

**HUMAN FLOURISHING AND  
THE COMMON GOOD:  
THE INTENTION AND SHAPE OF  
FAITH-BASED YOUTH WORK IN  
THE BIG SOCIETY**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirement of Staffordshire University for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

**In collaboration with Centre for Youth Ministry  
and Oasis College**

**September 2013**

## Acknowledgements

Undertaking this thesis would not have been possible without the support of a number of people.

I am most indebted to Staffordshire University, Centre for Youth Ministry and Oasis College for their generous bursary support. The collective wisdom of my supervision team has kept me on track and I am very grateful to Pete, Nick, David, Paul and Pam.

Without something to research, investigations of this nature are not possible. I am, therefore, also indebted to the many youth workers who gave of their time so generously to support my endeavours. I remain in awe of the passion and commitment you show in the work you do.

My colleagues at Frontier Youth Trust have been continually supportive and encouraging during my studies. They have allowed me to work flexibly and I wish to acknowledge that I have very much appreciated this and value immensely all that they are and do.

Thanks also to Leanne, Sally, mum and dad, Creative Communications Unit and other academic colleagues for doing what you do best.

And finally, special thanks to Sue for putting up with me when my mind was exclusively focused on academic matters, for allowing me to talk things over when she would have preferred to have gone to sleep and, most of all, for just being there and sharing the journey.

Shalom

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates faith-based youth work – establishing how it operates and what it does – in the context of the Big Society political initiative popularised during the period 2009-2013.

Religion, politics and young people are subjects that promote lively debate, yet literature about faith-based youth work is limited. What is available does little to reveal the complex factors that underpin and portray such work. Whilst a variety of literature about youth work, young people, religion and social policy exists there is no body of work that brings these considerations together.

Using a tripartite mix-of-methods approach, this study has developed an original contribution to knowledge in the form of an explanatory model for faith-based youth work: involving a scoping survey, focus group consultations and four case studies, a contemporary portrayal of such work has been established. Data was collected from faith-based youth workers from a variety of backgrounds and practices to develop the model, which establishes the foundational ethos of faith-based work, the grounding upon which it is developed, the philosophical shape of how it operates and the pedagogical intentions of what it does as it supports transformation in young people.

The findings indicate that faith-based youth work is focused on helping young people flourish in pursuit to the common good; such work relates to the Big Society notion, but this is because of an overlapping consensus regarding mutual aspirations rather than any causal considerations. The place of faith within such work is motivationally foundational, but often not explicitly identifiable, in day-to-day operations.

The investigation concludes that rather than perceiving young people as problems to be fixed, faith-based youth work offers a means of helping young people flourish for the collective good.

Key words: Faith; Youth Work; Big Society; Flourishing; Common Good.

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## **Glossary**

Prima facie definitions of some sector-specific terms used in my thesis.

This Glossary is included to aid understanding of some of the terms and sector-specific jargon used within my thesis. Many of these terms and concepts are contested notions. Whilst a wide variety of alternative, enhanced and more nuanced definitions might be considered, the ones set out here reflect the prima facie meaning of how I perceive, interpret and contextually employ them within my thesis and argument. No claim is made regarding exclusivity or that these are the most resounding or comprehensive interpretations.

On occasions and where appropriate, some of the alternative and contested understandings are given further critique and reflection within the body of my thesis.

**Big Society** - ‘... is widely thought of as a political programme. But it is more than that. It is a set of interlocking ideas, even a philosophy; a concerted and wide ranging attempt to engage with the twin challenges of social and economic decline, and to move us towards a more connected society. It rests on a bold conjecture, that lying beneath the surface of British society today is a vast amount of latent and untapped potential energy’ (Norman 2010:195).

**Civil Society** – ‘the sphere of institutions and individuals located between the family, the state and the markets in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests’ (Anheier 2004: 22) and it comprises three key elements:

1. Civil Society as Associational Life – aiming for social, economic and political progress;
2. Civil Society as the Good Society – providing opportunities for people to act together, developing values and skills;
3. Civil Society as the Public Sphere – a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good’ (Edwards 2009: viii).

**Christendom** – ‘a geographical region in which almost everyone was at least nominally Christian; a historical era resulting from the fourth-century conversion of Constantine and lasting into the late twentieth century; a civilisation decisively shaped by the story, language, symbols and rhythms of Christianity; a political arrangement in which the church and state provided mutual, if often uneasy, support and legitimation, and an ideology, a mind-set, a way of thinking about God’s activity in the world’ (Murray 2011: 51).

**Common Good** - that which is in the interest or well-being of the whole community:

‘The profoundly important belief, shared by people of all faiths and none, that every individual is precious, that everyone has worth, and that the hunger, need and despair of any, should rightly pain us all. A belief that in a good society we share the risks of our own vulnerability, can identify that which makes us collectively strong, and can contribute to the flowering of everyone’s capabilities, not just the achievement of the very few. A good society that recognises that what we hold in common is both important and valuable, and that jeopardising the common good for individual gain, diminishes us all’ (Unwin 2011).

**Evangelical** - a person exhibiting four beliefs and behaviours:

- Conversionism: the belief that lives of all humans need to be changed by way of a ‘born again’ decision to repent of their sins and accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour;

- **Activism:** the expression of the gospel in various ways, including missionary outreach and social reform;
- **Biblicism:** a particular regard for the Bible as the Word of God and the ultimate authority for religious belief and morality;
- **Crucicentrism:** a stress on the substitutionary atonement by Christ on the cross. (Bebbington 1989:3)

**Golden Rule** – the ethic of reciprocity – summed up by the statement ‘Do to others as you want others to do to you’. See Wattles (1996).

**Human Dignity** - ‘Catholic social teaching believes that human beings, created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27), have by their very existence an inherent value, worth, and distinction. This means that God is present in every person, regardless of his or her race, nation, sex, origin, orientation, culture, or economic standing. Catholic social teaching asserts that all human beings must see within every person both a reflection of God and a mirror of themselves, and must honour and respect this dignity as a divine gift’ (Groody 2007:109).

**Isomorphism** – ‘a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions’ (Hawley 1968).

**Neo-Liberalism** – ‘a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom, characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such activities’ (Harvey 2005: 2).

**Para-Church [mosque, temple, synagogue] Organisations** – ‘any spiritual ministry whose organization is not under the control or authority of a local congregation [church, mosque, temple, synagogue]’ (White 1983:19).

**Shalom** – ‘the term shalom (like the Arabic term salaam) conveys a desire for wholeness, fulfilment, completion, unity, and wellbeing, thereby encompassing both reconciliation and justice’ (Steele 2008:5).

**Solidarity** - ‘a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is the good of each individual, because we are all really responsible for each other’ (Pope John Paul II 1987);

**Subsidiarity** – ‘a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good’ (Pius XI 1931).

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## Chapter Summary

**Chapter 1** introduces my topic and highlights the need for an investigation. It introduces my proposed explanatory model for faith-based youth work and sets out the aims and objectives of the project. It sets out *prima facie* definitions that enable a discourse to begin.

**Chapter 2** highlights the reflexive nature of my investigation. It considers the influence of *self* and my professional experience upon my research and explores the impact of my theoretical understanding, faith, personal values and standing on my study. Finally, it establishes the unique territory claims of my investigation.

**Chapter 3** reviews and critiques the fluid, multifaceted and contested nature of the literature and context of my study. It establishes the gap in knowledge underpinning the need for an investigation, considers what is meant by youth work and faith-based youth work (Part A), critically evaluates the common good and examines the notion of the Big Society policy initiative (Part B).

**Chapter 4** explains and discusses the methodology used in my investigation focusing upon my overarching ideological approach, ontological beliefs, epistemological philosophy, theoretical perspective and research strategy.

**Chapter 5** sets out the specific methods used to gather my data and evidence for my mix-of-methods study. It describes, analyses and reflects upon: my scoping survey, focus group consultations and case studies. It also considers the ethical issues associated with my investigation.

**Chapter 6** sets out the findings from my survey and consultation work. It identifies the key findings and emerging themes from the first two elements of my tripartite investigation.

**Chapter 7** sets out the cross-case findings from my four case studies. It portrays the foundational place of faith within them and establishes the relationship between faith-based youth work and the Big Society. It describes the reciprocal shape and prospective intentions of faith-based youth work as found in my cases.

**Chapter 8** discusses and analyses my findings relating to the Big Society and faith before establishing my emerging hypothesis and a proposed theoretical framework.

**Chapter 9** presents my proposed new explanatory model for faith-based youth work in the Big Society. It reflects upon the limitations of my investigation and considers future possible work that builds upon my study.

**Chapter 10** concludes my thesis, revisits my aims and objectives, and summarises my findings. It also evaluates my investigation and confirms my original contribution to knowledge.

# Chapter One

## 1. Introduction

During my adult life, religion, politics and young people are subjects that have captivated my interest. They have collectively and continually sparked my imagination,<sup>1</sup> been a cause of both joy and frustration and spurred me to transformational and reflective work rooted in radical youth work practice and academic investigation. Common etiquette advises against talking about religion and politics and, throughout history, the issue of *youth* has evoked strongly contested perspectives. It is, therefore, with a mixture of enthusiasm and anticipation and a degree of foreboding that I establish this thesis about faith-based youth work and its association with contemporary social policy drivers.

In this chapter I establish the subject matter<sup>2</sup> of my thesis, introduce my new explanatory model for faith-based youth work and portray the contextual background, and the aims and objectives of my investigation. I analyse the need for my investigation and describe the parameters within which it has taken place.

This thesis explores faith-based youth work undertaken in a contemporary social policy context. It is an investigation into the relationship between faith-based youth work, achieving the 'common good' and the notion of the Big Society – a political initiative popularised during the period 2009-2013.

It examines the role of faith, the pedagogical intentions of faith-based youth work, the philosophical shape embodied and investigates how these considerations flow together to bring about human flourishing in the lives of the young people faith-based youth work seeks to serve. It does so from an inquisitive, but non-suspicious, social science (Bradford 2012) perspective that seeks to 'discover the patterns of social living' (Davie 2007:7) relating to faith-based youth work rather than any theological 'competing truth claims' (ibid) associated with different religions.

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<sup>1</sup> Willis (2000) talks about, *The Ethnographic Imagination* and 'human meaning-making'. It is in this sense my interest is rooted.

<sup>2</sup> My investigation has been funded by Staffordshire University, Oasis College and Centre for Youth Ministry. As such, my overarching subject matter was predetermined by the funders.

My thesis presents a new explanatory model for faith-based youth work. It is a model that provides a theoretical explanation of what faith-based youth work is and does within the contemporary policy framework of the Big Society. It takes account of the diverse typologies of faith found in such work and the fluid and contested nature of youth work to propose an emerging understanding of practice on the ground.

My explanatory model is that faith-based youth work can, metaphorically, be portrayed as a house made up of a series of floors that can be pictorially represented thus:

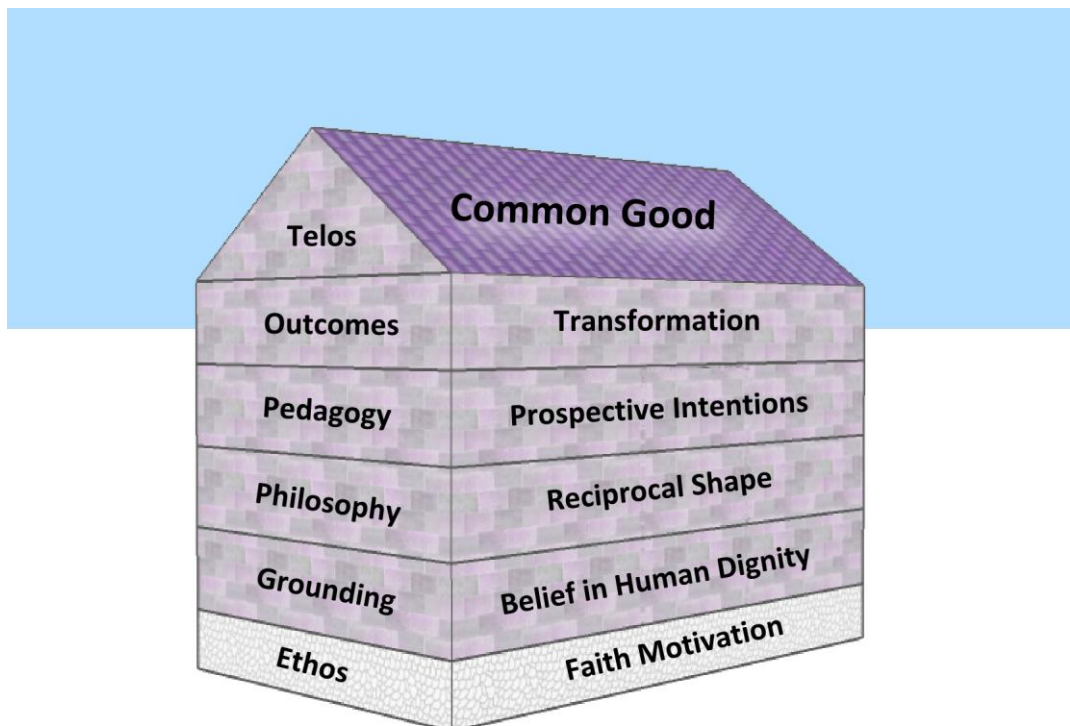


Figure 1. Explanatory 'house' model of faith-based youth work

I have established this house is built upon a faith-motivation foundation and ethos that is organisationally an ontological vocation. The content of the work consists of four metaphorical floors<sup>3</sup> comprising, a:

- grounding – that is based upon human dignity;

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<sup>3</sup> The composition of which has emerged during my investigation. This is discussed fully in subsequent chapters.

- philosophical shape – rooted in reciprocal values;
- pedagogy – employing positive and prospective intentions; and
- set of practical outcomes – resulting in transformed lives.<sup>4</sup>

As illustrated by the elevation views of my model below, faith-based youth work analogically progressively develops up through each of these floors towards the roof; resulting in a faith-based youth work practice telos of the common good.

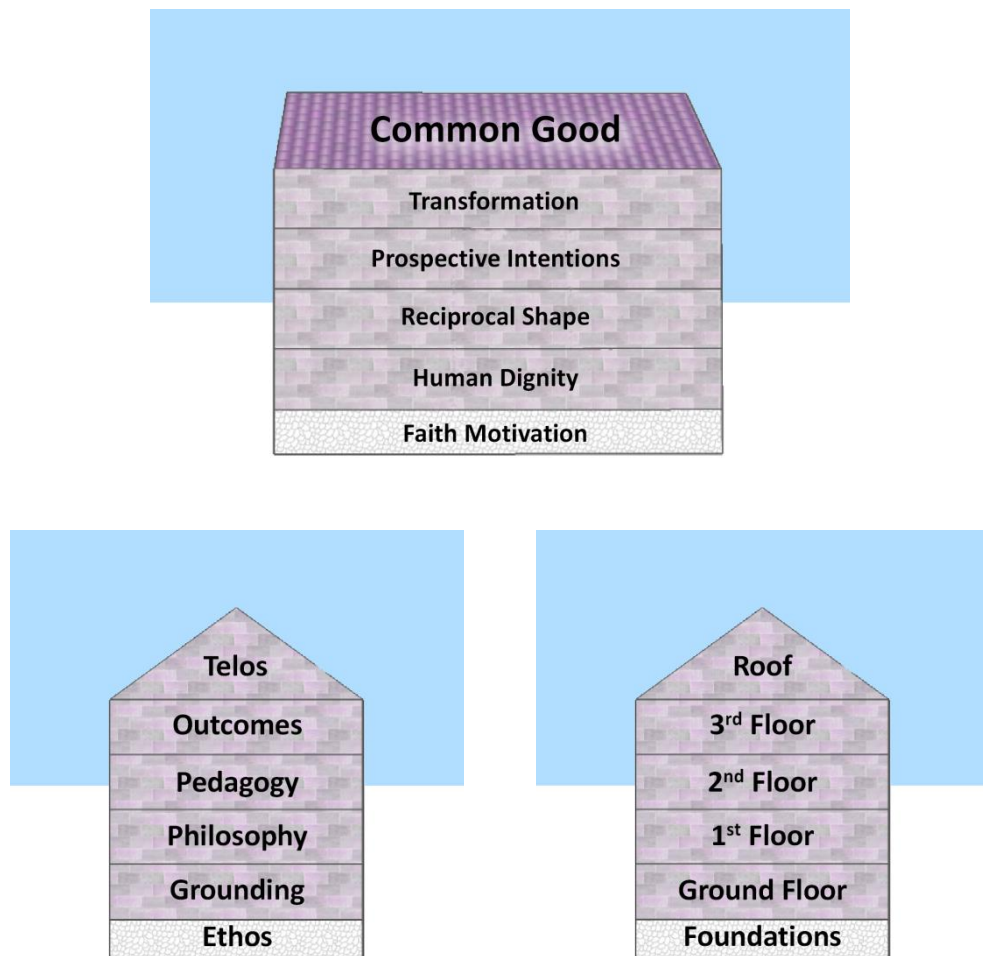


Figure 2. Front and end elevations of my model, illustrating the metaphorical foundations, component floors and roof

Philosophically, the model exemplifies Catholic Social Teaching ideas of human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity and seeking the common good. It operates by helping young people

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<sup>4</sup> I further explain the meanings of these terms as my thesis develops.

flourish and have life, realise change and tell their stories. This is achieved by working in mutually beneficial partnerships with others and developing sustainable models of practice. Pedagogically, faith-based youth work undertakes a variety of activities that reflect the multifaceted nature of the discourse that underpins it. These dynamics combine to bring about transformation in the lives of the young people worked with and the communities they live in.

My explanatory model has been developed by undertaking a rigorous investigation comprising seven key elements. Each of these elements is afforded its own chapter in this thesis. Following this Introduction, Chapter 2 establishes my perch and position as reflective researcher before Chapter 3 discusses the fluid, multifaceted and contested nature of my subject matters. Building upon these considerations, Chapter 4 focuses upon the methodology of my investigation, and Chapter 5 sets out the details of my tripartite mix-of-methods investigation. Chapters 6 and 7 portray firstly, the findings from my scoping survey and focus group consultations and, secondly, those from my case studies respectively. Chapter 8 analyses and discusses my findings, before Chapter 9 synthesises my investigation to establish my new explanatory model for faith-based youth work. My thesis ends with a summary conclusion.

I begin by setting the scene and considering the contextual background to my investigation.

### **1.1 The Place Faith-Based Youth Work Finds Itself In**

Work with young people has often been under the microscope. Faith leaders (Asim 2011; Williams 2012a), the media (Bawdon 2009; Robinson 2010:125-133), politicians (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a; 2011b; 2012) and young people themselves readily share opinions about both the virtues and the vices of youth. In the United Kingdom, youth work has now been in existence for over a hundred and fifty years (Davies 2010:7). It was started by people of faith (Ahmed, Banks and Duce 2007:x; eds. Jeffs and Smith 2010:2), continued and developed by them with government becoming increasingly involved from the middle of the last century (Davies 2010:7).

Since inception, such work has become geographically widespread, diverse in nature and significant in impact (ed. Robb 2007:15-51; Sapin 2009:26-38; Ingram and Harris 2005:12-14). As the discipline has emerged and grown, faith groups have often been at the forefront of practice developments, innovations and impacts (Ahmed, Banks and Duce 2007). They have facilitated

growth in the training of professional workers (Nurden 2010:121) and, ensured that young people in many local communities have ‘things to do and places to go’ (Department for Education and Skills 2005:25-38).

