challenges.

Epilogue

This particular doctoral journey started in 2012, with the primary research being carried out predominantly in 2014 and 2015. My own 'love letters' hint at the difficult, but rewarding, climb that the doctoral journey has been for me. These love letters have been difficult and, at times, painful to write, however, like any climb, the hard work comes to an end, or at least the path levels out and hopefully, a viewpoint is achieved.

This has not necessarily been the case in practice, however. Since the primary research was completed, a number of events have occurred, which have made the title of the thesis 'Love letters to services **past**' sadly more prophetic. At the time of writing (July 2017), ACYP was facing yet more financial pressure, losing some local authority funding for work with young carers and young people with disabilities. In Northtown, there has been a restructure to help ease the funding issues: Ben and other colleagues have been made redundant; Anne has taken early retirement and now works for ACYP part time but with national responsibilities; Will has left to pursue other interests in an attempt to keep his head above water. At my request, he wrote his own 'love letter' to the work he has had to give up:

> *As I have worked within the youth industry for 11 years, I have been involved with a rollercoaster of events. I've seen contracts come and go, budgets retracted, projects cancelled and knee jerk reactions to local issues being implemented sometimes for the good and sometimes as a way for those in position to gain [a] brownie point or two. However, this is all in the background, far from which the young people and families can visually see but they can sure feel the effects*

> *and atmospheres. What outshines all of this, are the rewarding outcomes and positive feedback from the service users and the occasional smile or comment I get from someone I had worked with many years ago however briefly. It's the smile or nod that says 'thanks, whatever you said or did made a positive impact to my life'.*

Sandra now manages ACYP Midtown, ACYP Northtown and projects in another city.

Tom is currently taking time out from work in the sector. Whether the ACYP projects will continue to be able to offer outdoor opportunities to young people remains to be seen. Anne's 'love letter' to outdoor education, captured during the research, still echoes in my head:

> *It allows the young people to be young people...You know, there's enough space to scream and let off, and just scream for the joy of being alive...it is just that, whole freedom and achievement and space.*

Where, I wonder, will we be, if there is not that literal and metaphoric space to allow young people to be young people?

In Hillshire, the site of 700 job cuts in what was an already small Children's Services Department, Mary and Paul are still employed, but battling against the odds. Fred has taken up employment elsewhere. I requested he wrote a 'love letter' to outdoor education. He chose the focus thus:

> *To experience uncertainty, excitement, challenge, failure and success on a journey in the mountains, and on rivers and lakes is the most powerful learning experience available. Young people learn more about themselves and their capabilities through outdoor education and adventure activities in wild places than is possible to measure.*

> *We must ensure that future generations have similar opportunities to those enjoyed by generations past. Furthermore, we must be determined to maintain the reality and quality of experience and*

prevent at all costs the deterioration of something that is so powerful
and special into a series unrelated fairground rides.

The outdoors is the optimum medium for catalysing the learning
process if done professionally. If we value it we must support it!

We are, like Barrett Browning, the poet who opens this thesis, at Hope End, with another General Election passed that offers no respite from the gloom, no party (aside from the Greens) committed to investing in youth services. There is no party support for any kind for outdoor learning, nor has such support ever appeared in any party's manifesto (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2017; NYA, 2017). Investing in young people both as young people and as the next generation, however clichéd is one that repays its dividends several times over. Investment in good, year round, open access youth work and high quality outdoor education opportunities will result in happier, healthier, more engaged young people. What is more important?