Governments of both left and right political persuasions have increasingly sought to shape, develop and transform youth work according to political, and sometimes contradictory (Davies 2010:10-19), imperatives of the day. The early years of the present Conservative-Liberal Coalition Government have seen young people, religion and social policy under intense media, political and public scrutiny. Unemployment (Frontier Youth Trust and Church Urban Fund 2012), riots (eds. Singh et al 2011 and 2012; Lammy 2011; Jones 2012), protests<sup>5</sup> and economic calamity (Dinham 2012) alongside a global economic ‘new order’ (Bishop and Green 2011:217-246) have formed a context for ongoing moral panics (Cohen 2002) and public debates. This has often led to a ‘national habit of being suspicious and hostile when we see groups of youngsters on street corners or outside shops and bus shelters’ (Williams 2012a): leading to accusations of ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) toward young people.<sup>6</sup>

Simultaneously, government has set about wholesale social and welfare reform (Welfare Reform Act 2012) – extending further a ‘third way’ (Giddens 1998) ‘contracting culture’ (Gann 1996:7-21) of service delivery (began in the 1990s) that has both impacted young people and those who seek to work with them. Many services have been cut and youth provisions closed (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a; Hastings et al 2012).

At the forefront of this reform has been the Big Society initiative. Designed to put right the fact that ‘something is seriously wrong with Britain’ (Blond 2010:1), the notion has attracted both significant support and widespread criticism. Conscious of the growing inequalities in society (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010), faith groups have taken a major role in wrestling with the philosophy and practicalities of the notion (Common Wealth 2010; Jewish Leadership Council 2010; Loughlin, Allott and Crellin 2013).

Whilst doing so, faith bodies have a growing awareness that their role in, and value to, society is contested (Furbey 2008:119). They are frequently seen as the reason for division and conflict

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<sup>5</sup> Most notably with regard younger people, the protests about stopping Education Maintenance Allowance (January 2011), rises in student tuition fees (November 2011) and the Occupy Movement protests of 2011/2012.

<sup>6</sup> This is discussed further in Chapter 3.

rather than promotion of harmony and the common good (Singh, G. 2012).<sup>7</sup> Accusations that faith conspires against human flourishing, societal cohesion and capital rather than adds to them are plentiful (Singh, G. 2012; Lowndes 2004:7-14).

At the same time faith groups can be found at the heart of local communities as they seek the common good, social justice, equality and provide for the marginalised (Singh, G 2012). They continue to build collective social capital (Jacobs 1961:138; Bourdieu 1972:184; Coleman 1988; Putnam 2001; Mohamed and Salem 2012), facilitate and undertake a vast array of social activities, services and charitable work (Singh 2012), whilst being concerned for their own long-term survival where 'militant secularisation is taking hold of ... society' (Warsi 2012).<sup>8</sup>

Some faith bodies have received public money to support their work,<sup>9</sup> but arguments remain about the ethics of this with numerous arguments for and against<sup>10</sup> (Chapman 2009:212-215). Some endeavour to pragmatically balance a working relationship with local and national government (Bartley 2006), whilst others advocate working from a faith position irrespective of government policies, rhetoric and interference (eds. Furbey et al 2006). It is within this fluid cultural, political and spiritual context that faith-based youth work exists (eds. Collins-Mayo and Dandelion 2010).

In more recent times, young people have been the subject of numerous government policy initiatives. However, 'we have to ask, what kind of society is it that lets down so many of its young people; that doesn't provide enough good role models; and drives youngsters further into unhappiness and anxiety by only showing them suspicion and negativity?' (Williams 2012a). There have been interventions that have sought to improve behaviour, develop achievement, combat social ills and promote citizenship (Pimlott 2013). Faith-based work has sometimes partnered in such work and, at times, been critical of it (ibid).

Despite these considerations, little is known about the role faith-based youth work plays in society, thus highlighting the need for an investigation.

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<sup>7</sup> Singh (ibid) argues for many people, terrorism, warmongering, discrimination, prejudice, violent extremism and imperialism are words and concepts readily associated with faith and religion.

<sup>8</sup> I discuss secularism and postsecularism further in Chapter 3.

<sup>9</sup> Most notably from the, now closed, *Faith Capacity Building Fund*, but from many other local and national 'non-faith specific' (Faith-Based Regeneration Network n.d.) government sources.

<sup>10</sup> For a Christian perspective regarding this, see Bretherton (2010:31-70).

## 1.2 An Informed and Serious Debate: The Need for an Investigation

As an experienced reflective practitioner my own perspective contends, like Woodhead (2012b), that ‘there is an appetite for a more informed and serious debate about religion in our public lives’ and that faith-based youth work continues to be an emerging practice and academic discipline (Fenton 2012). In recent times both state entities and academic institutions (Spence and Wood 2011:1) have encouraged its development, but ‘religion has attracted only sporadic attention from youth work scholars’ (Collins-Mayo 2010:1). Little is known about how faith-based youth work exists, with debates about its relationship with social policy, market mechanisms and wider discourses scant. This is the backdrop to my investigation.

There is a growing body of research that relates to work with young people, but this has tended to focus on ‘negative aspects of adolescence’ (Spence and Wood 2011:1). A growth in academic courses<sup>11</sup> has resulted in a more nuanced and informed approach to youth work generally and faith-based work specifically.<sup>12</sup> However, my analysis shows that there remain significant gaps in knowledge and theoretical understanding and that more extensive research is needed to determine the philosophies and pedagogies of faith-based youth practice and establish ‘cohort-based theories and theoretical tools’ (Collins-Mayo 2010:36-37) to help understand such work.

In recent times, I have experienced oscillatory emotions, conflicting professional priorities, ethical dilemmas and paradoxical emerging practices that have had to be held in tension with one another. I have also heard, felt and experienced these tensions and oscillations across the faith-based youth work sector. An absence of commonly held definitions, adequate frameworks, comprehensive understanding and symmetry with other forms of youth work have caused confusion and uncertainty; resulting in an underdeveloped contemporary discourse that effectively inhabits faith-based youth work environments. This investigation is motivated by a desire to address these shortcomings and contribute to changing this for the better. I further consider my role as a reflexive investigator in Chapter 2. Firstly, I introduce the youth work context of my study.

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<sup>11</sup> Partly fuelled by the professionalisation of youth work when it became a graduate profession in 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Fenton (2012) describes this growth as going from ‘virtually no formal training qualifications ... to a veritable feast’.



### 1.3 The Current Context: Challenges on Many Fronts

Youth work provision has been subjected to ‘very significant, disproportionate cuts to Local Authority services’ (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a:3),<sup>13</sup> and the government is accused of failing to adequately respond (ibid). This has had a knock-on effect with reduced resources available for work with young people in the voluntary sector (National Children’s Bureau 2012), including the faith-based element of this, with ‘services for children and young people ... taking the biggest hit’ (Hastings et al 2012:24). Notwithstanding these cuts, the sector has been congratulated for its ‘dexterity in making limited resources go a long way’ (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a:3).

Alongside these cuts, policymakers want solutions to the complex challenges faced by both young people and the communities in which they live (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a and b): the Big Society being the latest political process designed to address these challenges.

The communities within which faith-based youth work operates are increasingly diverse with an array of ethnic, religious and cultural factors to consider. The risks of people living ‘parallel lives’ (Cantle et al 2001; Community Cohesion Panel 2004) and, either living or retreating to their own ‘silos’,<sup>14</sup> threaten any desired notions of inclusiveness, shared values and common integrated citizenship that contributes to, and supports, the common good.

Whilst policymakers want youth work to make a positive and significant contribution to addressing societal ills, there is criticism that youth work is undefined, cannot prove its effectiveness and generally lacks coherence and clarity (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a and b). It stands accused that its terminology, concepts and practice is inconsistent and full of disparity and that it is a creative, yet dislocated and fragmented sector (ibid). Addressing these challenges regarding faith-based work further informs this investigation.

Despite diminishing participation in organised religion by young people (Voas and Crockett 2005; Crockett and Voas 2006) widespread interest in a plethora of faith-based youth work provision exists; not least because policymakers recognise the capacity of faith-based work to deliver Big

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<sup>13</sup> Local Authority spending on youth services in England being 26.9% less in 2011-12 than 2010-2011. See House of Commons Library (2012).

<sup>14</sup> Furnham (2008:204) considers if the ‘silo’ instinct is simply a natural consequence of the human condition and, as such, not a purely negative notion.

Society notions. Services and activities<sup>15</sup> are provided locally, regionally and nationally by churches, mosques, synagogues and temples, uniformed organisations and para-organisations.<sup>16</sup>

Precise data is not available regarding the full extent of the provision of faith-based youth work and little research has been undertaken to examine the impact of such work and its relationship with wider considerations such as government policy, cultural associations and citizenship discourses. Any research undertaken largely relates to quantitative data from Christian contexts (Brierley 2000; Baxter-Brown 2006). These findings are themselves ambiguous and rely upon 'an element of guesswork' (Baxter-Brown in Barrett 2006). This study seeks to address this by investigating the influence and impact of faith-based work.

#### 1.4 Aim of the Investigation

This investigation aims to explore and establish the **relationship** between faith-based youth work and the notion of the Big Society (as portrayed between the period 2009 and 2013) and develop an **explanatory model** that explains such work in the Big Society context.

In order to do this a critical analysis of faith-based youth work is undertaken to:

- Establish the place, position and characteristics of any faith dynamic in such work – determining the foundations and ethos of the work; that is, establishing **why** such work is undertaken.
- Determine the shape of faith-based youth work – defining its philosophy and values; that is, clarifying **how** such work is undertaken.
- Discover the intentions of the work – distinguishing sector specific pedagogies of the work; that is, understanding **what** work it undertakes.

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<sup>15</sup> These services and activities consist of regular events, social action projects, single issue campaigns, intervention programmes, accredited schemes, help, advice and advocacy services and a wide variety of other social, educational and community orientated programmes.

<sup>16</sup> To further aid understanding, a Glossary of technical terms and sector specific jargon used can be found in the Appendices.

This will enable an exploration of how faith-based youth work establishes a space and place within the Big Society public realm, thereby developing a contemporary conceptualisation and theoretical model for faith-based youth work.

In order to achieve these aims, I will examine the origins of faith-based youth work, the definitions it purports and the values it represents. I will analyse how youth work practice and government policies have impacted the work, considering the extent to which faith-based youth work has influenced society and government policies. My investigation examines such influences and, considers an alternative view that faith-based work has simply forgotten what it is supposed to be doing, has ended up chasing the latest policy initiative and pursues money at the expense of achieving its mission – simply adopting the ideologies of the day.

An **emerging hypothesis** that establishes the philosophical shape of **how** faith-based youth work operates is also proposed; this establishes a clear territorial claim for such work within the fluid parameters of civil society, policy considerations and market mechanisms.

A **theoretical framework** is established in order to define **what** contemporary faith-based youth work practice does; this sets out the intentions of faith-based youth work, within the context of a dialectic between faith-based youth work practice and social policy. This establishes a clear rationale for such work and addresses criticisms that the aims and definitions of such work are ambiguous.

These conceptualisations combine to present a **new and original contribution to knowledge** in the form of an **explanatory model** for faith-based youth work in the Big Society.

### 1.5 Objectives of the Project

This investigation sets out, by means of a multi-stage, mix-of-methods methodology, to establish the relationship faith-based youth work practice has with the concepts previously described in order to fulfil the objectives of:

- providing a contextualised analysis of the relationship between faith-based youth work and the space it occupies within society;
- determining the place, position and focus of faith-based youth work;

- examining government policies which impact faith-based youth work and market mechanisms implemented to facilitate them;
- researching and critically analysing the dominant ideologies found within these dynamics and examine their interrelationship;
- evaluating the effectiveness of these ideologies against existing faith-based youth work models and practice, considering if what people are doing matches existing theoretical frameworks;
- identifying and investigating contemporary exemplar practice models of faith-based youth work in order to develop new practice frameworks that reflect faith-based youth work aims, drivers and roles; establishing an hypothesis that will inform future faith-based youth work; and
- responding to social justice and political considerations within faith-based youth work.

These objectives have the intention of realising the following outcomes:

- informing faith-based practitioners, leaders and policymakers;
- stimulating further debate;
- impacting theoretical understanding;
- shaping future policy considerations;
- promoting changes to practice that are emancipatory and empowering; and
- identifying opportunities for further research and study.

However, definitions of my subject matters are engulfed by ambiguity, complexity and contested understandings; therefore, I now present *prima facie* definitions of my topics as an introductory foundation from which a more nuanced discourse can be established.

### **1.6 Elusive, Contested and Multicreedal Connotations**

Precise and universally agreed definitions of youth work, faith, the common good and the Big Society remain elusive. Each embraces many associative connotations that are riddled and

unduly influenced with particular contextual worldviews, value assumptions and sociological positionings, which present a methodological challenge and impinge upon achieving a reliable basis for a conceptual analysis.

A full review and critique of the meanings, definitions, creeds and concepts of my subject matter is established in Chapter 3, but in order to provide a starting point for the crux of my argument, I set out here my *prima facie* definitions.

### 1.6.1 An Understanding of Faith-Based Youth Work

Smith's consideration that 'it is helpful to think of there being different forms of youth work rather than a single youth work with commonly agreed characteristics' (Smith 1988:51) paints a picture of a practice that has a contested theoretical basis. As such, it has the potential to pedagogically be educational (Young 1999), empowering (Fitzsimons et al 2011), democratic (Davies 2011) and experiential (Ord 2009), whilst simultaneously occupying a variant space across the domains of civil society, the state and the market.

Within the context of this investigation, faith-based youth work is considered as one of these forms; such work being preliminarily defined as youth work undertaken from a faith motivation, whereby the faith element is originating from, and identifying with, one of the world's major religions.<sup>17</sup> A key aim of my investigation is to determine a nuanced understanding of faith-based youth work, whilst recognising that, for many, *faith* is a notion that is represented by a continuum, spectrum or set of stages of belief, understanding and practice.<sup>18</sup>

My positioning in this investigation sees faith through a sociological (Beckford 2003; Aldridge 2007; eds. Beckford and Demerath 2007; Davie 2007; Roberts and Yamane 2012) and non-suspicious lens, believing that all youth work has an identifiable worldview underpinning it: be it, for example, a recognised religion, secular-humanism, consumerism and/or a political ideology. I concur with Batsleer (2012) believing 'if present, faith has to be named in our practice' and if present, 'secular-humanism also has to be named in our practice' (ibid). I consider it anomalous that only work associated with a religious domain is usually labelled *faith-based*.

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<sup>17</sup> In the context of my study, UK demographics and my previous practice experience, these being most notably: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism and the Bahá'i religions.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Dawkins' (2007:73-74) 'spectrum of probabilities' and Fowlers' (1981) 'stages of faith development'.

Notwithstanding this, I simply propose at this juncture that faith-based youth work is work undertaken with young people of secondary school age by those working from ‘self-identifying faith communities’ (Batsleer 2008:84);<sup>19</sup> thus providing a framework within which my investigation can be located. A full review and analysis of what faith-based youth work is, how it began, what has influenced it, what influence it now has and how it has developed is set out in Chapter 3a.

### 1.6.2 The *Telos* of the Common Good

‘... the general conditions that are in an appropriate sense equally to everyone’s advantage.’ (Rawls 1999:217)

The *telos*<sup>20</sup> that unifies this investigation is the theoretical ideal of helping young people flourish and achieving that which is in the interest or well-being of the whole community: namely the common good.

Expounded as a virtue over two thousand years ago,<sup>21</sup> the common good is a contested principle that embraces many shared understandings and perspectives. These are critiqued in Chapter 3b and specifically considered regarding their relevance to faith-based youth work and the Big Society. Both faith-originating and more secularly located definitions are stated here to frame my discourse.

Rooted in Christian principles, Catholic Social Teaching (Konstant 1996; Stiltner 1999; Caldecott 2003; Ivereigh 2010) has been at the forefront (Ivereigh 2010) of framing the common good in ways that ‘are just as likely to appeal to people with no belief’ (Konstant 1996:2) as they are to Catholics; being ‘the sum total of the conditions that enable people to reach human fulfilment through the just ordering of society’ (Pope Paul VI 1965:GS26). Understanding is further illuminated by Unwin (2011) who determines the common good as:

The profoundly important belief, shared by people of all faiths and none, that every individual is precious, that everyone has worth, and that the hunger, need and despair of

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<sup>19</sup> In Chapter 3a, I more fully determine the breadth, diversity and actuality of such work.

<sup>20</sup> For Aquinas (1981 trans.), the *telos* was about humanity’s ultimate aim, purpose or end goal, and for him this demanded a friendship with God. Whilst this argument is not dismissed, the *telos* is given wider consideration here as an endeavour, whereby human community and its individual members flourish to reach their full potential.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Plato (1974 trans.) and the purpose of society and role of ‘the guardians’.

any, should rightly pain us all. A belief that in a good society we share the risks of our own vulnerability, can identify that which makes us collectively strong, and can contribute to the flowering of everyone's capabilities, not just the achievement of the very few. A good society that recognises that what we hold in common is both important and valuable, and that jeopardising the common good for individual gain, diminishes us all ...

This proposition provides an introductory understanding of the common good principle as used throughout my thesis.

### 1.6.3 The Big Society: A Response to 'Broken Britain'

The Big Society is David Cameron's flagship idea (House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee 2011:HC 714, para 109). He talked about it prior to being elected from an assumed position that 'Britain today is a broken society in which civic-participation is petering out ... because of the growth of the overwhelming central state' (Szreter and Ishkanian 2010:16), and, proposed:

Our alternative to big government is the Big Society. But we understand that the Big Society is not just going to spring to life on its own: we need strong and concerted government action to make it happen. We need to use the state to remake society. The first step is to redistribute power and control from the central state and its agencies to individuals and local communities. That way, we can create the opportunity for people to take responsibility. (Cameron 2009a)

It was cemented at the core of Conservative Party policy prior to them forming the Coalition Government in 2010, portrayed as:

... a change from one political philosophy to another. From the idea that the role of the state is to direct society and micro-manage public services, to the idea that the role of the state is to strengthen society and make public services serve the people who use them. In a simple phrase, the change we offer is from big government to Big Society. (Conservative Party 2010)

A broader meta-analysis that examines these and other dimensions of this philosophical change is fully considered in Chapter 3b, albeit within the constraints that this investigation is about faith-based youth work and its relationship with theoretical concepts and constructs.

As with the notions of faith-based youth work and the common good, understanding of the Big Society as set out by Cameron is accepted uncritically at this point to enable a discourse to begin.

#### 1.6.4 Theoretical Lenses and Conceptualisations

In Chapter 3, I identify particular perspectives and assumptions that inform my methodology, shape my data collection methods and subsequently help build my theoretical analyses. At this juncture, I set out the specific theoretical lenses, frameworks and conceptualisations I have used throughout my thesis in order to aid understanding and provide the theoretical context for my investigation. I do so without substantial comment, this being reserved for later chapters:

- Postsecular theory (Habermas 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010) – as this provides a theoretical descriptor of the contemporary religious landscape against which my findings can be critiqued.
- Human geography (Hopkins et al 2010; Cloke and Beaumont 2012) and sociology of religion theory relating to young people’s spirituality (Francis and Robbins 2005; Voas, 2010; Vincett et al 2012) – enabling analysis to be undertaken regarding performative religion, notions of ethical citizenship and social action, as practiced by people of faith.
- More active (for example, *missio Dei*) and politicised forms of Christian faith-based work theory (Smith 1998; Kuhrt 2010; Schreiter 2011) – because these suggest that activism and social action initiatives have become more widespread than in previous eras enabling comparison between my findings and previous considerations.
- Doyle and Smith’s (2002) model of Christian youth work literature – as it is the only model that attempts to explain Christian faith-based youth work, therefore providing a conceptualisation which my investigation can be compared to.
- The aforementioned, Catholic Social Teaching – as the main principles associated with this allow a collective discourse that embraces faith-based approaches, Big Society notions and common good aspirations. This enables an evaluation of the relationships between these domains to be undertaken.
- Baker’s (2012b:570-571) typology of church engagement – being a nuanced lens that takes account of contemporary practice, thereby reflecting my research context.
- The already noted theory of social capital – this lens enables faith-based work to be compared with work undertaken in wider contexts as well as facilitating an assessment of benefits developed as a result of such work.



- Sider and Unruh's (2004) typological characteristics of faith-based organisations – because this offers a robust and comprehensive framework for describing and understanding the type of work I am investigating, thus enabling comparisons to be made across different projects and cases.
- Edwards' (2009) understanding of civil society – as this provides a theoretical tool for establishing the extent to which faith-based youth work supports social, economic and political progress; how it provides opportunities for people to act together; and in what ways it establishes a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good. Consequently, in the work I am investigating, this lens allows appraisal of the success or otherwise of these considerations.

These introductory sections have set out my proposed explanatory model as the basis for this thesis, established the need for an investigation, highlighted current policy contexts, set out my investigation aims and objectives and highlighted the theoretical lenses used in my thesis. My proposed *prima facie* definitions provide a theoretical framework within which faith-based youth work and its relationship with the common good and the notion of the Big Society can be analysed. I now consider my role as the researcher within my investigation.

## Chapter Two

### 2. A Reflexive Investigation: My Perch and Perspective

In order to provide a context, consider the overarching ethical dynamics and offer transparency regarding my background and motivations for my investigation, this chapter defines my own positioning as a reflexive researcher (Hall and Hall 1996:42; Bryman 2004:22; Davies 2007:241). Finley (2003:5 citing Banister et al. 1994) contends, 'reflexivity in all its guises is now, arguably, a defining feature of qualitative research' accepting 'that the researcher is a central figure who actively constructs the collection, selection and interpretation of data' (ibid). I, therefore, examine these influences, evaluate their impact, consider the potentiality for bias in my research and, outline the unique territory and claims of my investigation recognising that this cannot, 'be carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and particular biography of the researcher' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:15).

In sympathy with Schön's (1983) critique of positivist technical rationality (1983:21-74), I seek to reflect upon my subject matter, whilst acknowledging existing knowledge and endeavouring, like Schön, to generate new knowledge. I do so believing that this is best achieved by 'reflexive acts' (Mason 2002:4-5) that 'ask difficult questions' (ibid); synthesising theory and practice within a 'critical self-scrutiny and active' (ibid:7) reflexivity.

I consider this essential given the influence my practice experience, understanding of the field, faith position, political views and background has had upon my research; factors establishing what Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997:50-52) describes<sup>22</sup> as my 'perch and position'.

#### 2.1 My Investigation Motivation and Rationale

From the outset I wish to affirm my investigation is not seeking 'to abolish my researcher's presence' (Finlay 2003:5), but 'seeking to write a dispassionate and unambiguous account' (Marshall and Green 2010:92), whilst highlighting my reflexive involvement in the process (Steier 1991). This involvement provides a starting point and context enabling me to recognise my 'self-

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<sup>22</sup> In *The Art and Science of Portraiture* – A theoretical framework I analyse in Chapter 5 regarding my case study methods.

location' (Moss 2005:1; Nash 2011) and move beyond personal feelings and emotions; thus developing a theoretical conceptualisation that informs my methodological discussions.

My previous body of work<sup>23</sup> has informed and shaped this investigation. As such, this thesis is a culminating point in my vocation and career in work with young people. Although this investigation was undertaken between October 2010 and May 2013, it is underpinned by my experience to date bringing influence to the explanations, descriptions, and meanings I examine. In determining to have a robust theoretical and methodological approach to my investigation, I contend these influences add to the strength of my study rather than threaten, bias, or distort its integrity.

Whilst it is a stand-alone investigation addressing defined objectives, I aspire that my study will provide an academically credible account and stimulate and enhance contemporary practice. I view my research as one of 'reflective partnership' (Blaikie 2010:50-54) that looks to promote the standing of young people and faith-based youth workers.

I am motivated by a number of identifiable factors. These include a desire to:

- witness better outcomes for (especially marginalised) young people;
- support those working with such young people;
- elevate the space and place of faith-based youth work and see it taken more seriously by secular colleagues;
- improve the standing of youth work in social policy considerations;
- increase social inclusion, justice and help develop cohesive associational communities and approaches; and
- fully take account of changing cultural contexts in planning future faith-based youth work.

Volf (2011:79) aptly embraces my core motivations:

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Pimlott (2009), Pimlott and Pimlott (2008), Pimlott and Bullock (2008), Pimlott, Bullock and Brymer-Heywood (2010), Pimlott and Nash (2010). See [www.pimlott.org](http://www.pimlott.org) for further details.

I want to make Christian communities more comfortable with being just one of many players, so that from whatever place they find themselves – on the margins, at the centre, or anywhere in between – they can promote human flourishing and the common good.

These background factors and motivations provide the context within which I seek to develop an original contribution to knowledge in a pioneering area of study.

## 2.2 The Influence of *Self* and Professional Experience upon my Research

I have worked with young people for thirty years: I have done so in a number of church, community and organisational settings as a volunteer, employed worker and self-employed consultant. Like Jeffs and Smith purport (2010:3), I have worked with young people ‘so that they might better relate to themselves, others and the world ... and God’. I consider this my ‘ontological vocation’ (Freire 1972:48). Whilst I might not have always been consciously aware of it, the aspiration to see young people flourish and realise the common good has always been vocationally centre stage.

In terms of reflexivity, recognition must be made of my own white, male, middle-aged Christian orientation seeking to work across ethnic, gender, age and faith boundaries. This investigation has a cross-cultural element that I need to take account of. Consequently, I endeavour to be a ‘disengaged observer’ (Blaikie 2009:52), whilst concluding that I cannot escape being a ‘co-participant’ and ‘reflective partner’ with those whom I am researching.

Having discovered faith in my teenage years, I became a junior leader in the youth group<sup>24</sup> I was involved in. Whilst untrained, I enthusiastically developed my skills and understanding through personal experiences, theological reflection and attending conferences. In 1990, I decided that more formal training was required: I moved to Nottingham undertaking a training course<sup>25</sup> facilitated by a large city centre church. Here, my training focused on creative arts orientated work, visiting schools, prisons, churches and community groups and working with young people

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<sup>24</sup> In my home town, Congleton, Cheshire.

<sup>25</sup> In *Leadership and Mission*, facilitated by The Christian Centre and DCI Trust. See [www.christiancentre.org](http://www.christiancentre.org) and [www.dctrust.org.uk](http://www.dctrust.org.uk)

and adults. This work developed, and I established a charity<sup>26</sup> to oversee the work and provide a legal framework for it – effectively becoming self-employed.

As a result of this work, I networked with Frontier Youth Trust<sup>27</sup> whom I subsequently became employed by: initially as part-time co-ordinator of a spiritual development project before becoming Deputy Chief Executive Officer.

In 1995, I moved to North Nottinghamshire and worked extensively in the community alongside a local church.<sup>28</sup> The pinnacle of this work was taking a lead role in converting a disused factory into a vibrant community centre.<sup>29</sup> This involved extensive work with a wide variety of stakeholders that, if taking place now, would probably qualify as fulfilling Big Society imperatives.

Throughout, my faith values were the main driver in my work. The combined interest generated by undertaking faith-based work, desiring community transformation and seeking better outcomes for young people, fused to form the background and motivation for my general growing academic interest and, specifically, this investigation. This praxis has had an influence upon my investigation. I now examine the relevance of this.

### 2.3 My Theoretical Understanding of the Field

As a youth work practitioner, trainer, writer and coach of other workers, understanding my field perch and position represents a praxis that seeks to combine both theory and practice. This is informed by the learning and consequential critical pedagogy that results when face-to-face work with young people asks questions *of*, and enters into dialogue *with*, theoretical frameworks, research investigations, cultural dynamics and reflective practice (Schön 1983).

Such a praxis is, thus, not impartial nor uninformed, but embodying of holistic social pedagogy stances (eds. Cameron and Moss 2011), political socialisation (ed. Greenberg 1970) and an interrelationship between me as researcher and that being researched (Blaikie 2009:50). This endeavours to reflect my primary motivation of helping young people achieve self-actualisation

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<sup>26</sup> Hands and Feet Trust.

<sup>27</sup> See [www.fyt.org.uk](http://www.fyt.org.uk)

<sup>28</sup> See [www.ashwoodchurch.org.uk](http://www.ashwoodchurch.org.uk)

<sup>29</sup> See [www.ashcom.org.uk](http://www.ashcom.org.uk)

(Goldstein and Maslow 2006:2), experience 'well-being for all' (Atherton, Baker and Reader 2011:124) and have a place as 'social beings in a social world' (Young 1999:3).

My praxis exemplifies some of the conflicting philosophical ideals of the post-*Albemarle Report* (Ministry of Education 1960) years. Further reference is made to the impact of *Albemarle* in Chapter 3a, but, as Davies (1999b:2) summarises, this report illustrates a number of key conflicting positions:

- universalism versus selectivity;<sup>30</sup>
- education versus rescue;
- professionalism versus volunteerism; and
- voluntaryism versus the state.

His analysis that what 'emerges as social policy is almost always the result of contradictory, even contested, motives many of which have more to do with self-interest on the part of those promoting the policies than with an unsullied desire 'to do good'' (ibid:3) reflects my own praxis, perch and position. Policymakers have consistently ebbed and flowed between these conflicting positions undermining young people, disorientating workers and alienating the faith-based sector for long periods of time. This has challenged holistic approaches, threatened political socialisation and inhibited investigations regarding faith-based work in policy and societal contexts.

Even when policy has been subject to analytical and explanatory critique, inconsistency and contradiction have won the day. This is illustrated, for example, by policies that have:

- endeavoured to promote cohesion at a local level against a backdrop of imperialistic warmongering and demonisation of aliens and immigrants;<sup>31</sup>
- looked to promote community responsibility, education and development, but denied the very notion of society and community (Thatcher 1987);

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<sup>30</sup> For research relating to how the voluntary sector increasingly delivers targeted over universal services, see *Community Matters* (2013).

<sup>31</sup> Illustrated by the 2010 Election campaigns, where political parties seemingly had a 'race to the bottom' (Redpesto in Hundal 2010) to see who could be the most restrictive regarding immigration policies.

- sought to teach young people respect by policymakers accused of bullying, sleaze and telling lies (Gilbert 2006:152-170); and
- criminalised young people's anti-social behaviour, but allowed those complicit in bringing the world to near economic collapse to escape with intact lifestyles (Riddell 2010).

As Blair (2011) has commented,<sup>32</sup> such positioning engenders 'good politics, but bad policy'.

My investigation aims to add to the limited knowledge of faith-based work by generating new understandings about meanings, field practices and conceptualisations, whilst recognising my practice and political positioning. In order to further illuminate my own reflexive position, I examine the influence my own faith has upon this investigation.

## 2.4 A Personal Journey of Faith

Whilst this is an investigation about 'faith-based work', it is not a discourse about theological considerations associated with religious beliefs. I am not comparing and contrasting different faiths other than with relevance to how youth work practice is undertaken within them. Equally, it is not prescribing, nor endorsing, a single multi-faith homogeneity of belief that all faiths are equal and that all paths lead to God,<sup>33</sup> nor ascribing to the idea that any one faith has exclusive claims to all truth. Within this context, I declare my own faith position to acknowledge the role my beliefs play in this investigation (Greenbank 2003:791-801) further aiding transparency.

Religious labels and descriptors have the propensity to stereotype and limit rather than develop understanding and value nuance and subtlety.<sup>34</sup> However, I recognise that some *de facto* parameters can be helpful in aiding perspective, and, therefore, I consider my faith as:

- being rooted in the Christian tradition;
- orientated around following the teachings of Jesus;

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<sup>32</sup> His retrospective analysis of New Labour responses to young people and moral breakdown post the 1993 Jamie Bulger murder.

<sup>33</sup> As, for example, Universalists believe.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Hassan, Corkindale and Sutherland (2008).

- seeking the Kingdom of God and pursuing ‘shalom’ (Marchant 1988; Punton 1993; Steele 2008:5);
- finding resonance with Anabaptist teachings (Murray 2011);
- suspicious and cautious regarding the canons and institution of the church fearing the ‘routinisation of charisma’ (Weber 1947: 364) has caused the pure and beautiful to become bureaucratic and institutionalised;
- critical, rather than assuming;
- appreciating that people of all faiths are seeking truth and welcoming interfaith dialogue (Francis and Robbins 2005:218); and
- recognising that Christendom (Murray 2004) has undermined early Christian aspirations and authenticity.

I see faith as a developmental journey (Fowler 1981) that is both personal and communal and not a static inherited tradition and position. This has particular significance regarding my investigation as it prefers the idea that faith-based youth work is part of a development process<sup>35</sup> and not a cultural default presumption.

From being largely dismissive of claims made by faith groups other than Christian, I came to a place where ‘I could no longer live with the faith I inherited’ (McLaren 2011:2) and, became ‘more accepting, less defensive and more willing to enter into open discussion’ (Jamieson 2002:94) with other faiths recognising that wisdom, insight and truth are evident across belief perspectives. Having progressed on a journey of spiritual development through ‘seasons of simplicity, complexity, perplexity to a place of harmony’ (McLaren 2011:25), I am now nervous of any exclusive and unique claims (Billings 2009:95-96) that profess to know God and His/Her will.

The consequences of my personal journey enable me to engage in my study with greater self-awareness and consciousness in ‘fellowship with persons at other stages of *faith development* and from any other faith tradition’ (Fowler 1981:200-201) or perspective. This might not have

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<sup>35</sup> See, for example, models of faith development: Elkin (1964, 1970), Westerhoff (1976), Fowler (1981) and Hagberg and Geulich (2005).



been possible when I was younger<sup>36</sup> as I perceived belief in very evangelical and exclusive terms.<sup>37</sup> Were my investigation to have taken place then, I consider that my perch and position would have lacked ‘critical awareness’ (Thomas 2009:43) and, failed to recognise the frailty of knowledge (ibid), thus potentially negatively biasing my study more than it has today. My current faith aspirations can be summed up by the hope found in what has become known as the *Nazareth Manifesto*:<sup>38</sup> prophetic propositions that are rooted in a desire for transformation, freedom and social justice for the oppressed, located within a bias to the poor (Sheppard 1984) theology.

It is the connection that faith has with politics that further shapes my positioning. I now consider the bearing my ideological stance has on my research perch and positioning.

## 2.5 The Impact of Christian Communitarianism on my Research

Whilst not particularly reflexively aware during my twenties and thirties, my ideological development took place alongside my faith development. This resonated with normative political theory in that it sought ‘what ought to be’ rather than ‘what was’ (Sinha 2007) – critically evaluating beliefs and societal structures in order to bring about transformation – nearly always involving work with young people.

After I left school I worked for a bank in the affluent football and stockbroker belt of South Manchester and Cheshire. The belief that there was, ‘no such thing as society’ (Thatcher 1987; McSmith 2010, Bradford 2012:134) was highly evident, and I witnessed many of the ‘excesses and conspicuous display’ (Marr 2008:428) associated with this time period. These began to engender great political unease in my own spirit forging a politically left of centre<sup>39</sup> communitarian (Etzioni 2004; 2010) paradigm. This developed more strongly during my time in Nottingham; a period that witnessed the wholesale destruction of the mining industry and

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<sup>36</sup> Particularly when I was in my twenties and thirties.

<sup>37</sup> My early faith was shaped by, for example, McDowell (1972), Watson (1981) and Wimber (1985).

<sup>38</sup> That is: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour’. Jesus (Luke 4:18-19, New International Version)

<sup>39</sup> In contrast to the ‘centre-left’ *Third Way* politics, popular under New Labour (Giddens 1998; ed. Giddens 2003).

consequential catastrophic fall-out of Thatcherite economic policies.<sup>40</sup> It is this perspective – in sympathy with Layder (1998) – that has adaptively discovered and constructed my sense of knowledge and understanding of reality and, formed a starting point for my investigation.

Byron declared, ‘The days of our youth are the days of our glory’ (in Moore 1832:295). This statement took on somewhat ironic grandeur during my time in North Nottinghamshire; the Byron ancestral home<sup>41</sup> was five minutes drive from where I lived and worked, but the days of youth were far from days of glory for the young people I worked with: unemployed, disillusioned, without aspiration, socially immobile, in poor health and prone to substance misuse – these were truly marginalised young people (Pimlott 2001) and, far from flourishing. Such poverty, oppression<sup>42</sup> and lack of hope only served to fuel my political development becoming more left wing in the process.

Thus, it is clear ‘whose side I am on’ (Troyna and Carrington 1998:188-205). In acknowledging ‘bias comes not from having ethical and political positions – this is inevitable – but from acknowledging them’ (Griffiths 1998:133), I disagree with Troyna and Carrington (ibid) that this is problematic, but rather seek to ‘unmask any bias’ (Griffiths ibid) so it can critically inform my investigation.

My political allegiance is not to any one political party. I consider that societal change cannot be achieved by politicians alone as they always have an eye on being re-elected. It is the exercising of democratic rights that I consider has the greatest capacity to bring about change. These democratic rights need to be rooted in active participation where ‘society breaks open’ (Freire 1974:13) and people ‘emerge, no longer mere spectators, they uncross their arms, renounce expectancy and demand intervention’ (ibid). Such rights need to exist interculturally (Gundara 2000; Cante 2012) and be attentive to social justice and the needs of the marginalised<sup>43</sup> in order to be fully inclusive.

Thus, my ideology is in sympathy with that of Freire (1972; 1974; 1998), Gramsci, (1992), liberation theologians (Gutiérrez 1973; Boff and Boff 1987) and post-Marxist (Laclau and Mouffe

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<sup>40</sup> For the ongoing impact of these, see, for example, Russell (2007).

<sup>41</sup> Newstead Abbey – [www.newsteadabbey.org.uk](http://www.newsteadabbey.org.uk) for more information.

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion about how the type of people I worked with are oppressed and demonised, see Jones (2011).

<sup>43</sup> For a discussion about marginalised young people, see MacDonald and Marsh (2005). For a discussion of a Christian worldview of ‘marginalisation’, see Atherton (2003).

2001) agendas, albeit rooted in democratic participation (Giddens 1994:59-62) that seeks to overcome the aforementioned 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) toward young people. This 'partisan' (Tooley and Darby 1998:28) influence should be noted as it has had bearing on me as a 'human instrument' (Denzin and Lincoln 2003c:231), shaping my investigation and informing my chosen methodology. I establish my methodology fully in Chapter 4, but note my perch and position regarding this in order to acknowledge my implicit interests (Shacklock and Smyth 1998:6-7).

## 2.6 The Significance of My Pragmatic Reflexivity

As I establish shortly, my methodology falls under the banner of 'pragmatic constructivism' (Creswell 2009:9-10). The critical reflection that 'pragmatic constructivism seeks to locate ideas about politics and the world within the social conditions from which they emerge, or are constructed' (eds. Bauer and Brighi 2009:104), is applicable to my context and, helps develop a rationale that accommodates my study.