I end this thesis as I began it, with some lines from the language of love, from poetry, that sum up what I perceive as an important facet of the thesis:

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness!
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time

J. Keats 'Ode to a Grecian Urn' c.1819

Word Count: 66,462

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Appendices

Appendix A.Summary of data collection activities

ACYP – Northtown – Positive Opportunities project	
Scoping discussions	November 2013
Interview Anne – ACYP Safeguarding manager	December 2013
Artefact collection – Northtown Positive Opportunities project office base	December 2013
Interview Ben – ACYP – Northtown Positive Opportunities Project worker	January 2014
ACYP – Midtown	
Scoping visit – ACYP Midtown	February 2015
Interview – Sandra ACYP Midtown project manager	March 2015
Focus group – Tom, Rachel ACYP Midtown project workers	March 2015
Artefact collection – Midtown office base	March 2015
ACYP – Northtown – Open Access project	
Interview – Will – Northtown Open Access project co-ordinator	June 2015
Artefact collection – Northtown Open Access project	June 2015
Hillshire County Council (CC)	
Scoping discussions with Mary, Hillshire CC youth worker	March 2015
Focus group – Fred, Hillshire CC outdoor education co-ordinator and Mary and Paul Hillshire CC youth workers	May 2015
Interview – Fred, Hillshire CC outdoor education co-ordinator	May 2015
Interview – Paul Hillshire CC youth worker	May 2015

Artefact collection - Hillshire CC outdoor education offices	May 2015
Telephone Interviews – Mary Hillshire CC youth worker	June 2015
Validity and Reliability	
Checking of data analysis/ transcripts with pilot participants	February 2014
Y College Conference workshop to share pilot study with youth work academics and youth work practitioners	February 2015
SHU Doctoral conference presentation of work to date to share approach and provisional findings from pilot to academic audience	June 2015
Checking of transcripts with participants (member checking)	September 2015
SHU ESRC funded conference on Risk and Young People organised to share provisional findings from the research to a wider youth work practitioner audience	November 2015
Checking of initial analysis/ findings with participants	January 2016
Sharing of draft thesis with participants (participative member checking)	January – June 2017
Sharing of draft thesis with critical friends	May – July 2017
Presentation of report of findings to ACYP national senior management team	December 2017

Appendix B. Approach to undertaking the literature review

The literature on risk is enormous, given the all-pervasive phenomena that it represents (Power, 2007). Indeed there is a risk 'industry' in many fields that has produced its own substantial body of literature, for example, risk in the financial world. I limited the review to the most pertinent types of risk literature, and to those offering frameworks of analysis of risk that can be applied in the outdoors.

In terms of the literature around outdoor activities, sifting through the weight of information available was always going to be an issue, so I focused, with the exception of some landmark 'classics' – that is, key older texts, on literature published in the last 6 years defining that as being recent, (Hart, 2001). I have found it necessary to broaden this guide in some cases however, as a number of important texts have not been updated in that period. For example, the Russell House Publishing (RHP) Guide to the Outdoors which explored, amongst other things, the experience of Black and Minority participants in the outdoors and the place of philosophy in outdoor education (Barnes and Sharp 2004; Barnes 2004).

To try to establish the specific literature that covers the intersection between youth work, risk and outdoor education, I used a number of search terms such as "outdoor activities" AND "youth work " to carry out a more focused literature review and included grey literature, journals, books, eBooks etc. to give me the broadest range of options and starting points. The term "risk and outdoor education" proffered fruitful results in terms of possible hits, of the 3000 or so results 66 were initially selected and examined in order to provide a useful starting point. Other terms such and "youth work " AND "outdoor education" were less successful in terms of volume of hits but nonetheless useful for cross checking the initial finds. A reading of the more recent literature also pointed to some classic texts that proved a source of some inspiration, and the search also encompassed broader search terms such as "outdoor education accident" to double check that I had not missed anything significant.

A further important approach to this literature search has been the focus on following citations – a route that has frequently proved fruitful, particularly in terms of tracing classic texts, but has also taken me down a number of paths that sometimes appeared more of a distraction. For example, there is a significant volume of literature in the area that focuses on the aesthetic appreciation of exploring mountains, leading Tobias and Drasdo to claim that:

> *Of all sports, mountaineering may have the richest, most copious literature: first, a wide body of reflection rooted in the legacy of metaphors – scientific, physical, literary, and religious – applicable to exploration, and second, a broader literary perspective concerned with the idea and ethos of the mountain itself. (Tobias & Drasdo, 1979, p. 7)*

I found little in this body of literature that was pertinent to risk in relation to working with others from a youth worker's perspective, but plenty on the risks inherent in

'wild' environments and the perspectives of some of the more famous risk takers of each generation (see for example Drasdo, 1997).