In advocating a pragmatic approach in a classroom research setting, Cobb (2002) says 'the basic challenge is to develop interpretive frameworks that enable us to see pattern and order in the complex, messy and sometimes chaotic events that characterise classroom life'. The world of faith-based youth work consists of an equally, and probably more diverse, complex, messy and sometimes chaotic set of parameters that provide the backdrop to this investigation.

Consequently, this analysis has application in my investigative context rendering a pragmatic approach appropriate.

This approach, with me as reflexive practitioner as well as philosopher/theorist, is rooted in problem-solving, analytical, sense-making and divergent disciplines and approaches that inform my youth work practice. As I cannot disassociate these traits from my research investigation with integrity, I am simultaneously practitioner and researcher. I recognise that this can introduce problems, but there is a helpful mutuality in this dynamic with the *bricoleur* (Lévi-Strauss 1962) descriptor having resonance. Whilst noting writing a thesis in the first person is the subject of academic debate,<sup>44</sup> I have chosen to write in the first person as I am fully involved in the

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<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Hyland (2002).

'reflexive consciousness' (Steier 1991:156) of my investigation and consider total objectivity and impersonality largely unachievable.

Denzin and Lincoln portray this 'Jack [and Jill] of all trades approach' (Lévi-Strauss 1962:11) as a 'reflexive collage or montage' (eds. Denzin and Lincoln 2005:6), but this is criticised by Crotty for being a poor footnoted translation of the original text. Even if this criticism is overstated, the consequent disposition to leap from 'Jack of all trades' to 'master of none' does not portray this approach in a positive light. He contends that a more accurate translation is to describe someone who 'makes something new out of a range of materials that had previously made up something different' (Crotty 1998:50).

Whilst I am not entirely dismissive of the reflexive role described by Denzin and Lincoln, it is this latter descriptor that most accurately positions my investigation. My aspiration is to be an 'artisan' 'constantly musing over objects, engaged precisely with what is not [my]self, in order to see what possibilities the objects have to offer' (Crotty 1998:50), and reconceiving the component parts of my investigation (ibid), youth work, faith and contemporary social policy drivers into my new explanatory model.

The assertion, with reference to Dewey, that 'inquirers creatively construct facts and ideas via specifiable and repeatable operations that serve the purposes of inquiry' (Garrison 2009:94), aptly summarises my intention and, points toward the use of a mixed-methods, or perhaps more accurately a mix-of-methods,<sup>45</sup> approach to collect the data 'facts and ideas' (ibid) considered appropriate.

This embraces the 'new voices' (Gergen and Gergen in Steier 1991:76) of a reflexive dynamic that opens 'new vistas of research' (ibid:77) for exploration and formulation.<sup>46</sup> It is this extrapolation that provides a foundation and process for the unique territory claims of my investigation. I now consider claims about this originality.

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<sup>45</sup> The difference between these is discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>46</sup> Whilst it might be contested that this analysis, written in 1991, is no longer 'new', this approach is certainly less well developed, critiqued and evaluated than more traditional approaches to research. In this sense I am content to term it 'new'.

## 2.7 Unique Territory and Theoretical Assertions

My investigation occupies a unique academic territory that explores three key theoretical problems. Firstly, it investigates the nature and role of the under-researched subject of faith-based youth work. Secondly, it address the challenges of how such work endeavours to realise the common good and, thirdly, it does so with reference to an emerging policy notion that is new to academic critique.

The motivation to undertake this study has been to explore faith-based youth work in an ‘ontological, problem-focused, systematic, reflective and emancipatory’ (McLaughlin 2007:3) investigation that reflects my aspirations and values and develops an authentic rationale that has critically formed aims and objectives. This is done from a position and personal value-base that sees my work with young people as a lifelong learning process.

As already noted, there is little existing research regarding contemporary faith-based youth work. Whilst Ahmed, Banks and Duce (2007:ix) look at how ‘faith communities involve their young people’, they do not investigate the role of faith-based organisations and their work with young people. Consequently, there is both a need and the space for a substantive enquiry that investigates these parameters – a need that is given added weight as the new policy ideology of the Big Society emerges. Reflexively, this need has been heightened as during the course of my investigation the youth work sector has experienced a period of profound change. This has seen a demand for new theoretical and methodological models (House of Commons Education Committee. 2011) and, new ways of working that embrace the emerging economically austere environment.

The reflexive relationship between theory and practice has also witnessed a reordering of the space youth work, and specifically faith-based youth work, occupies regarding civil society, state and market contexts. Since it began, the space and place faith-based youth work has occupied has ebbed and flowed. Over time, it has witnessed the rise and fall of state provided youth work, a growing, emergent and fluctuating reliance on the market and a subsequent re-emergence of the faith and voluntary civil society dynamic as a key player in the sector. The notion that youth work was born in civil society and, only makes sense in civil society has historical justification and added relevance given the recent demise witnessed in state mandated work. Indeed, Symonds (2012) now argues, ‘there is no place for “youth work” in Local Authority services because the agenda, which is about social problems, is set by the state ... the natural home for youth work is

in the voluntary sector'. In the future, it may be that we come full circle and, that the only youth work that exists will be that undertaken by civil society organisations – particularly faith-based ones; this being similar to how such work began.

In summary, my investigation is undertaken from a fully reflexive perch that considers the authority of my extensive personal experience and critiques existing literature within a context that is constantly emerging and developing knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the field. In recognising how my experience has the potential for undue influence in my investigation, I have had to step back from previous and potentially presumptuous theoretical positionings and, critically suspend personal adherences in a manner Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997:95) describes as demanding 'constant vigilance and calibration as the portraitist tries to avoid narcissism and yet use *self* as a research instrument'. This has enabled a systematic, rigorous academic investigation that entertains the idea of paradox and contradiction, whilst maintaining a thoroughly scholarly approach.

Having established the central aims of my investigation, overarching theoretical conceptualisations and my reflexive perch and positioning, I now examine existing literature and the current practice, policy and theoretical context of my subject matters.

## Chapter Three

### 3. Fluid, Multifaceted and Contested – A Literature and Contextual Review

In this chapter I examine the literature and context of my investigation. Whilst there is substantive material addressing the individual subject matters in my investigation, a dearth of material exists which brings these together. Whilst convention points toward an in-depth review and analysis of a narrow body of work, the subject matter of my investigation does not permit such an approach; there is simply no such work associated with faith-based youth work within a Big Society policy narrative.

Consequently, both this and the rapidly changing political and policy landscape, necessitate widespread reference to recent literature, thinking and theoretical dynamics. By so doing, I achieve an in-depth exploration of a narrow field of study, whilst embracing a breadth of considerations that theoretically locate my investigation and point toward a new understanding of faith-based youth work.

My analysis covers two overarching conceptual territories: youth work, including faith-based youth work, and the Big Society. In Part A of this chapter I identify faith-based youth work as an uncertain practice. In Part B, I explore how the Big Society is the new general way of talking about the political context within which faith-based youth work is operating, with the telos of the common good encapsulating aspirations across both territories. As uncertainties around faith-based youth work come into dialogue with the notion of the Big Society, a potentially open or confusing environment about how such work should operate materialises. My model helps resolve this confusion by portraying how faith-based youth work is and should be operating. This is the unique ground of my empirical study.

Before considering these two overarching territories, I note much appears to have changed in the religious and faith landscape of the United Kingdom in recent years. I therefore begin this review by analysing literature relating to the themes of postsecular theory and sociology of religion and youth spirituality before examining how understandings of the recent shifts in some Christian contexts have shaped religious and faith practice. I do this to establish the influence these have on contemporary faith-based youth work.

### 3.1 Emerging Notions of Postsecularism

As noted, Harris (2006), Dawkins (2007) et al would indicate, as the title of Harris's work suggests, that the post-enlightenment period has ushered in 'the end of faith'. However, as Neuhaus (1982) notes, 'we are witnessing the collapse of the 200-year old hegemony of the secular enlightenment over public discourse'. We have 'lost confidence in reason and its universality' (Williams 2012c:27) as a growing realisation manifests regarding an 'awareness in what is missing' (Habermas 2010) in public life. Postsecularism suggests religion is once again an option in public discourses (Beckford 2012).

The contemporary context witnesses contrasting theoretical positions of secularisation and desecularisation (Woodhead 2012a:3) alongside emerging notions of postsecularism (Habermas 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010), a 'return of faith to the public table' (Dinham and Lowndes 2009:1) and 'Christianity fighting back' (Cameron in Watt 2012) competing with ideas that faith is a 'spent force' (Dawkins 2012) where the hold of religion is 'weakening' (Grayling in Aitkenhead 2011). These contrasts are aptly illustrated by the work of the highly influential Habermas, with his later works contrasting his earlier position which focused on secularisation rather than postsecularism (Mendieta 2010), thus illustrating the fluidity of process at work in contemporary thinking.

Indeed, Habermas now argues for the equal inclusion of *religious* voices (2006:11) in the political public sphere where reflexive approaches bring the secular and religious together by demanding both perspectives undergo transformation (Cloke and Beaumont 2012:36) to enable conditions that allow mutual tolerance and commonality.

Habermas proposes a process whereby religious people undertake 'hermeneutic self-reflection' (2006:15) that causes them: to appraise other religious beliefs more openly (thus avoiding exclusive claims to truth); see secular knowledge more favourably and not in conflict with faith beliefs; and accept that secularity is the dominant actor in the political arena (ibid). The extent to which these preconditions are realised in my investigation is considered in Chapters 7 and 8. In return for religious people implementing these dynamics, he expects secular citizens 'not to deny from the outset the possible cognitive substance' (ibid:17) of religious perspectives and beliefs. Furthermore religions, he argues, should not be dismissed by secular citizens as archaic (ibid:16) but seen as important contributors to moral debates and liberal communities. Habermas does not argue secular citizens should become religious, but rather he contends they



learn from them whilst remaining agnostic (ibid:20) whereby the ‘cognitive preconditions’ (ibid:21) – as set out above – allow citizenship to fully take place.

Atherton, Baker and Reader assert Habermas’s proposed shifts are ‘radical and challenging’ (2011:12) demanding changes ‘in the way both sides see themselves’ (ibid); changes that, because of the fluid, plural and culturally responsive context they often work in, many faith-based youth workers might be ideally positioned to make (assertions given further consideration in Chapter 3a). Whilst Sheedy (2010) argues that Habermas’s view is too narrow and euro-centric regarding religion, it nonetheless, I would argue, offers vital insights regarding emergent postsecular narratives that have witnessed faith-based work being more valued in recent times by policy-makers – a consideration I discuss further in Chapter 3b. For Cloke and Beaumont (2012) this rapprochement has been a key in understanding the emergence of urban spaces of partnership between people of faith and those of no religious faith, with new praxes emerging. In referring to the landscape observed in modern cities, Cloke’s individual work talks of a ‘collision’ (2011:2) and ‘swirl of postsecularism in the public arena’ (ibid) as ideals that go ‘beyond secularism’ and faith-motivated work that goes ‘beyond Christendom’ (ibid:3) come together to engender a new praxis.

This praxis, according to Cloke, Thomas and Williams (2012) involves faith groups and people of faith outworking their beliefs and love for humanity by being charitable to others, becoming involved in welfare and care orientated work alongside involvement in action for social justice. The extent to which these factors are evidenced in the faith-based youth work this investigation considers is extrapolated in Chapter 7 and 8.

Paradoxically, Cloke argues, contemporary neoliberal secularism has ‘created new spaces for postsecular praxis’ (ibid:2) because it has allowed faith-based providers to paradoxically enter the market, bringing with it religious motivations into public spaces previously dominated by secular worldviews. As I will discuss shortly, this has been the experience of faith-based youth work providers who might now be delivering state-funded contracts and programmes.

### **3.2 Sociology of Religion and Youth Spirituality: Contemporary Contextual Shifts**

Ward (2011) is correct in saying, ‘we know more about young people and religion than we have ever known’. A plethora of research projects (eds. Woodhead and Catto 2012) have emerged

addressing a broad range of subject matters relating to young people and faith.<sup>47</sup> These have been undertaken within a context that is ‘no longer accepting of one “off the peg” religious identity’ (Woodhead 2011).

According to Atherton, Baker and Reader (2011:5) – after Taylor (2007) – postsecularism could be a societal move where religion is now a choice or life option as belief and unbelief are no longer rival theories, but, as Atherton, Baker and Reader consider, ‘different ways of being in the world’ (2011:5). Further considering the work of Taylor (ibid), they reflect that human flourishing might not be linked to a transcendent goal as faith becomes one option amongst many (Atherton, Baker and Reader 2011:6), including differing spiritual and religious options. This possibility has formed the basis for my previous work on young people’s spirituality (Pimlott 2005; Pimlott and Bullock 2008; Pimlott, Bullock and Brymer-Heywood 2010; Pimlott and Nash 2010) and I make brief reference to it here as a further emergent theme relevant to my investigation.

The relationship young people have with faith, religion and spirituality is changing and fluid (Voas 2010:25-32, Vincett et al 2012). In my context, it appears to be evolving significantly with organised and institutional religion becoming less significant in the lives of young people and more individualist expressions of spirituality gaining credence (Heelas and Woodhead 2005:118-120 and 140-141; Lynch 2007:3; Voas 2010). Thus the, particularly Christian, religious context young people ‘find themselves is ... significantly different to that of previous generations in the UK’ (Vincett et al 2012:no page numbers) – a contextual reality I would expect to find reflected in how the type of faith-based youth work I am investigating goes about its work. For Vincett et al (ibid) the changing Scottish context is reflected in a clear shift from faith and belief being about ‘rituals and ... doctrine’ (ibid) to one more about ‘experience and ... performance’ (ibid). Thus, in my investigation, I will consider the extent to which these shifts are evident in English faith-based youth work and how the characteristics of ‘mobility’, ‘authenticity’ and the idea that faith is expressed ‘practically’ – key findings of Vincett et al (ibid) – are evident in the type of work I am studying.

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<sup>47</sup> Seventy five research projects have been undertaken as part of the £12m *Religion and Society* programme, with a proportion of these being related to young people. See [www.religionandsociety.org.uk](http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk) for more information.

Specific, all encompassing sociological conclusions and future predictions are difficult to draw (ibid: Heelas and Woodhead; Lynch) as neither young people, nor faith groups exist as easily quantifiable homogenous units. Furthermore, it is a challenge to separate what might be considered as 'authentic' (Aziz et al 2009:13) faith-based work and cultural 'traditions and customs' (ibid) that have more to do with nationality and ethnicity than faith (Pimlott and Pimlott 2008). The situation is complex, with interrelationships between these dynamics wide-ranging (eds. Jochum et al 2007) with 'many faith communities [unable to] share a concept of youth work' (Ahmed et al 2007:5). As I discuss shortly, these realities perhaps reflect wider discourses regarding the competing roles of the individual and the collective in achieving any sense of a common good, where – as Davie (2007:ix) notes, 'there remains ... a deep-seated resistance to the notion that it is entirely normal ... to be fully modern and fully religious' – a notion that faith-based youth work would seemingly aspire to. Davie goes on to assert that contemporary sociological debates in the modern world are different to those of the past and that a 'mismatch' (2007:1) has resulted in understanding the ways religions and faiths 'not only influence, but are influenced by the behaviour of both individuals and collectives' (ibid). This is the context for my investigation as I seek to understand these influences and mismatches.

Contemporary studies of young people's spirituality (Francis and Robbins 2005; Rankin 2005; Savage et al 2006; Collins-Mayo, Mayo and Nash 2010; Vincett and Olson 2012) seemingly reflect such mismatches and the secularity debates considered above. Debates regarding the death of the dominant religious culture (Brown 2009), secularism (Savage et al 2005:36-37), postsecularism (Collins-Mayo, Mayo and Nash 2010), the increase in 'new spirituality' (Lynch 2007) and a narrative where participants select 'fragments of faith' (Francis and Robbins 2005:155) simultaneously reflecting multiple positions, all appear in studies regarding the spirituality of contemporary young people. This causes Woodhead (2012a:3) to conclude that such debates amount to a 'sheer incompatibility of accounts' as to what is actually happening. This should come as no surprise given the plurality of the nation and the aforementioned diminishing homogeneity. For example, Cloke and Beaumont's (2012) research on 'geographies of postsecular rapprochement in the city' (ibid) rightly highlights how 'interconnecting networks render the city as a more likely context for significant rapprochement' (ibid:32) than, say, rural areas simply because the religious and spiritual demographics of the city are more pluralistic. In short, the spirituality of the multicultural city is likely to be far more diverse than that of, for example, more homogenous rural areas such as the one in which I live in Nottinghamshire. Of

significance here is the extent to which these patterns can be identified in my investigation – particularly across my case studies.

Hopkins et al (2010), in their geographical study of intergenerational religious relationships, consider how the 'process of place-making' (ibid:317) has changed given the aforementioned changes in the sociology of contemporary belief and religion. Whilst their study is very much focused on the religious practice of young people (and thus not directly related to my investigation) their valuable insight that as the cultural landscape changes new spaces and places are being forged, relates to my study as faith-based youth work similarly wrestles with how children and young people as 'social becomings and competent agents in their own right' (ibid:316) exist in the emerging context. Their conclusion that 'the formation of young people's religious identities is influenced by a broad range of actors in different everyday sites', (ibid:326) including 'youth group practices ... having significant influences over young people's articulations of their religiosity' (ibid) is a helpful critique given the topic of my investigation in that it gives validity to faith-based youth work as a transformative practice.

This sense that faith identity is formed and shaped by differing influences has also impacted contemporary Christian approaches to the practice of religion, particularly in evangelicalism, as illustrated by recent activist and politicised shifts within elements of Christian faith practice. I now review salient literature regarding these shifts where relevant to my study.

### **3.3 From Consensus to Committed Action: The *Missio Dei* and Politicised Forms of Engagement**

Smith (1998) calls for evangelicals within the Christian church to avoid being pious, defensive and supportive of the status quo. He argues for a return to an original reforming agenda embracing 'both the declaration of the world of God and the practice of deeds which demonstrate the love and justice of God' (ibid:69). As I discuss shortly, this resonates with the quest for social action and justice typified by the type of faith-based youth work I am investigating. His invitation to perceive evangelicalism as 'world-transformative' (ibid:16), thereby enabling the evangelical church to be more relevant to society, would prima facie, appear to be reflected by the missional telos of the work I am studying. Such an invitation is reflective of a wider recent shift in how Christianity engages with the wider world.

For example, Schreiter (2011) argues that the evangelical church has 'shifted' in the last forty years from focusing on matters of 'theological covenant' (ibid:88) to 'a commitment to action' (ibid:89). His reflection is rooted in analysis of the changes witnessed between two statements from The Lausanne Movement (1974 and 2011) – which represents churches from over one hundred and fifty nations – that have marked differences. Principally, the 1974 statement perceives the church and Christians as being separate from the world and 'set over against' (Schreiter 2011:90) it. Contrastingly, the 2011 statement seeks to overcome any 'sacred-secular divide' (ibid), firmly locating the church 'within a pluralist, multireligious society' (ibid:90) that embraces the world in a manner consistent with the concept known as the *missio Dei*: this conceptualisation seemingly typified by the type of work I am investigating.

For Bosch (1991:10), the *missio Dei* is:

God's revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate.