There are numerous recreational focused magazines and trade periodicals some of which serve the leisure industry, I have referred only to the ones that debate practitioner views on risk/ law (for example, the Horizons magazine, now published by the Institute of Outdoor Learning). In terms of peer reviewed journals there are journals of outdoor education/ experiential education/ leadership to be found in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom and I have searched for relevant articles amongst the key journals here too.

Given the nature of the research focus, it was also important to interrogate key legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work 1974 etc. regulations (HSE, 1974); The Activity Centre's (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 (HM Gov., 1995); the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996, 2004 (DfES, 2004); The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1999 (the Management Regulations) (HSE, 2003), the Compensation Act of 2006 (HM Gov., 2006) and the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 (HM Gov., 2007). This legislation forms an important backdrop to a youth worker's legal duties with regard to outdoor education alongside the more generic legal duties of, for example, Safeguarding (DfE, 2015) and Duty of Care (Hamilton, 2005).

On the same basis, reports into the deaths of children and young people have been examined, where this involves youth workers or allied professions to (in most of these cases teachers) such as the report into the Glenridding tragedy (HSE 2005) and the Stainforth Beck drownings (Baillie, 2003). Significant court reports into deaths where manslaughter charges have been brought against those who duties of care are similar to that of youth workers for example R. v Kite 1996, have also been explored.

Reports into what is deemed good practice have been interrogated, for example, the Government's Health and Safety of Pupils on School Visits (DfE, updated 2014); specific youth work guides such as (Rogers & Smith, 2012) and a similar guide produced by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA, 2012).

There is much literature around outdoor education but not much of it is 'theory heavy' in fact perhaps best characterized as an overrepresentation of 'how to do it' manuals rather than 'why do it' although the balance is rapidly being rectified through texts such as Humberstone et al 2016. There is however, little that is written from a youth work perspective on outdoor education and therefore a gap in the understanding of and theorization of the purposes of outdoor education from a youth work perspective.

I have maintained a focus on UK based literature in all its shades – grey or otherwise - throughout, but have examined literature based in other countries, where material was available in English; in practice, particularly for the literature around outdoor education, this meant examining literature mainly from the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Appendix C. Participant information sheet – document authors

I would be very grateful if you would take part in a study about youth workers and outdoor education.

The research is part of my Education Doctorate study and I would like you to take part because of your experience as a youth worker/ youth work manager in running/ authorising outdoor activities for and with young people and specifically because you are named as an author on some of your organisation's risk assessments/ policy documents.

I would like to gain your permission as the author of these documents to use them as part of my research. You and your organisation will be anonymised so no one apart from us will know that you are the author/ one of the authors.

This (and all other) data will be kept in a secure place and stored in keeping with the 1998 Data Protection Act. Data will be kept for 3 years after the publication of the main study and then destroyed as confidential waste. The only people who will be able to access this data are my supervisors and I.

The information that you give me will remain completely confidential.

I am very willing to come back to debrief you and your organisation following the initial write up of the study (January 2016) if that would be helpful to you. I would also be very pleased to provide you with a copy of the final study or a summary of it if you would prefer although this is not likely to be available until late in 2016.

Participation in this study is voluntary, but if you decide you do want to take part and subsequently change your mind, you can withdraw from the study at any stage up until the data goes into the main body of the EdD report, that is December 2015. You can withdraw by telling me you wish to withdraw from the study or by putting it in writing to me.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any other questions.
If you are still happy to proceed I would be grateful if you could fill in the participant consent form.

Many thanks in anticipation of your support.

Jean
Jean Harris-Evans, EdD research student
Work Address - Arundel Building, 122 Charles Street, City Campus, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield S1 2NE
Telephone - 0114 225 4585   Email – J.Harris-Evans@shu.ac.uk

My Supervisors (if you have any concerns you cannot discuss with me) Dr Mark Boylan
Work Address - Owen Building, Howard Street, City Campus, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield S1 1WB Telephone - 0114 225 6012   Email – M.S.Boylan@shu.ac.uk
Dr Karen Dunn Work Address - Arundel Building, 122 Charles Street, City Campus, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield S1 2NE Telephone - 0114 225 4787   Email – Karen.Dunn@shu.ac.uk

Appendix D.   Participant consent form – documents

A HOMAGE TO SERVICES LOST: RISK, YOUTH WORK AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS - DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS RELATED TO RISK ASSESSMENT
Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies:

YES   NO

1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.

2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.

3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher.

4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.

5. I agree to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), can be used as the basis for academic and professional publications/ other research in relation to risk in youth work/ youth work related contexts.

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Contact details:

_____

_____
Researcher's Name (Printed): JM HARRIS-EVANS

Researcher's Signature: _____
Work Address - Arundel Building, 122 Charles Street, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield S1 2NE
Telephone - 0114 225 4585 Email – J.Harris-Evans@shu.ac.uk

Appendix E. Participant information sheet – interviewees

I would be very grateful if you would take part in a study about youth workers and outdoor education. The research is part of my Education Doctorate degree and I would like you to take part because of your experience as a youth worker/ youth work manager in running/ authorising outdoor activities for and with young people.

I would like to undertake an interview in your work place. If you would like to meet elsewhere I would be happy to negotiate an alternative venue. In the interview I would like to discuss your understanding of risk in relation to taking young people into the outdoors and understand the policies/ procedures/ practices that you use in your organisation.

I anticipate that the interview will take about an hour. It may well be that I ask that to come back for a second interview as part of the main study, but I will check with you that you are happy for that to happen first. These are the sorts of questions I would like to ask you:

1) What is your experience of running/ managing trips and visits for young people into the outdoors?
2) How do you go about organising trips and visits in your organisation?
3) What is good and not so good about the (risk management) system your organisation has in place?
4) What if anything has been the impact of the recent cuts to Youth Work to your outdoor education provision?
5) Is there anything else you would like to talk about in relation to the above topic?

I would like to record the interview using a digital recorder and then write that interview up. You and your organisation will be anonymised so no one will apart from ourselves will be able to connect you to what you was said in the interview(s).

This (and all other) data will be kept in a secure place and stored in keeping with the 1998 Data Protection Act. Data will be kept for 3 years after the publication of the main study and then destroyed as confidential waste. The only people who will be able to access this data are my supervisors and I.

The only time that something you tell me will not remain completely confidential is in the unlikely event that that you tell me that there is a very significant safeguarding issue that is not being dealt with by an organisation and a young person is in immediate danger. I may then have to follow the University's safeguarding procedures and pass this information on.

I would also like to take copies of your organisation's policies and procedures on Health and Safety. Any information I use from these procedures where they are not publically available will be anonymised. Finally I would like to look at and if possible have copies of some risk assessments that have been written about a range of outdoor activities. If the authors are named then I will seek their written permission to use them and will anonymise them. I will not use any risk assessments that have young people named on them as part of my study.

I am very willing to come back to debrief you and your organisation following the write up of the study (January 2016) if that would be helpful to you. I would also be very pleased to provide you with a copy of the final study or a summary of it if you would prefer although this is not likely to be available until late in 2016.

Participation in this study is voluntary, but if you decide you do want to take part and subsequently change your mind, you can withdraw from the study at any stage up until the data goes into the main body of the EdD report (December 2015). You can withdraw by telling me you wish to withdraw from the study or by putting it in writing to me.