The renewed sense that the church is now participating more in the world has been recognised by a number of missiologists (Smith 1998, 2003; eds. Samuel and Sugden 1999; Frost and Hirsch 2003; Gibbs and Bolger 2006; Kirk 2006; Murray 2004, 2006; Moynagh – with Harrold 2012) with Gibbs and Bolger (2006:50-51) noting how the *missio Dei* 'changes the functional direction of church ... from a centripetal (flowing in) to a centrifugal (flowing out) dynamic'. Certainly, Christian faith-based youth work has led the way regarding such approaches and trail-blazed for the wider church (Ward 1997; Passmore – with Pimlott and Pimlott 2003; Pimlott and Pimlott 2008:65-68) believing that 'establishing transforming communities may be an important step forwards for many churches in the UK' (Croft 2002). As already mentioned, I will investigate the extent of this *transforming* in my investigation.

For Kuhrt (2010), these mission initiatives have resulted in a 'new ecumenism' (ibid:14) that has 'sought to serve the needs of the local community in practical and tangible ways' (ibid). Despite his caution that 'theological tribalism' (ibid:15) and 'silos' (ibid:17) threaten to undermine such work, he encourages a venture into 'risky and ... radical places'; places that, as I contend shortly, are often occupied by expressions of faith-based youth work.

It is perhaps this new ecumenism, and the aforementioned renewed centrifugal sense of engagement with society, that has led to an increase in activism, social justice prerogatives and

the politicisation of Christian faith-based work (Padilla 1999; Bretherton 2010; Ivereigh 2010; Taylor 2010). Engagement with justice issues and the needs of the world – in my case the needs of young people – Taylor argues, enables people to act out their ‘faith in ways that transform ... communities and the world’ (2010:215). Furthermore, pursuit of the *missio Dei* ‘has helped open up the realm of politics ... as an integral part of the mission agenda’ (Matthey 2002). Whilst Bretherton (2010:57) sees ‘the changing pattern of the relationship between religious communities and the state in liberal politics’ as presenting ‘the church with a difficult task of discernment’ (ibid) it is nonetheless the context within which faith-based youth work exists as the Big Society notion unfolds.

In reviewing salient literature relating to recent developments in the religious and faith landscape of my study context, a more theological dimension to my analysis has emerged. Whilst *theology* is not the focus of my investigation, these topics have needed to be considered given their bearing upon the world within which faith-based youth work exists. Having given consideration to these matters, I now re-establish the main foci of my investigation.

### 3.4 My Literature Review Themes

I commence this part of my review by thematically reporting and reflecting upon existing definitions, current knowledge and overall trends relating to my subject matters and the relationship between them. I examine the rationale and approaches used in work with young people to link and reconcile knowledge with current understanding and practice relating to my telos of the common good and, the Big Society policy notion. This process analyses key concepts and variables, highlights shortcomings, and details inconsistencies, contradictions and knowledge gaps thus providing a theoretical context for my investigation.

I will:

1. assess landmark contributions to my investigation subject matters;
2. provide a context for my investigation;
3. determine if, from an ontological perspective, faith-based youth work has been at the heart of youth work from its inception;
4. understand what space and place such work occupies in the Big Society; and

5. examine if such work has an epistemology that is foundational, contextual and influencing; thus enabling it to uniquely contribute to the common good.

Whilst reference is made to literature from a number of countries, predominance is given to British (and specifically English) sources as these reflect the policy and practice context of my investigation; aiding reflection upon historical assumptions, developments, organisation and positioning of experienced youth work practice.<sup>48</sup>

With regard to the theoretical rationale and critique relating to youth work, I will draw significantly on the enduring works of Smith, Jeffs and Davies and their collaborative portrayals and analysis offered by the encyclopaedic *Informal Education* website.<sup>49</sup> Their contributions have provided insightful commentary over a sustained period of time. They have simultaneously been passionate advocates, committed campaigners and critical friends across many youth work genres. Their work relating to youth work history, policy, practice and surrounding frameworks is unsurpassed: ideally qualifying them to inform my investigation.

The development of faith-based youth work has not place taken without critique and considerations of ethical dynamics. This review will consider key arguments presented by Banks, Green and Sercombe who have made significant contributions in this subject area.

In recent times there has been criticism that faith and religion is irrational and, has a potential for ill (Harris 2006; Dawkins 2007; Grayling 2007; Hitchens 2007). Given the actuality of faith-based youth work and the fact that this investigation is about understanding the impact of faith approaches rather than questioning their virtue, this review does not consider the merits and validity of such criticisms, but instead focuses on those who have impacted the development of faith-based youth work. Reference is made to contributions from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives that have helped establish, shape and develop such work.

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<sup>48</sup> This might overlook significant contributions from other places (for example, Verschelden 2009; Dean 2010), but I contend youth work and faith-based youth work are very country specific in their existence, practice and pedagogy. Anecdotally, my own practice has encountered great differences in youth work across the countries of the United Kingdom, due to individual national parliaments and youth policies.

<sup>49</sup> See [www.infed.org](http://www.infed.org). Ledwith (2011:37) highlights the significance of this site asserting it 'provides the largest collection of theory and practice papers in a single resource relevant to community development'. A large proportion of the theory and papers refer directly to youth work: portraying its history and informing practice.

Given British history, there is more material available relating to Christian faith-based perspectives. There is, however, a growing and emerging body of work reflective of a developing pluralistic society;<sup>50</sup> exemplified by writers like Khan who has elevated and provided a critique for Muslim youth work.

Analysis is undertaken of my overarching telos: an ontology that sees faith-based youth work as, ‘informal education contributing to the “common good”’ (Davies et al 2011:7). Defining arguments, research and ongoing critique of the Big Society notion are still emerging. Work to date by Blond, Norman, Glasman, Millbank and Ishkanian and Szreter has helped shape perspectives, and I focus on their contributions to the discourse. A significant number of press articles and *prima facie* reactions and responses from academics, political commentators and faith-leaders are also referred to.

Before turning to examine these considerations, I analyse the current gap in knowledge prompting this investigation.

### 3.5 The Gap in Knowledge

Having reviewed studies regarding the sociology of religion, the spirituality of young people, postsecular influences and changes in the way Christian church undertake their work, I note that there is no substantive body of work that examines the foundations, philosophical values, pedagogy and aspirations of faith and religious-based youth work that takes account of contemporary social policy parameters.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, many contemporary texts about *general* youth work fail to mention the historical, developmental or contemporary influence of faith-based work and perspectives. For example, I find resonance and commonality in much of Nicholls’ (2012) contemporary critique of youth work, but there is no mention whatsoever of faith or religion. This investigation seeks to close this knowledge gap and develop a more rounded critique and explanatory consideration of such work.

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<sup>50</sup> My underpinning rationale is that Britain has been multicultural for many centuries, but in recent times the range and diversity of this has significantly broadened. For example, in London, 232 languages are spoken by children at school (McPake 2006:3).

<sup>51</sup> The one exception being to this being Khan (2013) – a recent evaluation of Muslim youth work I review shortly.



As I contend shortly, significant literature exists relating to youth work and Christian faith-based youth work, but there is ‘a need for greater theorisation and model development both to refine youth work practice and to provide a basis for a critique of youth work policy’ (Cooper 2012:99). This investigation addresses this need.

Literature about Christian faith-based youth work has focused on the story and historical narrative, rather than any sense of critique or appraisal (Doyle and Smith 2002). More often than not, such works are somewhat subjective<sup>52</sup> and not what might be termed ‘dialogical’<sup>53</sup> (ibid). Pugh (1999) goes further arguing ‘the reluctance of many Christian organisations to use ‘secular’ theory and critical analysis has left Christian youth work with a weak theory-base’. Although asked over a decade ago, Pugh’s questions remain about the theory-base of not only Christian and faith-based work in general, but also wider secular domains and practices (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a, 2011b and 2012).

There is an extensive body of work about the common good, but somewhat limited studies that specifically relate to young people and/or youth work.<sup>54</sup> Work relating to the Big Society is embryonic and developing and, as yet, there is little research evidence to evaluate its success or otherwise. This study uniquely contributes to remedying this.

Cooper (2012:99) goes onto say that ‘a clear articulation of purpose and values enables a well-considered and timely response to social policy initiatives pertaining to youth work’. In considering how my subject matters relate to one another, I conclude that there is a significant gap in knowledge that brings together all these disciplines: especially regarding the foundations, ethos, philosophy and pedagogy of faith-based youth and the impact such work has. This study seeks to present such a ‘clear articulation’ of faith-based work in the Big Society.

I begin by reviewing literature and the context relating to contemporary youth work.

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<sup>52</sup> Perhaps due to the sensationalised narratives portrayed in early popular writings: for example, *The Cross and The Switchblade* (Wilkerson 1963), *Run Baby Run* (Cruz 1969) and *Chasing the Dragon* (Pullinger 1980).

<sup>53</sup> I would, however, contend my own work (Pimlott and Pimlott, 2008), sets out a more rounded critique.

<sup>54</sup> Coles (1995) gives consideration to youth policy and citizenship, but the context he considered has now significantly changed.

## Chapter Three: Part A – Youth Work and Faith-Based Youth Work

### 3a.1 The Significance of Youth Work Definitions

Definitions of youth work are important because they reveal the intended focus of such work. For example, a definition might point towards an individual empowerment rationale that helps young people flourish, make educational progress and/or become a good citizen. Equally, a definition might point towards a collective notion that supports ideas of community and/or developing: for example, community cohesion (Cantle 2001, 2008; Parekh 2006; eds. Flint and Robinson 2008; Thomas 2011). Furthermore, definitions might indicate at whose behest work is undertaken. For example, a definition might suggest an agenda that supports state orchestrated policies, a societal aspiration and/or a faith imperative. In this section I consider definitions of youth work addressing these issues.

Informal education youth work is a relatively recent practice and profession (Jeffs and Smith 2005; Batsleer 2008; Nicholls 2012). Commentators of old have identified the needs and challenges of working with young people,<sup>55</sup> but it was not until the eighteenth century that youth work, as now perceived, emerged as an identified practice.

When youth work began in the United Kingdom, it was predominantly undertaken from a faith-based perspective (Kadish 1995; Ward 1996; Smith 1999, 2002; Davies 1999a:8-10). Ward contends this resulted from a growing 'popular consciousness' (1996:24) regarding children and young people. Inspired by the pioneering Sunday schools work of Robert Raikes (Smith 2000), this inception is attributed by Pugh, (1999) to Hannah More: a Christian who openly proclaimed her work with young people as educational, instructive, and evangelistic. Since then it has developed into a diverse practice and profession encompassing many traditions, philosophies, pedagogies and perspectives, whilst having its 'roots in a religious and Christian motivated social concern' (Davies 2012:148). As Smith (1999, 2002) notes, 'the meaning of youth work is difficult to pin down – it means different things to different people'. A universally accepted definition of the practice has proved elusive and, where frameworks have been proposed, they have not always stood the test of time or rigorous critique; thus resulting in 'a mosaic of methodology'

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<sup>55</sup> For example, the following is widely quoted in the public domain: 'I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words.' (Hesiod, Eighth Century).

(Oginsky 2012) where identifying ‘the golden strand that runs through the practice’ (ibid) proves evanescent.

It is, therefore, an objective of this review to critique existing theoretical and ‘disciplinary debates and perspectives’ (Hart 1998:29) in order to clarify conventions before generating new understandings. Prior to clarifying the identity and uniqueness of faith-based youth work, I expedite a summary of significant landmark works in youth work, critique historical theories and youth work definitions, examine current understandings and ethical considerations, and identify and locate my reflective practice within contemporary discourses.

### **3a.1.1 Significant Landmarks in Establishing Youth Work Practice**

The advent of seeing adolescence and youth as social constructs<sup>56</sup> (Montgomery 2007:53, Bradford 2012:23) and subcultures, separate to mainstream adult culture (Nichols and Good 2004:3), defined post-1900 youth work. Such work focused on developing young people socially: helping them to ‘discover how to contribute, as well as take, from ... association with others’ (Davies and Gibson 1967 in Spence 2008:7). Whilst appearing consistent with a common good aspiration and virtuosity, this approach contributed to an age-based sectarianism and cultural territoriality.<sup>57</sup>

Whilst work with young people has probably always taken place, focused work with the teenage age range is now educationally cemented in a manner that can be clearly named – if not actually fully defined. The origins of this planned, tailored approach might be seen as the beginnings of modern youth work and, can be traced to the aforementioned Sunday schools of the late eighteenth century (Smith 1999, 2002).<sup>58</sup> Most early approaches were undertaken from a Christian perspective (Davies 1999:9) reflecting the dominant cultural context and demographics of the time. There was some work that emanated from the Jewish faith (ibid:7; Kadish 1995), but little work reflecting other faith perspectives.

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<sup>56</sup> This does not ignore the biological and psychological development characteristics we now term adolescence, but rather reflects a sociological demarcation and definition attributed to the period between childhood and adulthood, see Saltman (2005:15-20).

<sup>57</sup> The concept of ‘young people’s territoriality’ is explored by Kintrea and Suzuki (2008:199-217).

<sup>58</sup> For a discussion about ‘Sunday schools’, see Stanton (2013).

Sweatman's (1863 in Smith 2009) pivotal contribution built on, and advanced, the Sunday school approach. His advocating of a 'Youth Institution' that supplied, 'recreation, companionship, reading and instruction' would not be out of place today. The rhetoric and policy framework of the modern age that talks of 'positive activities' (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007b), 'outcomes' (ibid), 'structured youth clubs' (ibid:21), 'intentional relationships', (ibid:6) and 'mentoring' (ibid:82) bears striking resemblance to Sweatman's terminology and endeavours. His philosophy has been the harbinger of many of today's approaches, and his work might conceivably be classified as part of the Big Society if operating today. His language might be archaic (Hargreaves 2009:23), but the issues he identified, approach advocated, Christian value-base employed<sup>59</sup> and practice adopted, cemented the notion of youth work as an expression of faith.

This association between faith and youth work developed further during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a civil society language and dynamic more fully emerged;<sup>60</sup> motivated by compassion, a quest for social justice and reform (Smith 1999, 2002; Coburn and Wallace 2011:3-13), the pioneering philanthropists of this period endeavoured to tackle the more negative aspects of the industrial revolution. Urban migration created a social underclass and emerging youth culture in poorer urban areas. Cranwell (2001:39) comments that the youth work of this period concentrated on tackling the poverty that undermined educational performance, health, moral development and effective parenting.

Youth work increasingly found itself in a contested space and ideological triangle as it sought to develop its own principles, meet the needs of young people and operate within a policy dynamic. As Williamson (2006:7-8) notes, 'youth work and youth workers have to negotiate a position between the three corners of this triangle: slavish attachment to any one corner is a recipe for paralysis, inertia or ineffectiveness'. This analysis suggests approaches to work with young people have remained largely unchanged from the formative years up until the more recent inclusion and cohesion<sup>61</sup> policy initiatives of the New Labour years. These will be examined shortly.

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<sup>59</sup> Sweatman was an Anglican minister, who later became Bishop of Toronto.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Ferguson's (1767) late eighteenth century pioneering work.

<sup>61</sup> See the work of Cattle (2001, 2008, 2009) for analysis of these cohesion initiatives.

The pioneering development of the Young Men's Christian Association (in 1844), Boys' Brigade (in 1883), Church Lads' Brigade (in 1891), Jewish Lads' Brigade (in 1895) and Catholic Boys' Brigade (in 1896) further established the faith-based sector as the primary deliverer of youth work (Smith, 1999 2002). With a male gender focus,<sup>62</sup> such work was driven forward by 'an army of unpaid volunteers' (Martin 2006:61) that reflected the cultural context of the era: namely, a growing social concern for what was happening (particularly) with a 'seemingly endless' (Bolton 2006:3) supply of teenage boys and a faith-based, social action response to such concerns.

Baden-Powell (1908), again with significant resonance to modern day approaches, focused on developing the 'well-being' (Smith, 1999, 2002) of young people. The synergy he purported of adventure, team work, service, social action and experiential learning might be said to resonate strongly with definitions of modern faith-based youth work<sup>63</sup> that I refer to shortly and the Big Society, *National Citizen Service* initiative (Cabinet Office 2010). Conversely, it has been argued (Warren 1986; Foster 1997; Watt 1999) that the inception of the Scout movement was not youth work at all, was not intent on helping young people flourish, but little more than militarism in disguise preparing future recruits for the Boer Wars; as such, a phyletist<sup>64</sup> movement designed to support British Empire aspirations and more about patriotism than faith – thereby, being strongly influenced by social policy imperatives of the time.<sup>65</sup>

In a similar vein, the Jewish Lads' Brigade is said by Kadish (1995:xvi) to have started as a response to young people being at risk and it 'functioned chiefly as an agent of anglicisation' for the children of immigrant Jews, 'using physical activities to attract the boys whilst 'religious instruction ... was the real aim' (Kadish 1995: 3). Furthermore, many of the Brigades converted into military cadets units in the 1930s with nationalistic overtones forcing one commentator to remonstrate about a:

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<sup>62</sup> For a feminist perspective on dominant male approaches and work with girls, see Batsleer (2013).

<sup>63</sup> Taylor (2013) critically notes, 'all the youth work framework concepts of today, although differently constructed, are in Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys*'.

<sup>64</sup> 'Phyletism' is a term coined by the 1872 Synod of Constantinople to describe the confusion existing between Church and nation when one becomes synonymous with the other, embodying racial and national identities (McGuckin 2011:26). Bretherton (2011) uses the term to describe Cameron's (2011a) assertion – Britain is a 'Christian country'.

<sup>65</sup> In a contemporary debate about faith-based youth work, Campbell (2012) argues that Church of England work with young people is similarly unduly influenced by Government policy rather than ministry imperatives.

Grave concern at the lack of citizenship amongst boys and their parents ... The Brigades actual task was to make its member loyal and efficient citizens ... and those who hold strong pacifist views should part company with the Brigade. (in Kadish 1995:85)

These examples raise concerns about the influence of hegemonic forces and the way faith-based youth work is complicit in supporting them – potentially by deceitful and oppressive means. The role the state played in youth work was put on a formal footing by the 1939 Board of Education Act: this solidified youth work provision and augmented it across both state and civil society parameters. The later *Albemarle Report* (Ministry of Education 1960:4) recorded this intention:

... the Board of Education called the Youth Service into being with the issue of a single circular. This could not have happened but for what had gone before. The voluntary organisations had been labouring in the cause of youth, some of them for well over half-a-century... What the Board did at the start of the war was to bring these three parties, State, education authority and voluntary organisation, into a working arrangement to which the term “Youth Service” has ever since been given.

Thus a movement from civil society voluntarism toward state provision can clearly be seen; thus paving the way for the introduction of further legislation.

The *1944 Education Act* effectively replaced all previous educational legislation; thus establishing it as a significant landmark in developmental history. According to Smith (1996), it was the *1944 Act* that positioned youth work separately to formal, school educational work. Whilst he indicates that this was unhelpful, I contend that it gave esteem and distinctiveness to youth work and defended it against becoming a mere extension of general education. Lindsay (in Davies 1999a:22) declares the youth service an additional ‘province’ of the education service. The use of the word ‘province’ confirmed the unique nature of the sector whilst at the same time potentially invites a separatist and contra-cohesive approach.

Whilst Barnes (1948:120 in Smith 2002) concurred with the view that sector demarcation was diminishing, he aptly recognised and described the discovering and pioneering nature of the voluntary sector:

Experimentation, the trying out of new methods, the opening up new fields, the training and testing of new hypotheses – these are the activities which not only evince the vitality, but can permanently guarantee the indispensability, of the voluntary youth organization.