If you are still happy to proceed I would be grateful if you could fill in the participant consent form (interviews). Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any other questions.

Many thanks in anticipation of your support.

Jean

Jean Harris-Evans, EdD research student
Work Address - Arundel Building, 122 Charles Street, City Campus, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield S1 2NE Telephone - 0114 225 4585

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My Supervisors (if you have any concerns you cannot discuss with me)

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Email – M.S.Boylan@shu.ac.uk

Dr Karen Dunn
Work Address - Arundel Building, 122 Charles Street, City Campus, Sheffield Hallam University Sheffield S1 2NE Telephone - 0114 225 4787
Email – Karen.Dunn@shu.ac.uk

Appendix F. Participant consent form – interviews

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies:

YES NO

1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.

2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.

3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher.

4. I agree to take part in interview(s) under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.

5. I agree to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

6. I consent that the data collected from the interview(s) once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), can be used as the basis for academic and professional publications/ other research in relation to risk in youth work/ youth work related contexts

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Participant's Name (Printed): _____
Contact details:
_____

_____

Researcher's Name (Printed): JM HARRIS-EVANS

Researcher's Signature: _____
Work Address - Arundel Building, 122 Charles Street, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield S1 2NE
Telephone - 0114 225 4585 Email – J.Harris-Evans@shu.ac.uk

Appendix G.   Interviewee questions

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS - A HOMAGE TO SERVICES LOST: RISK, YOUTH WORK AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS.

- What is your experience of running/ managing trips and visits for young people into the outdoors?
  Prompt questions
    o *How often do you go on trips/ visits from your organisation?*
    o *What sorts of trips/ visits do you organise for/ with young people?*
    o *Which young people are involved?*
    o *What's your direct involvement in these trips/ visits?*
- How do you go about organising trips and visits in your organisation?
  Prompt questions
    o *Who is involved in organising the trips and visits?*
    o *Who authorises the trips/ visits?*
    o *Exactly what paperwork is involved?*
    o *Talk me through the processes/ procedures a member of staff would have to go through from coming up with an idea for a trip outdoors to carrying it out/ evaluating it?*
    o *What is good and not so good about the (risk management) system your organisation has in place?*
- How do you decide whether the risks associated with the activity(ies) are worth taking?
  Prompt questions
    o *Who makes the final decision?*
    o *What happens if there's debate about the risk assessment results?*
- Do you feel the system could be improved in any way?
  Prompt question
    o *What, if any, do you see as the benefits of the systems you have in place?*
- What do you think is the value / benefits of outdoor education to young people in your setting?
  Prompt question
    o *What do you think young people get out of the outdoor ed you deliver?*
    o *What are the benefits to you / your organisation?*
- What if anything has been the impact of the recent cuts to Youth Work to your outdoor education provision?
  Prompt questions
    o *How (if at all) have you been effected by the cuts to youth service budgets?*
    o *What difference if any has this made to the amount or type of outdoor education trips you have been able to deliver*
    o *What if anything do you think might have been the impact on young people?*
- Is there anything else you would like to talk about in relation to the above topic?
  Prompt questions
    o *Is there anything you have not had the opportunity to say so far?*
    o *Do you have any questions for me?*

Appendix H. Example of transcription and open coding

M	Yeah, so like for activities and trips and youth club sessions I kind of work things around staff and kind of they're set in stone, their working patterns and they're set in stone, where volunteers and I kind of use it as like an additional, like a bonus and I think like that's playing it safe because some volunteers come … others, or some it might be a nice sunny day and they want to come and work or volunteer, they just don't come or they might ring and make an excuse, which it's understandable.	Volunteers as bonus staffing Vagaries of weather impact on staffing
*	Yeah, yeah, because it is a voluntary thing isn't it?	
M	Yeah.	
*	So what drives your choice of activities and so on and venues, what drives that?	
M	We do like participation events with young people, I ask them what they like and also with the older ones sometimes we tell them how much we've got or what we haven't got because otherwise we get really unrealistic, let's go-	Informed participation
*	Bungee jumping.	
M	Let's go bungee jumping, then paintballing, then Alton Towers, yeah, we can do that but our youth club's shut for the rest of the year. But yeah, we do participation like events, quizzes and asked them what worked well, what doesn't work well and a lot of it's really informal and we'll ask a few young people what might lead the others into like decisions and kind of gauge it like that really. But they really like routine and they like the same things again and again and I've been trying to like be a bit more diverse and whenever I've introduced something new there's a bit of upset sometimes and then they get used to it and then they're like-	Difficult choices Youth Work process Managing the process YP needing routine – routine as security
<u>Key</u> Funding issues Practice improvement issues Risk assessment issues Purposes of outdoor education		

Appendix I. Example of Analysis Process

Open Coding	Sub Themes	Themes	Findings
The chance to get to know that child	Worker to young person	Relationship building	Purposes of outdoor education – opportunity to develop Slow practice
Young people as brave	Young person to young person	Relationship building	OE for specific relationship building
A fractured family	Family relationships	Relationship building	Importance of family relationship building to ACYP
Volunteers as custodians	Young person to significant others	Relationship building	Specific relationship building
Not a series of unrelated fairground rides	Structure of OE centres	Learning opportunities	Marketisation of OE centres
Having to keep going	Character building	Learning opportunities	Extension of Greenaway's model
Countryside 10 miles away	Broadening horizons	Learning opportunities	OE as site of social justice
Job opportunities	Opportunities to engage in new experiences	Learning opportunities	OE as site of social justice
8 months pregnant	Risks from individuals	Risk assessment issues	Risk – constant vigilance
Lack of information/ inaccurate information	Referrals, information and risk assessment	Risk assessment issues	Experience/ knowledge of staff key, informal mechanisms important
What you do is – getting young people to talk about their lives	Youth Work process as holistic risk assessment	Risk assessment issues	Slow practice
Volunteers as bonus staff	Staffing levels	Risk assessment issues	Importance of 'appropriate' staffing ratios, staff going beyond formal requirements
We haven't done anything	New activities	Risk assessment issues	Risk as all pervasive issue

new for a while			
For me that's where it's going to happen	Transport	Risk assessment issues	Constant vigilance, staff going beyond guidelines
Not wanting to have my head chopped off	Risk to self as professional	Risk assessment issues	Worker responsibilisation
We have this system, it's a kind of planning tool	Evolve	Risk assessment issues	Risk as all pervasive issue
Vagaries of weather	Dynamic RAs	Risk assessment issues	Constant vigilance, staff going beyond guidelines
The tight team	Staff team issues	Risk assessment issues	Importance of staff cohesion; Staff experience key, informal mechanisms important
The mum test, the my child test	Informal mechanisms	Risk assessment issues	Staff going beyond guidelines
Key information missing	Referrals	Risk assessment issues	Staff experience key, informal mechanisms important
Participation in risk	Ground rules	Risk assessment issues	Importance of staff cohesion; Staff experience key, informal mechanisms important, concordance
It's a nightmare	Managing short term funding	Funding issues	Funding – youth services as precariat organisations
6 different funders	Managing targets	Funding issues	Complexity of funding
Difficult choices to be made	Managing on a restricted budget	Funding issues	Youth services as precariat organisations

Appendix J. Example of memoing

Sample of notes written following interview with manager of ACYP Midtown (Sandra) – 10/3/15

NB Need to contact 'Sandra' for copies of their case studies about Engage, fishing project etc. – also from project information see page 18 and outcomes frame page 26, template ALPHA peer assessment pg 31

At Midtown they focus on what **works**, highly pragmatic, and an obsession with funding – all-important, can't function without it, have to meet outputs/ outcomes/ deadlines.