Whilst I would contend that preserving such a vitality is paramount and that the faith-based sector has generally sought to do this (Nurden 2010), the outcome of the *1944 Act* led to a diminishing of youth work provision (Davies 2001:14) and an ‘acute depression’ (Ministry of

Education 1960:1) in youth work that culminated in a 1960 report which further dramatically transformed the nature of youth work; thus, a paradox developed whereby attempts to help youth work flourish actually led to diminished outcomes for young people.<sup>66</sup>

It was the *Albemarle Report* (Ministry of Education 1960) that provided the watershed moment and cemented youth work in a setting and context that was broader than that afforded by those working from a faith-based perspective. I would concur with, amongst others, Jeffs (1979), Mayo (1998) and Smith and Doyle (2002) that this report had some serious flaws which were detrimental to work with young people; it dealt with young people as separate entities, apart from the rest of the community and cemented a generation gap into service delivery (Mayo 1998); it targeted disadvantaged young people 'enshrining' (Mayo 1998) them as different to, rather than part of, wider society; it also turned around a declining the youth service (Davies 2001:14) but increasingly placed responsibility for provision on the state, and saw crime as a working-class 'youth problem' (Smith 1966; Smith and Doyle 2002); it ignored 'black' and 'immigrant' young people (Patel 2001) and enshrined a divisive culture of demonising young people embedding a deficit pedagogy that depicted 'young people as lacking something in themselves' (Belton 2012:217) in ways that persist to the present day (Howells et al 1995; Belton 2012:217-218).

What the *Albemarle Report* (ibid:36-41) did was provide a rationale that linked key concepts, factors and variables within a framework and definition of youth work: namely that it should be framed around association, training and challenge. It was an emphatic defensive policy that sought to 'create critical citizens concerned with the common good' (Taylor 2009). Furthermore, whilst the report recognised the importance of faith principles in youth work (Ministry of Education 1960:38), it questioned their appropriateness (ibid:60) and, to quote Pugh (1999), 'felt that such principles should be introduced by example rather than through assertion'; thereby laying the foundations for decades of debate regarding the place of faith in youth work.

These landmark developments reflected a pattern that sought 'to move welfare and education from partly or predominantly faith-based philanthropic enterprises before 1945, through a period of statism afterwards, and then from the 1980s back out to a plurality of providers again,

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<sup>66</sup> For example, see *Hunt Report* (1967) and *Thomson Report* (1982) regarding provision of facilities and services for young black people.

which explicitly includes religious groups once more, though in a greater mix of 'competition' (Dinham and Jackson 2012:272).

Dinham and Jackson are keen to assert that 'this is not to say that faith-based provision ceased in the period after 1945, but that it was in some sense nationalised before being set back within a much more mixed context once again after 1979' (ibid). However, it aptly portrays post-1945 approaches and a 'deliberate marginalisation' (ibid:273) of religious input into such work and a subsequent 'accidental re-emergence' of it after 1980; although, as I will discuss later, I would argue this had more intentionality about it during the latter New Labour years and the present Coalition Government era.

### 3a.1.2 The Influence of Historical Theories and on Current Definitions

Having already referred to youth and community work as a fast changing practice, it might seem abstract to consider the period from 1960 to the present as 'current'. However, I contend that the *Albemarle Report* was so significant that it helped shape policy, understanding, rationale and definitions right up until present representations. Finer and Nellis (eds. 1998:68) describe the report as the 'vehicle by which modern youth work was established', thus fundamentally reordering youth work (Beck and Purcell 2010:4). It set a precedent that has since witnessed a number of similar ideological shifts oscillating between state priorities, market forces and civil society<sup>67</sup> imperatives shaped by the dominant issues of the day.

For example, *Albemarle* was a response to 'moral panics' (Cohen 2002) of the time, whilst the Report of Policy Action Team 12 on Young People (The Stationery Office 2000) was a response to the challenges of neighbourhood renewal during a period of perceived extensive social exclusion. The *Every Child Matters* (Department for Education and Skills 2004) initiative was a response to safeguarding challenges following a number of high profile child abuse cases<sup>68</sup> and *Positive for Youth* (Department for Education 2011a), a response to economic crisis whereby the state determined not to fund work with young people centrally (Buckland 2013); this in itself

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<sup>67</sup> Figure 4 on page 89 portrays the inter-relationship between state, civil society and market.

<sup>68</sup> Most notably the case of Victoria Climbié who was tortured and murdered by her Aunt, Marie-Thérèse Kouao, and Aunt's boyfriend, Carl Manning, in 2000. Victoria's death led to a public inquiry headed by Lord Laming (2003). This inquiry found that the agencies involved in caring for Victoria had failed to protect her and made one hundred and eight recommendations regarding child protection reform.



being underpinned by Big Society agendas reflecting the sense that society was broken (Blond 2010). Such shifts are no longer unusual as youth work policy has taken on a mantle of being orchestrated by contextual political and ideological demands.

*Albemarle* cemented post-war policies that drew clear demarcation lines between the original notion of voluntary sector delivery of youth work and state provision that determined how work should be undertaken.<sup>69</sup> Whilst the role of the voluntary sector was not dismissed completely, *Albemarle* positioned the state as the shaper and provider of youth work – a positioning that was segregating rather than cohesive. This policy largely continued up until the Thatcher Government years and attempts to ‘roll-back the state’<sup>70</sup> (Norman 2010:87) where youth work largely ‘escaped direct policy intervention’ (Bunyan and Ord 2012:23). As will be explored shortly, such debates have continued to the present where youth work has not been so fortunate: falling victim to extensive cuts in services (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a).<sup>71</sup>

This demarcation also effectively positioned, perhaps unintentionally, state-sponsored work against voluntary and faith-based work engendering a ‘contested area’ of work (Ahmed, Banks and Duce 2007:5) doing little to aid the common good. Indeed, Scripture Union (1967:3) presented the case that *Albemarle* offered ‘an exciting challenge, since it provides a career’ for Christians – the implication being that Christian-based youth work would follow state professionalising agendas (Bradford 2012:35), rather than the hitherto consideration that such work existed in its own right. It was not until the era of the New Labour government’s<sup>72</sup> that faith-based work was once again considered part of a wider and more inclusive view of youth work service delivery (Ghose 2004; Ahmed, Banks and Duce 2007:4-5; Department for Communities and Local Government 2008).

In effect, these discourses began to challenge who youth work was aimed at, what it actually was and who determined the form it took. I now examine how more modern definitions of

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<sup>69</sup> Davies (1999a:16) highlights these debates noting, for example, the *King George’s Jubilee Trust 1939* report considered ‘there is high value in the effort inherent in the voluntary system, but it can and has become a burden too great to be borne’: i.e. the voluntary sector alone cannot do it all – a contradiction to the rationale of the Big Society.

<sup>70</sup> Although Blond contends she did little to roll back the state (2010:122).

<sup>71</sup> For an example of the impact of these cuts see Pidd (2013).

<sup>72</sup> When public spending was increased and regeneration became a policy focus. See the aforementioned, *Policy Action Team 12 Report on Young People* (The Stationery Office 2000).

youth work have tended to exclude the role of faith and, how this contributes to an ethical and practical dissonance that hinders common good developments.

Definitions of youth work offered in the last decade or so have focused on the development of young people and the contribution they can make to society. The following typifies this approach:

... promote the social, moral, cultural, emotional and physical development of young people, involve young people in the governance of relevant services and encourage young people's preparation for the responsibilities, opportunities and expectations of adulthood and citizenship. (Department for Education and Skills 2002:8)

Representations to include 'faith' and 'spirituality' references are often met with ambivalence by multi-agency bodies. This does not encourage those in the faith-based sector to engage in the policy agendas surrounding these definitions.<sup>73</sup> Any assumption that faith-based work is not part of a cohesive and mainstream service delivery is somewhat theoretically denying of the vast amount of work the sector undertakes with young people.

As stated above, definitions frame models of working and how youth work is framed impacts how faith-based work is perceived by the wider field. Therefore when definitions exclude faith and faith-based work and practice, contention arises (Orton 2006:4-9; Ahmed, Banks and Duce 2007:5-9) that potentially leads to exclusive approaches from both non faith-based and faith-based sectors in equal measure. At best, this does nothing for the realisation of a collective common good. At worst, it sets one discipline against another – benefitting no one. This can be illustrated by a critique of Sercombe's (2010) work on youth work ethics.

### **3a.1.3 Contemporary Definitions and Ethical Considerations**

Sercombe introduces a new parameter and ethical perspective into the definition of youth work and, insists that it must be undertaken in 'a professional relationship in which the young person is engaged as the primary client in their social context' (Sercombe 2010:27). The use of the words 'professional' and 'client' puts further distance between his view and developed original

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<sup>73</sup> As highlighted, for example, by my personal practice experience in working with multi-agency groups in 2006/07 to design the *2008 National Occupational Standards for Youth Work*. Controversies over the *2012 Standards* resulted in some members of the Christian community and academics alike declaring them not 'fit for purpose' (Davies 2013).

understandings. This elevation of worker status drives a wedge between the person who works voluntarily with young people and someone who is paid to do such work. This approach is particularly disputatious in some faith settings. In the Sikh religion, for example, it might be considered against the faith's value-base to employ a youth worker to work out of a place of worship (Nijran 2012). It is also something that is in sharp contrast to, for example, the idea of young people and youth worker '*Journeying Together*' (eds. Rogers and Smith 2010) in associational relationship and belonging.

Sercombe goes further in stating the original purpose of youth work in western countries was evangelism (ibid:31). As I have already discussed this is true to some extent, but raises wider questions as to what is meant by 'evangelism' and it runs the risk of neglecting the remits of compassion, informal education and social justice that were part of the common good motivations of the early pioneers. He acknowledges this to some extent, but the anomaly in his argument can be found in the oxymoron of a hypothesis that purports:

Faith-based youth work is youth work if it engages the young person in a professional relationship as the primary client in their social context. First, it isn't youth work if the relationship isn't a professional one. Many church-based youth groups work on friendships and peer-based networks, and the language for the facilitative role reflects that: 'youth leader' rather than 'youth worker'. The professional disciplines are not presumed to apply and don't. There isn't a problem if a youth leader forms a sexual attachment to another member of the group. (ibid:32)

The analysis of context here has some merit, but the exaggerated conclusion borders on a slanderous generalisation; his assessment that young people are 'clients' is also a modern mantra that has become embedded into many contemporary expressions of youth work. Whilst Sercombe defines modern youth work in these terms, Smith (2003)<sup>74</sup> had previously condemned such views, not as youth work, but as 'the end of youth work'.

Sercombe's (ibid:32) analysis also provides a further contention in relation to the motivations of service providers:

If the motivation for service is the faith community's ambitions for growth, or the status attaching to conversion, or a programme of containment to make sure that the young

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<sup>74</sup> Smith argues work which only sees young people as clients and economic units, 'sells' them accredited courses and focuses work around delivery rather than relationships, all within a culture of surveillance and bureaucracy, is anything but youth work. He calls upon workers to keep the original 'spirit and practice' of youth work alive (Smith 2003).

people don't stray from the faith irrespective of their own reasonable but different choices, it isn't youth work.

The contradiction here is that much of contemporary target-driven youth work is about growing a particular embodiment of 'behavioural modification'<sup>75</sup> (Davies et al 2011:6) that is zealous and evangelistic in its quest, often seeking to contain, motivate and direct young people in a pre-determined manner<sup>76</sup> akin to the 'Street-Level Bureaucracy' portrayed by Lipsky (2010). Such work is also potentially foundationally *faith-based*; the faith being, for example, capitalist, secularist, humanistic and/or atheistic. Whatever the motivational foundation of the work, if workers are aware of their own 'personal agendas' (Batsleer 2008:39) and those of the institutions they may work for, avoid deceitful practices and challenge 'covert working' (ibid) within an appropriate framework of reflective practice, then any such concerns can be addressed.

The National Youth Agency (2007) offer a broader definition and framework that I consider more rounded:

Youth work helps young people learn about themselves, others and society through activities that combine enjoyment, challenge, learning and achievement. It is a developmental process that starts in places and at times when young people themselves are ready to engage, learn and make use of it. The relationship between youth worker and young person is central to this process.

However, the subtext to this definition brings another contestation. In going on to say, 'youth work contributes to the government's vision for young people' (2007) they introduce state-backed parameters and an institutional agenda that can alienate a wide variety of service providers – potentially including those working from a faith-based perspective. Subsequent publications have softened this stance to, 'youth work has the potential to play a central role in achieving ... Government's aspirations' (National Youth Agency 2010:5). Whilst subtly different in emphasis, this perspective offers a less prescriptive and more inclusive framework that goes some way to recognising the variety of agendas embodied by service providers.

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<sup>75</sup> For example, I recall from my own practice (Local Management Group 2003-2006) how the Connexions service used to engage young people in education, employment, or training. Young people were routinely harangued on the telephone and coerced into (often inappropriate) courses and training simply to achieve Government targets.

<sup>76</sup> Whilst not an argument I agree with, this might also be said of the *In Defence of Youth Work* campaign (Davies et al 2011).

Many faith traditions encapsulate a counter-cultural narrative,<sup>77</sup> rather than supporting state agendas *per se*.<sup>78</sup> Consequently if definitions that embrace state-endorsing elements are accepted uncritically, then work is susceptible to imposing on young people policies that might be transient, contradictory and eroding. For example, Davies et al (2011:6-7) argue that in recent times the state has defined young people as ‘problematic’ and detrimentally moved the pedagogy of youth work toward social, welfare and diversionary intervention work. For many this is ‘undemocratic’ (Davies et al 2011:8) and, if taken to extremes, may propagate disastrous and extreme political views that history has previously witnessed. Such definitions must be challenged to avoid the prospect of work with young people previously considered excellent, being left high and dry when government policy changes.<sup>79</sup> I contend that if policy-driven definitions are not questioned, they have the potential to be equally, if not more, concerning, counter-productive and destructive than promoting a particular religious view in work with young people.

Belton (2010:22-23) contends that any professional operating in a sphere that is funded by the state is most unlikely to be operating in a way that contradicts the values of that state. Consequently, he asserts such work is prone to adopting colonising approaches where professionals come with their ‘cultural armoury’ and undertake a ‘cultural assault’ on the young people they purport to be helping. If Belton’s discourse is accepted, and I would do so,<sup>80</sup> then, according to the definition offered by Sercombe, any such state-connected work is also not youth work. If all state-funded and connected work and all faith-based work is denied the title of ‘youth work’, then one is left questioning what could possibly be called *pure* youth work.

Belton (2010:45) critiques current practice that merely positions professionals as promoters of an ‘elaborate deficit model’ that keeps young people as pitiful, ignorant and constant recipient clients in continual need of input from youth work professionals. He concludes by equating such approaches to the work of ‘missionaries of colonial times’.<sup>81</sup> If this pitfall is to be avoided then young people voluntarily need to be at the vanguard of such work – not ‘manufactured’

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<sup>77</sup> For example, see Murray (2004:245-250).

<sup>78</sup> Unless that state is a religious government operating under, for example, Sharia or Hindu Law.

<sup>79</sup> As is currently the case for some, see Hiller (2010:8-9).

<sup>80</sup> A discourse considered by many including: Young (1999), Jeffs and Smith (2005), Banks (ed. 2010) and Taylor (2010a).

<sup>81</sup> I previous work I analysed the dangers of Christian faith-based youth work operating from a colonial pedagogy (Pimlott and Pimlott 2008:32-36).

(Vertovec 2007:33) top-down approaches where employed professionals are often 'parachuted'<sup>82</sup> into a local community to solve problems.

In emphasising the voluntary participation of the young person and the broad role of the youth worker, Nicholls (2012:31-32) defines youth work from a different philosophical and pedagogical position:

Youth work is a unique intervention which seeks to respect the current condition of the young people it engages with and to assist them voluntarily in moving from this condition to an improved one in which greater understanding, skill, awareness, knowledge, fun, emotional pleasure or intellectual, physical or experiential attainment are developed.

Although ignoring any sense of spiritual development, he at least brings together the ideas of 'transformative practice ... voluntary relationship ... and the full complexity of the human' (Nicholls 2012:32) to embed a flourishing dynamic. What remains missing, however, is any appeal to a collective good.

The *2008 Occupational Standards* (NOS 2008:3) state youth work should:

... enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential.

The use of the word 'holistic' and recognition of both the individual and societal dynamics of youth work in this definition potentially renders it a helpful didactic that is more inclusive. Whilst the words 'political and spiritual' were rejected by policymakers,<sup>83</sup> the movement towards a holism was welcomed in faith-based settings.

The New Labour years witnessed a number of formalised attempts to develop cohesive approaches. This was done through legislation, policy, joined-up working, threats, and redefining workforce agendas (Davies 2005a, 2005b). Just as Foucault (1961) illustrated how 'madness' became the antithesis of reason in the eighteenth century and was used as a way of socially controlling, categorising and stigmatising anyone who was disadvantaged and considered unwelcome, the early New Labour years were characterised by policies that demonised young people via a plethora of anti-social behaviour initiatives and statements.

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<sup>82</sup> 'Parachuting' is viewed sceptically in community work. See, for example, English Heritage (2005:2), National Youth Agency (2008:5).

<sup>83</sup> Despite the consultation processes recommending inclusion. See 'Footnote 73' above.

Policy publications emerged (Department for Education and Employment 2001; Department for Education and Skills 2002, 2004, 2005; Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007b), and there was a rush to 'genericism' (Davies, 2005b:6) and workforce cohesion that sought to embed common and joined-up approaches to work with young people. Davies, in attempting to determine youth work's 'defining characteristics', critically questions if these approaches were young people centred and clear to 'professional worlds outside youth work' (ibid:7).

New Labour policies and the debates that surrounded them bring us to the present with *The House of Commons Education Committee Report* (House of Commons 2011a) on youth services. The report talked of being 'frustrated' (ibid:23) by the lack of clarity about what youth work was. In the 'light of the limited and outdated research evidence' (ibid:22 and 74) it recommended further research be undertaken to establish the positioning and effectiveness of youth work – the ultimate aim being a meta-analysis (ibid:22) of studies to which it is envisaged this investigation will contribute. They called upon the government to carry out this work, setting out what youth work is and the outcomes it seeks to achieve.

The response was the *Positive for Youth* (Department for Education 2011a) policy for young people. This commissioned and adopted such a framework (Catalyst Consortium 2012),<sup>84</sup> but deferred 'to everyone but the government' (Davies 2012a) to implement it. Whilst in line with its localism philosophy,<sup>85</sup> it remains unclear how the general common good can be developed given the stated reliance on 'growing the market and making it more contestable' (Davies ibid). If done at a local level, then a postcode lottery of provision seems the inevitable conclusion.<sup>86</sup> When considered alongside the decimating cuts in youth services overseen by Government, it would seem that current definitions and alignment of strategic approaches by policymakers to proposed definitions remain as elusive as ever. The consequence is a theoretical dissonance where the best that can be deduced is a Durkheimian 'collective consciousness' (Durkheim

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<sup>84</sup> Which credits me (Catalyst Consortium 2012:2) as helping shape the framework despite ignoring requests to be more inclusive of faith-based and voluntary sector approaches. I deemed it 'lacked currency', was 'too complex' and 'would be a barrier to engagement/participation' (Pimlott 2011a).

<sup>85</sup> 'Localism' is discussed shortly, but of note here is that 'local' is mentioned three hundred and seventy four times in *Positive for Youth* (2011).

<sup>86</sup> Due to ambiguous legislation, there is already great variance in provision of local youth services. The *Education and Inspections Act 2006* stated services should be 'sufficient' and 'reasonably practical' for Local Authorities without defining what these terms meant. Thus interpreting meaning has been left at the behest of increasingly cash-strapped Local Authorities: see National Youth Agency (2012) for a further discussion.