Family focus – look at whole family issues not just young person's issue, work with what interests are in mentoring project, agenda of healthy eating/ lifestyle heavily behind family project - but weave other learning in too in ways that are accessible/ interesting to clients – imaginative. Multiplicity of complex projects and outcomes to juggle with small staff base – and a large network of volunteer mentors, funding getting in the way of meeting gaps in provision – Projects such as e.g. fishing – seen as way of increasing family engagement with each other – quality time – workers as facilitators of family relationships rather than focus on youth work intervention

Risk assessment – yes forms but also the **process** – signing in, checking in (zoo example), staff appropriately qualified (e.g. football coach) but also links to other opportunities – signposting

Entrepreneurial feel to project

Risk assessment key – knowing who's likely to benefit, who gets on with who, learning from mistakes, staffing ratios, knowing client group

Importance of enthusiasm and willingness of senior staff to take lead and engage with risk – be willing to try things. Vigilance and experience/ knowledge/ skills of staff (loo door example)

Process of signing off – worker, project manager, H&S lead, quality lead and area manager – but looking for gaps. On line training available but it's not enough many aspects of training only just becoming available. Separate process for new venues/ activities

Question of levels of consent and how realistic the targets are and WHO should be dealing with the issues – e.g. of young person and parenting – what is the social work role?

Importance of young people's participation in ground rules/ contracting

No clear process for justifying the activity. Risk assessment and insurance – dated?

Use of same venues/ activities = safe

Funding – very hard, much less funding out there and for the shorter rather than longer term, going into joint bids now with other organisations – more likely to meet outcomes and get bids in the first place. Funders demanding more from projects in terms of evaluation

Review of sample RAs etc. every 3 months, plus ALPHA needs better generic RAs and a good RA template, improvement in Moodle system needed as its not saving / printing certificates)

Appendix K. Practice Recommendations

These recommendations for practice have been gleaned from a combination of the best practice data from the case study organisations, practice guides and literature review and are produced at the request of ACYP for a very brief guide for practitioners.

<u>Before you go</u>:

Focus on the likely <u>learning</u> – from the venture? Trips and visits should have clear aims and objectives associated with them, ideally negotiated with all participants, staff and young people. Have you thought how you will <u>evaluate</u>?

<u>Young people</u> should be encouraged to <u>lead</u> on as many aspects of planning and risk assessment as practical. Build solid <u>relationships</u> with young people before you go.

All aspects of <u>planning</u> should be undertaken where possible in conjunction and through <u>negotiation</u> with, <u>young people</u> and other <u>staff</u> members.

Negotiate very explicit <u>ground rules</u> with young people and colleagues. Make sure everyone is 'signed up' to them and is aware of the consequences of breaching the ground rules. Be prepared to carry out any sanctions.

Ensure the staff team share a similar <u>vision</u> and understanding of the purposes of the venture and <u>approach</u> to behaviour and sanctions, and are aware of the aims and objectives for the event.

Ensure that there is an appropriate <u>staffing ratio</u> and that there is an appropriate mix of <u>experienced, competent</u> and <u>qualified</u> staff to lead whatever activity is taking place and to offer sufficient support for **all** the young people you are taking.

Ensure all the official planning and risk assessment proformas have been filled in and <u>sanctioned</u> by the appropriate person(s) in the organisation.

Keep copies of all <u>documentation</u> including emergency contacts and medical etc. details of young people and staff.

Ensure there is someone who will be your <u>base contact</u> who knows where you are going, who you have with you, and can act as a support to you in case of any issues.

If you are using <u>transport</u>, ensure you use a <u>reputable organisation</u>/ vehicle and enforce behaviour guidelines, the same applies if you are 'buying in' activities.

For further details, see Harris-Evans, J., (2017) Youth Work in the Outdoors – a conundrum? *CYPW Rapport, Journal for Playworkers, Community and Youth Workers* Birmingham: Unite.