1893:38-39) of shared meaning that ‘you know good youth work when you see it’ (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a:23).

Indeed, the response from the Government to the *Commons Education Committee Enquiry into Services for Young People* (House of Commons Education Committee 2011b) dismayed the Committee so much that it ‘highly unusually’ (Mearns 2012) returned it, asking for further clarification. This then resulted in a further response from Government (House of Commons Education Committee 2012). This also still failed to answer the most ‘blindingly obvious’ (Stuart in Hansard (WH) 2012) basic questions about what youth work is going to be done and how – Committee chair, Stuart (ibid) declaring that ‘with a strategy this light on content’ there must be doubt about whether ‘it will deliver on the ground’.<sup>87</sup>

In order to further illuminate debates about what youth work is and what it does, I now review my own theoretical understanding and reflexive practice positioning.

### 3a.1.4 Competing and Dominant Discourses: A Time to be Radical

Tucker (2005:211) uses the terms ‘competing discourse’ and ‘dominant discourse’ to describe the competing (and complementary) notions about what it means to work with young people. In summary, I believe that the idea of youth work being a professional and government agenda focused practice, working from a deficit model and pedagogy (Coburn and Wallace 2011:91), has become the dominant discourse – potentially squeezing out other representations. Given the history, influence, outputs and outcomes of the voluntary and faith sector, such a discourse has limited application given the many thousands of unqualified volunteers<sup>88</sup> undertaking work in a wide variety of contexts with diverse motivations.<sup>89</sup>

My own practice resembles the framework offered by Davies et al (2011:7), embracing:

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<sup>87</sup> The sacking of Minister for Young People, Loughton and subsequent comments by the Minister for Education, Gove ‘that youth policy is a priority for local government and not central government’ (Jozwiak 2013b) confirming this assessment, appearing to demote the importance of the *Positive for Youth* policy.

<sup>88</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, reliable data is not available to support this claim, but there is widespread anecdotal and incidental evidence to suggest the voluntary sector is the biggest provider of services to young people (National Council for Voluntary Youth Services 2010:4), and that the faith-based sector is the biggest cohort within that sector.

<sup>89</sup> My practice experience has encountered and identified an extremely diverse set of motivations, criteria and awareness of what others do in their work with young people. For example, see Pimlott, Evans and Fitzsimmons (2009).



- the sanctity of the voluntary nature of young people's involvement;
- a commitment to conversations which young people start and, within which, both the young person and worker are learners;
- the importance of association and sharing of a common life;
- a commitment to valuing young people's experiences;
- insistence upon democratic practice;
- recognition that young people are not a homogenous group; and
- the serious yet humorous, improvisatory, yet rehearsed, role of the youth work.<sup>90</sup>

It also resonates with the holistic social pedagogy stances (Petrie et al 2009; eds. Cameron and Moss 2011) more common in mainland Europe, considered by Cameron and Moss (ibid:9-10) as:

- a broadly educational role that is holistic;
- socially concerned with the individual, the group, the community and society;
- rooted in relationships;
- committed to inclusiveness;
- confronting of social problems; and
- showing solidarity with the marginalised.

Collectively, these two frameworks along with socio-cultural animation models (European Cultural Foundation 1973)<sup>91</sup> reflect my own values, principles and potential bias as both youth worker and research investigator.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> This is a synopsis of the framework.

<sup>91</sup> Socio-cultural animation is defined as 'that stimulus to the mental, physical, and emotional life of people in a given area which moves them to undertake a wider range of experiences, through which they find a higher degree of self-realisation, self expression, and awareness of belonging to a community which they can influence' (European Cultural Foundation 1973).

<sup>92</sup> I note the influence of these dynamics in my methodology and methods design, discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

If there is to be a formal definition of youth work, then Belton (2010:69) offers the type of definition most closely resonating with my own practice:

Radical youth workers work informally with young people and take them seriously. Their daily work is informed by political and moral values: opposition to capitalism and authoritarianism, belief in equality and respect for the environment. They question, 'common sense' and reflect critically on their work. They are aware that practising their beliefs will involve debate and struggle, but try to have fun too!

Being radical is about *arising from* or *going to* the root. Reflexively, my practice is focused on youth work that is critical, transforming and socially challenging of myself, others and society. It is rooted in young people's concerns and a common good view of humanity portrayed by Young (1999:1) as:

Education is the business of youth work. Enabling and supporting young people, at a critical moment in their lives, to learn and develop the capacities to reflect, to reason and to act as social beings in the social world. Not in any way they choose, but in accordance with the state of 'good faith' to which all human beings aspire. That state of living a life true to oneself.

I conclude that it is these types of definition that stand the best chance of both fully determining what youth work is and, when acted upon, helping young people flourish without necessitating any sense of compromise that may inhibit (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010) faith groups engaging with such approaches.

In summary, Buchroth and Parkin (2010:7) are perhaps correct believing 'there is not one body of theory of ... youth work, but many different and sometimes contradictory theories'. Whilst this may be problematic in assessing the effectiveness of practice (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a), it reflects the richness, diversity and vitality of the sector. This is further developed when the dynamics of faith and religion are added to the factors that need to be considered in critiquing contemporary youth work theory. Therefore, I now consider and review existing knowledge, assumptions and understanding specifically relating to the faith-based youth work field that aids human flourishing and develops the common good.

### **3a.2 Faith-Based Youth Work: An Evolving Tradition**

Faith-based youth work is a well-established tradition that is continually evolving to meet ever-changing and multifaceted societal demands and responses to young people's needs in a wide variety of contemporary contexts (ed. Kehily 2007:3; Robb 2007:15).

A review of the literature relating to faith-based youth work encompasses works of:

- theory – providing frameworks and practice models;
- methodology – considering the ‘how to’ aspect of the work;
- policy – disseminating social, political and professional developments;
- theology – presenting an underpinning religious and/or hermeneutical rationale;
- missiology – contextualising work and undertaking cultural critique; and
- resources – offering practical tools, spiritual techniques and ideas for worship and youth work sessions.<sup>93</sup>

I consider works relating to theology, missiology and resourcing are largely outside the scope of this investigation. Whilst reference for illustrative purposes has been made to some of these works, emphasis is given to those theoretical propositions, policy impacts and practice concerns which inform my investigation.

The analysis outlined previously about what youth work is could imply that youth work has an ongoing identity crisis; any such crisis appears incarcerated in faith-based youth work. Coussée’s (2008:3-4) analysis of Flemish youth work drifting from ‘a crisis of effectiveness to a crisis of identity’ could equally be applied as a summary of the debates considered here. In fact, he concludes that UK youth work policy typifies such a crisis with its paradoxical pedagogical approaches (ibid:115).

Consequently, a universally accepted definition of faith-based youth work appears even more elusive than an agreed definition of youth work (Ahmed et al 2007:7). For some this is inconsequential, whilst for others (ibid:85-92; Thompson 2007; Jolly 2011; Nash 2011) accurately determining what is being referred to is fundamental to understanding, establishing boundaries and recognising critical stances and assessment criteria. In order to illuminate such arguments, I now examine approaches and alternatives embodying the type of self-identifying faith-based youth work previously described.

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<sup>93</sup> The availability of such literature varies from faith to faith.

### 3a.2.1 A Pedagogical Identity Crisis?

A number of pedagogical identity issues impinge upon understandings about what faith-based youth work is and consequently, threaten its work, impact and sense of synergy with other youth work.<sup>94</sup> This is a challenge in conceptualising any universally agreed explanatory model.

Suspensions *about* and a 'lack of knowledge' (Green 2006:4) of *what* faith-based youth work is and does are widespread amongst those working outside a faith-based perspective. Khan (2005:2) talks of the 'existing suspicion of faith-based youth work'. On one level, such suspicion is perhaps justified given some examples of poor practice,<sup>95</sup> child protection scandals,<sup>96</sup> unsubstantiated claims,<sup>97</sup> and concerns about the motivations behind faith-based work.<sup>98</sup>

Ashton's (1986:69) pioneering work makes an assertion that would have little credibility outside of a narrow evangelical Christian worldview:

Youth work is not Christian if it is not true to Jesus Christ in facing young people with (the) gospel and warning them of the consequences of not accepting it. It is this message that separates Christian youth work from secular youth work.

Indeed, even if extreme perspectives like this are discarded and, any general suspicions are overstated, issues of language<sup>99</sup> and culture further cloud the picture. Speaking in a Muslim context, Khan (ibid:4) asserts that:

Youth work does not comprehend the language that can give youth work meaning for the Muslim community and the Muslim community/professionals do not understand the language that gives youth work meaning to the youth work community.

Green (2010a) acknowledges the dangers of 'religious fanaticism and manipulation' and identifies 'key ethical dilemmas around faith and youth work practice'. In stating, 'religion is seen simultaneously as problem and solution, a cause for social division and bloody conflict, but also

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<sup>94</sup> I discuss this further in a paper given to the *British Educational Research Association* Conference 2012 (Pimlott 2012a).

<sup>95</sup> One motivation behind establishing professionally accredited faith-based youth work courses was to improve standards. See: [www.cywt.org.uk](http://www.cywt.org.uk)

<sup>96</sup> See *Beyond Belief: The Papacy and the Child Abuse Scandal* (Yallop 2010).

<sup>97</sup> For example, the editor of *Youthwork* magazine claimed only Christian-based work is transformational: 'Faith-based youth work has something special, something inherently different to offer them [young people], because it offers something distinctive: transformation.' In *The Guardian* regarding the 2011 English riots (Saunders 2011).

<sup>98</sup> For example, irrespective of the contents titles such as the best-selling Christian publications, *Youth Work and the Mission of God* (Ward 1997) and *Mission-Shaped Youth* (Sudworth 2007) do little to allay such concerns.

<sup>99</sup> For a discussion about language in faith-based work, see Orton (2006).

as a resource in building civic ‘partnership’, inclusive local governance, ‘strong communities’ and a vibrant civil society’, Furbey (2008:119) acknowledges the tensions associated with faith-based work generally.

I agree with Green (2010b:134) that it is appropriate to question when youth work is being established, how young people are treated and valued. If appropriately done, I consider many of the ‘problems’ (and perceived or actual deceitful practices) associated with the intentions of faith-based work can be alleviated. If this is done with workers operating from every ‘ideological, religious or political persuasion’ (ibid:135), then it ‘can only be beneficial in the development of professional ethics’ (ibid:135) and wider common good principles.

In acknowledging the challenges, Eley (2010:35) provides an illuminative contextual evaluation that moves the debate from fears about deceitful practices, separation and segregation to potential pedagogical mutuality:

... some people in state youth work confessed to fears that youth workers in the voluntary sector were untrained enthusiasts or religious fanatics. ... there is often a feeling among youth workers that the two sectors are miles apart in terms of ethos, training, resources and working practices. The reality is that there is a borrowing of ideas and practices from both sides of the divide.

As previously discussed, the New Labour era sought to embrace this sense of mutuality<sup>100</sup> with the 2010 Coalition Government building upon it further:

I shall make it absolutely clear that we will not ask faith groups to conceal their beliefs, since we know that it is often their religious faith that is the driver of their social action. That said, we will expect services to be delivered equally and impartially on the basis of need. (Warsi in Hansard 2010)

Consequently, a growing interrelationship between faith-based youth work and contemporary policy aspirations is apparent. However from the faith side of the argument, suspicions remain that the relationship is simply one of ‘instrumental’ (O’Toole 2012) convenience for policymakers who perceive faith groups as having the ability to contribute to ‘cohesion and civil renewal agendas, supply resources and social capital and engage hard to reach communities’ (ibid).

Such suspicions do little to foster genuine partnership approaches and, on the policymaking side of the argument critical factions remain that fear faith-based work will proselytise and promote narrow and restrictive pedagogies. This is perhaps understandable when services to young

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<sup>100</sup> See Rochester with Bissett and Singh (2007:43).

people focus explicitly on ‘meeting religious and cultural needs’ (Ahmed et al 2007:5). Consequently support for faith-based work remains a ‘contested area’ (Dinham in Furness 2012).

Pugh (1999) attempts to locate Christian faith-based youth work in a four-themed spectrum that ranges from youth work undertaken with no spiritual content through youth work with a spiritual content; then work focused upon Christian principles (but doing social action work) through to evangelical work.<sup>101</sup> Whilst this is a helpful starting point to begin a wider discourse, it lacks any sense of nuance as to how, for example, Christian principles influence such work.

This illustrates that within faith-based work contexts there are many identity challenges and uncertainties with an associated risk of limiting beliefs around the discourse. Questions – as to whether or not such work upholds its own religious traditions, explores other faith and spiritual paradigms, just works with and meets the needs of young people but from a faith perspective, ministers to, proselytises, facilitates social transformation, generates social engineering and/or advocates on behalf of a particular faith – contribute to the understood space and place faith-based youth work occupies in seeking the common good.

These challenges and uncertainties are further compounded by contested use of the descriptors and language used to portray such work (Torry 2005:14-27). I highlight some of these to offer further contextual analysis.

### **3a.2.2 The Challenges of Agreed Conceptual Language and Terminology**

Ebaugh et al (2006) pose the question, ‘where’s the *faith* in faith-based organisations?’, however, Bretherton asserts that the term ‘faith-based’ is in itself ‘highly problematic’ (2010:38) arguing that such a denotation is over protestant in emphasis and, too general given the ‘incommensurable phenomena’ (ibid) that faith is. He suggests that the term ‘faith-designated group’ (ibid) is a more apt descriptor as it has more explicit terms of reference. However, this seemingly does little to combat his basic objections to the word ‘faith’ and, is equally problematic with regard to specificity. It also ignores the possible motivation behind any such work regarding any telos.

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<sup>101</sup> I note that she uses the term ‘evangelical’, but consider a more accurate descriptor of what she contends would be ‘evangelistic’.

Perhaps a better term might be 'faith-motivated work'. Whilst such a proposal does not overcome Bretherton's objection to the word *faith*, it embraces the key aspect of what motivates and drives people. It also addresses two important paradigms evident from experience in the youth work field.

Firstly, there are some people of faith who work with young people, but choose to do so within organisations that have no faith or religious affiliations. They consider this stance best reflects their beliefs and most effectively develops the common good.<sup>102</sup> Equally, there are those who have no faith or religion who work for faith-designated organisations.<sup>103</sup> In both cases it is not the designation that is the defining determinant, but the underlying motivation behind the work. It is this foundational motivation that I would argue is pivotal to any understanding as to what is meant by *faith-based youth work*.

Smith and Sosin consider the extent to which faith is important in American faith-based work (2001:652) arguing that 'faith-related' is a better description. They contend this acknowledges the 'complex ties between agencies and their societies' (ibid:653) that are 'inclusive' and 'analytically clear because it distinguishes the tie to faith from the actions that may result from this tie' (ibid). Whilst these arguments have significant merit, the terminology potentially presents a much reduced emphasis on faith. Moving from *based* to *related* might suggest a lesser motivation, focus and value-base thereby being equally problematic for many faith-based workers and organisations in the UK context. This argument might also be applied to the 'faith-linked' terminology used by Ahmed et al (2007:6). They contend that 'faith-linked' is a more inclusive term than 'faith-based', the former being representative of a broader range of work than the latter, which is 'strongly rooted in a faith tradition' (ibid). However, without a framework and criteria to determine where a piece of work fits on any such spectrum this only seems to promote further ambiguity.

Ahmed locates her analysis in an admirable desire to reflect work with young people that emanates from the faith 'etiquettes, of being tolerant and non-judgemental' (Muslim Youth Helpline 2011). Her use of the term 'faith-sensitive' (Ahmed 2011) may well take account of how work responds to young people's needs, but runs the risk of portraying the work as 'Muslim', but

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<sup>102</sup> For example, a Muslim might choose to work for a Local Authority considering they have a vocational duty to serve Allah and the community and live, in what Sufi Islamic mysticism might term, 'hulul' (Hall 1999). In Christian theological terms this would be called 'incarnational work' (Ward 1997).

<sup>103</sup> As my case study investigations note. See Chapter 7.

potentially in name only; a position that may embed self-defeating dualism.<sup>104</sup> For Khan (2013:13), this dualistic threat is significant. He argues it is particularly problematic for Muslim organisations to separate ‘their organisational presence and motivations and their actual activity’ in a way that Christian-based work might. For these reasons he rejects using Christian models and political associations to support and inform Muslim youth work (ibid:9), with the exception of the ‘faith-inspired’ (ibid:139-140) language and typology of Rochester (2010-11).

Whilst there may be merit in reframing terminology, any new parlance needs to have currency with, and be understandable by, stakeholders. This consideration, along with the problems identified regarding possible alternatives,<sup>105</sup> has persuaded me to use the ‘faith-based’ terminology in my study, whilst drawing on the nuances of other parlances in my discussions.

However, in order to provide a contextual analysis of the relationship between faith-based work and policy initiatives, I consider a more nuanced rationale will assist in providing a robust theoretical underpinning to my investigation. In terms of my methodological conceptualisation, this necessitates breaking down the term ‘faith-based’ into identifiable features so that my case study work has clear typological boundaries.

### **3a.2.3 Towards a Methodological Conceptualisation: Classifications of Faith-Based Work**

Monsma (1996) and Jeavons (1997) make attempts at identifying how religious an organisation is in order to develop a taxonomy of faith-based work. Whilst such attributes and dimensions are worthy of wider consideration, I deduce that they concentrate on identifying degrees of religiosity, rather than identifying clear understanding about what is meant by faith-based organisations and work.<sup>106</sup> Consequently, I do not propose further analysis of their work.

Sider and Unruh (2004:109-134), like Bretherton and Smith and Sosin, consider the ‘general term faith-based’ inadequate. They argue the ‘hopes and concerns’ (ibid:132) embodied in faith-based

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<sup>104</sup> For a discussion about whether language should ‘resonate with [all] other traditions’ using ‘generic religious imagery’ or just use the ‘language and analytical tools of each [individual] tradition’, see Fulton and Wood (2012:36-37).

<sup>105</sup> I note the term *faith-rooted* is growing in popularity Stateside, but is less common here. See, for example, Salvatierra and Heltzel (in press, due 2014)

<sup>106</sup> The decision by the Inter-Faith Network not to allow practitioners of the Druid religion into the Network, on the grounds they might damage harmony, further highlights these discourses. See Gledhill (2012).



organisations demand ‘conceptual categories and descriptive language that capture their complexity’ (ibid). The following is a simplified adaptation of their proposed typologies<sup>107</sup> providing a preliminary conceptual map against which congruence of my data can be evaluated:

1. Mission	The place of faith in the organisation’s identity and purpose
2. Founding	The connection with faith in the heritage, original and ongoing vision of the organisation
3. Affiliation	Whether the organisation is affiliated with a faith entity
4. Governance	The role and expectations of faith commitment in the selection of board members
5. Senior Management	The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment
6. Other Staff	The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment
7. Support	The extent to which funding is from faith-based sources
8. Beneficiaries and Users	Whether activities are aimed exclusively or not at people of a particular faith
9. Practices	The integration of faith practices into the organisation
10. Environment	Whether the activities take place in a space/building associated with a particular faith
11. Programme Content	Whether the programme content is explicitly religious
12. Connection between content and outcome	The extent to which religious/spiritual experience is considered significant for the programme’s desired outcomes

Table 1. Typological characteristics of faith-based organisations – adapted from Sider and Unruh (2004:112-113) and Jochum et al (ibid:9)

In turn, these typologies are classified into a spectrum of domains: faith-permeated, centred, affiliated, background, secular partnership and secular. I do not propose to undertake further critique of their hypothesis and these categories at this point, but will return to examine them when discussing the methods for and findings from my data.<sup>108</sup> At this juncture, I determine they offer a framework for describing and understanding what faith-based work is about – providing an analytical tool to aid my investigation.

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<sup>107</sup> See Sider and Unruh (2004) for their original work in full.

<sup>108</sup> See Chapters 5, 7 and 8.

Having examined the key issues of terminology and concepts relating to faith-based work in general, I now focus on specific issues relating to faith-based youth work.

### 3a.2.4 Beyond Christian Perspectives

As previously discussed, Christian faith-based youth work is much more established and prolific than work motivated by other religions. However, in order to further illuminate my analysis, a review is undertaken to critique youth work undertaken from perspectives other than Christianity: I make reference to Jewish, Muslim and Sikh work reflecting the general lack of literature available from other traditions.<sup>109</sup>

Rose (2005) uses a pendulum metaphor to critique Jewish youth work. This pendulum metaphorically swings through five oscillating typologies: social club, organisation, movement, hard-line movement and cult. He suggests that classical Jewish youth movements are orientated toward the latter of these typologies. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this investigation to pass an opinion upon this analysis (as the typologies themselves lack any nuanced definitions to aid understanding), it is evident from his model that faith-based work is potentially accused of operating in hard-line ways. It is perhaps this type of portrayal that does little to further acceptance of faith-based work by some secular colleagues.

The problem with terms like *hard-line*, as used in this model, is that they have a propensity to be perceived negatively. Jewish youth work pioneer Lily Montague could be described as *hard-line*, not because she was narrow and oppressive, but because, as Spence (1999) argues, she wanted to see girls flourish and took a hard-line in marrying 'club work and industrial reform' in a way that 'provides an early example of the progressive possibilities of youth work with working class girls'.

Chazan (2003) places Jewish youth work firmly within the domain of informal education, declaring:

Informal Jewish education is informed and shaped by the canon and reflects its best principles; however, its ultimate task is not the transmission of the canon *per se* but rather the canon's underlying values and ideas.

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<sup>109</sup> I do not imply that there is no work undertaken from, for example, Buddhist, Hindu or Gujarati traditions, but literature referencing such work from these traditions is less evident.

This is an informative consideration as it distinguishes between the motivation, philosophy and values of faith and the transmission of it to young people. This goes some way to establishing the foundational position of faith in faith-based work and how this subsequently manifests itself in such work.

Currently, the most high profile Jewish youth work provider is the Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade (JLGB).<sup>110</sup> This quotation from their promotional video (JLGB 2012) highlights how they aspire to balance the triangular aspirations of honouring their own faith principles, meeting the needs of young people and operating within a policy dynamic:

The JLGB ... operates a highly respected model of professional youth work for the twenty-first century ... it provides young people with positive activities and experiences in a fun friendly and safe environment ...that meets the religious and cultural needs of the Jewish community. JLGB combines Jewish values with British traditions encouraging young people to get involved in their community through active citizenship and volunteering projects. ... Effecting positive change by giving back to society in ways that make a real difference.

This vision portrays how a modern faith-based youth work organisation might operate in a contemporary policy context. It typifies many of the considerations of this review and the title of the video, *A Positive Future for Jewish Youth*, plays on the wording of the previously discussed *Positive for Youth* policy framework illustrating how this type of youth work is influenced by, and interrelates with, other drivers.

Whilst Jewish youth work has a long tradition in the UK, there 'has been a growing consciousness of the need to think about youth work in Muslim terms' (Belton 2011:9).<sup>111</sup> Despite research data (ed. Coleman 2009:11) indicating that 42% of mosques have a youth worker,<sup>112</sup> Seddon (2012:251) considers that 'no serious effort has been made that engages the Muslim communities to address the issues, concerns and anxieties faced by Muslim youths in Britain.'<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, Belton (2011:5) argues, 'for most of its history, the investigation of faith-based youth work has ignored the participation and contribution of individual Muslims and the general influence of Islam'. This study seeks to embrace the 'growing tradition' (Belton 2012:207-27) of

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<sup>110</sup> See Kadish (1995) for a history of this work.

<sup>111</sup> It should be noted work by Belton in eds. Belton and Hamid (2011) and eds. Ahmad and Seddon (2012) is very similar. Reference is made to both.

<sup>112</sup> The majority being volunteers with only 4% employed.

<sup>113</sup> See also Ahmed (2009:31-35).

Muslim youth work and take account of it. Belton (2011:5) considers faith-based youth work to be, an:

... eclectic and evolving response to young people, delivered in an almost overwhelming range of forms (in) endless locations ... deploying a continually growing array of techniques and approaches ... motivated by a superfluity of motivations, policies and beliefs.

He purports that Muslim youth work is delivered 'unselfconsciously' (ibid:8) as an expression of Islam, rather than as intentional and stereotypical western youth work and, in the context of this investigation, potentially colonial and Christo-centric paradigm. He also contrasts Muslim youth work with western capitalism believing the shape of such work is rooted in 'social kindness' (Belton 2012:216) – a value-base pointing towards the common good.

What perhaps these sentiments don't do is enable 'others' to clearly identify what Muslim, and other faith-based, youth work is and might look like. Whilst this is predominantly a problem for the 'others' and not those engaged in such work, it broadens and widens still further the scope of what faith-based youth work might be and, does little to promote a collective understanding.

It also highlights that seeing youth work undertaken by different faith groups through Christian or secular youth work models 'can be distorting' (Khan 2006:12) undermining opportunities to 'present (their) own voice and distinctive shape' (ibid:13). This is why Khan (2013:9) rejects the 'well-intentioned interest from Christian organisations' to work together preferring approaches that have a particular Muslim 'path' (2013:10). Whilst this is an understandable position to take, for me it is personally and practically disappointing, risking – as Khan acknowledges (ibid) – accusations of isolationism and separatism that can undermine collective stances amongst workers 'heading in similar directions' (ibid).

Analysis of the issue of identification in Sikh work with young people indicates a similar position. James's (1974) analysis is now approaching forty years old and is focused upon children, whilst Hall's (2002) consideration of Sikh young people in diaspora caught between two cultures concentrates on the challenges young Sikhs face rather than work undertaken with them. Whilst referring to Sikh young people living in mixed-faith families, Nesbit (2009:11) argues that religion and faith communities 'defy tidy compartmentalism'. Her investigations examined the socialisation of young Sikhs in Britain, but make no reference to informal education processes. In referring to secular and Christian paradigms of youth work, Singh (2011) argues that 'no organisations out there ... concentrate on this type of work'. Some Sikh work with young people

does take place, but this is often in more formal education settings and focused upon language study and worship events and camps;<sup>114</sup> this perhaps being more appropriately described as *youth ministry* than *youth work*, a distinction now critiqued.

### 3a.2.5 Youth Work or Ministry: What is the Intention of Faith-Based Approaches?

Where I would concur with Sercombe (ibid:32) is that ‘youth ministry’ may be better description of work undertaken by many faith-based initiatives. Such work is arguably about telling young people what to do and believe – a pedagogy inconsistent with youth work that historically does not work from a ‘pre-established curriculum’ (Batsleer 2008:5).<sup>115</sup> Indeed, Ahmed et al (2007:5) suggest that adoption of the term ‘youth ministry’ is purposeful in distancing faith-based workers from secular professional developments that might not be favourably viewed. Brierley (2003:10) argues that ‘if youth work is the broad discipline involving all informal educators ... then youth ministry is a ‘specialism’ within it’.

These *professional developments* are not viewed favourably by Hembury (2012) who considers the rise of ‘professionalism’ associated with secular youth and community work a ‘cancer ... of epidemic proportions’. She contends this eats away at Christian youth work activity; whereby the ‘good practice standards’ portrayed incarnationally by Jesus end up being subservient to managerial imperatives of control and risk aversion. Whilst having some sympathy with this argument, the invitation to ‘be as unprofessional as we can get away with’ (ibid) is open to significant misinterpretation potentially raising further alarm amongst those already suspicious of faith-based work.

Whilst separating *work* and *ministry* has the merit of providing a demarcation of role, it does little to explain what this role encompasses. Indeed, whilst Nash’s (ed. 2011:xiii) Christian-based analysis seeks to separate *youth work* and *youth ministry*, the argument that ‘youth ministry is multifaceted’ and ‘not a one-dimensional activity’ does little to point to a more precise understanding of the latter: instead it presents a broad ‘God-focused, inclusive, liberative, restorative, redemptive, empowering, reconciling and incarnational’ (ibid:xviii) perspective of what youth ministry is that could equally describe most, if not all, Christian-based *youth work*.

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<sup>114</sup> For example, see *Sikh Community and Youth Services*, Nottingham ([www.scys-notts.co.uk](http://www.scys-notts.co.uk)).

<sup>115</sup> This is discussed further in a paper I gave at *The Greenbelt Arts Festival 2012* (Pimlott 2012b).

In Muslim settings, much of the formative 'ministry' element is undertaken by the local mosque<sup>116</sup> (eds. Aziz et al 2009:11; Rahman et al 2010; Hamid 2011). This has the potential for, both adding to and being in, conflict with the informal 'work' element (Ahmed 2009:25) in similar ways which have seen institutional church agendas sometimes being at odds with the professionally employed Christian youth worker's perspectives.<sup>117</sup> Asim's (2011) extensive and ground-breaking research of Muslim young people and their engagement with local mosques aptly illustrates this conflict. Whilst 70% of the young people in the research wanted to see more 'youth clubs' (ibid:28), the research focused upon attendance at mosques, trust between generations, mosques having a local vision and community engagement. Whilst these are no doubt important considerations, no credence was given to the possible role of youth work and youth workers. Consequently, whilst Asim might have moved the debate forward for local mosques, he fails to embrace wider possibilities for work with Muslim young people that embrace Ward's (1997) 'inside out/outside in' analysis that has done much to aid understanding of these issues in a Christian context.

Hamid (2006:82) distinguishes between 'Islamic youth work' and 'Muslim youth work'; the former being about a 'confessional approach' (ibid) similar to Christian evangelical outreach type work, with the latter being more of a traditional informal education approach 'informed by and sensitive to the values of Islam' (ibid:83).<sup>118</sup> These tensions and dynamics (Khan 2013:25-26) further illustrate diversity in the faith-based youth ministry and work fields and the need to clarify the precise nature of the work undertaken. It may be that Roberts (2006:22) is correct in suggesting that Muslim youth work, like in part its Christian counterpart, may need to exist outside of 'present [Mosque] institutional frameworks'.<sup>119</sup>

Doyle and Smith (2002) provide a modular critique (below) offering a spectrum of criteria for describing Christian youth work literature and writing.

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<sup>116</sup> The role of madrasahs being significant. In some, curricula development is embracing formal and informal education paradigms. See, for example, [www.nasiha.co.uk](http://www.nasiha.co.uk)

<sup>117</sup> For example, see *Church Unlimited* (eds. Shepherd and Brent 2007).

<sup>118</sup> In 2011, Hamid re-iterates and broadens his analysis – Hamid (2011).

<sup>119</sup> Roberts (ibid) cites organisations such as the 'YMCA, Boys Brigade and Oasis' as Christian organisations set up outside of institutional frameworks to specialise and 'get things done'.

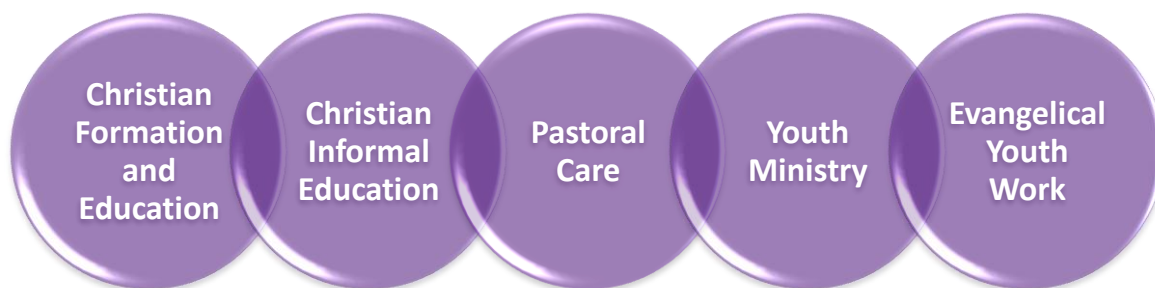


Figure 3. Doyle and Smith's Christian youth work categories

Some of the categories used are somewhat flawed in that they are not pedagogically consistent and, suggest that work is undertaken in isolated domains. For example, rather than determining that they are separate realms, both 'Christian Formation and Education' and 'Informal Education' might be a way of undertaking 'Youth Ministry'. Equally, 'Pastoral Care' and 'Youth Ministry' might be undertaken from an 'Evangelical' perspective. Perhaps 'Evangelical Youth Work' might more aptly be termed 'Evangelism' or 'Missional' work. A number of other important domains identifiable from literature and my practice: for example, the aforementioned 'Social Action'<sup>120</sup> and 'Worship'<sup>121</sup> are also missing.

However, whilst I consider this model inadequate as a comprehensive attempt at defining the intentions of Christian faith-based youth work, it does provide a 'p priori specification of constructs' (Eisenhardt 1989:536) for my investigation and opens up the possibility that such work might be better considered as a spectrum of practices or modular conceptualisation, rather than a single defining narrative. Adjustment of the language might also enable such a model to be devised that could be applied across the whole faith sector.

In summary, I concur with Pugh (1999) that, whilst a significant amount of reflection has taken place 'debate over the purpose of youth work is ongoing'. Furthermore, this debate is 'based around notions of the *good* and *human flourishing* – definitions of which remain open for discussion' (ibid). My proposed explanatory model illuminates these debates enabling further

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<sup>120</sup> See, for example, Passmore et al (2003).

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, Flannagan (2004).

understanding of these parameters to be considered. To shed further light upon my context, I now review literature associated with the principle of the common good and the Big Society.



## Chapter Three: Part B – The Common Good and The Big Society

### 3b.1 The Common Good: A Unifying Telos that Promotes Human Flourishing

The common good is the telos of my metaphorical house model; I contend that it is the one unifying aim of the faith-based work I have investigated. The common good is a contested principle, differently perceived in different contexts: Glasman (2012) argues it is this contestation that gives the principle energy. In this section I analyse origins of the principle of common good idealism, consider the relationship the principle has with faith and religion and review how this telos might be conceptualised in my explanatory model. This establishes a further narrative signpost highlighting the theoretical gap in understanding regarding faith-based youth work in the Big Society.

As introduced in Chapter 1, the common good principle encapsulates many interpretations. These include: pioneering philosophical conceptualisations (Plato 1974 trans.; Aristotle in trans. Barnes 1984); ancient and more modern religious interpretations (Aquinas 1981 trans; Pope Paul VI 1965:GS26; Konstant 1996; Stiltner 1999; Caldecott 2003; Longley 2009:159-179; Ivereigh 2010); historical political discourses (Hobbes 1660; Rousseau 1762 in Cole 1973; Burke in Stanlis 2009); and more contemporary interrogations that take into account emerging and ‘new orthodoxy’ (Jordan 1989) narratives associated with:

- justice (Nozick 1974; Rawls 1999);
- liberty (Novak 1988);
- economics (Polanyi 1996; Lutz 1999; Sagawa and Segal 2000; Etzioni 2002, 2004, 2010, Layard 2011);
- the natural environment (Daly and Cobb 1994; Gorringer 2011);
- education (Harpur 2010); and
- globalisation (Riordan 2008).

Throughout each the relationship between the role played by government or state entity, society as a whole, the place of the individual and the cultural context has been central to the discourse. Proposed assertions have sought greater understanding that might enable individuals,

families, communities, associations and nations to flourish (Norman 2013). It is this aspirational telos that forms an overarching theoretical foundation to my investigation; methodologically giving structure to my findings and explicitly proposing that faith-based youth work is seeking and intending to develop the common good.

I agree with Riordan (2008:4) that literature associated with the common good is littered with use of the term without ever defining it. Furthermore, even when it is defined it is done so in a way that is ‘confusing and frustrating’. Notwithstanding this, my *prima facie* definition is that offered by Rawls (1999:217): the common good is the ‘general conditions that are in an appropriate sense equally to everyone’s advantage’. To reduce confusion, the one proviso I would add is that the common good is not just about the *conditions* but also about the collective and distributive (Fagothey 1959, 2000:330) *outcomes and impact*.

### 3b.1.1 Aristotelian Roots: The Best Telos Thus?

Aristotle’s contention that behaviour is directed towards a telos or end point provides a helpful starting point in considering the place of the common good. His consideration of the roles of virtue, doing good, achieving happiness and well-being, the place of the individual, family, state and embracing citizenship are themes that have markedly shaped contemporary thinking (Jordan 1989; Longley 2012). His ideas have been reconsidered by, amongst others, Big Society commentators: Blond (2010:26) and Norman (2010).<sup>122</sup> MacIntyre (1998:264) contends that Aristotelian thinking is ‘the best theory so far’ about how we ought to exist, with Powell (2013: 44) believing there is a ‘timelessness’ about common good debates. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this investigation to fully critique all these considerations, key questions that inform my study are examined here.<sup>123</sup>

Analysis of the term *common good* highlights its subjectivity. Whilst establishing criteria associated with the idea of *common* might in simple terms be something that is, as mentioned, ‘collectively and distributively’ (Fagothey 1959, 2000:330) applicable to all, the same cannot be said about the use of the term *good*: a highly subjective adjective with multiplicitous applications. For example, the *good* might be a ‘qualitative good’ or a ‘quantitative one’ (Jordan

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<sup>122</sup> Particularly those ideas associated with the relationship between the individual and the state, happiness and virtue.

<sup>123</sup> The work of Blond and Norman is more fully considered in Chapter 3b.

1989:85), be concerned with economic aspirations, justice, equality, social responsibility, the environment, well-being, religious tolerance and/or educational considerations – where any sense of agreeing a universally acknowledged consensus regarding what the telos for each of these is, let alone a collective agreement for all criteria, would seem highly unlikely. Consequently, Calhoun (in Powell and Clemens 1998:34) sees such a telos as a ‘social project’ dependent upon cross-community communication rather than a ‘false claim that we are a single community’ able to achieve a single good. However, Vanier (1999:61) contests this believing that a national and common good can be achieved:

I believe that people can only get involved in the common good of a nation if they discover how we are all called to be people of service, of peace, and of justice. The common good is that which helps all to have a better life.

At the centre of these debates is achieving ‘the inalienable right to a life of dignity and personal development within a corporate framework’ (Atherton, Baker and Reader 2011:xxvii) that benefits an individual and general good of society (Jordan 1989). Aristotle (in trans. Barnes 1984:1094a) begins his *Nicomachean Ethics* with the declaration that ‘the good is what all things desire’ and continues with ‘even if the good is the same for the individual and the city, the good of the city clearly is the greater and more perfect thing to attain and to safeguard. The attainment of the good for one person alone is, to be sure, a source of satisfaction; yet to secure it for a nation and for cities is nobler and more divine’ (ibid:1094b).<sup>124</sup> This sense of aiming for good and, equating the needs of the individual and society is addressed by Smith (1988:111) in discussing youth work as an educational pedagogy:

... it is necessary to address questions surrounding the relationship of the individual to the collectivity: the extent to which education is for the good of the individual or the collectivity. There is a tension between education as an activity which seeks to offer benefits to individuals and education which is designed primarily to meet ‘society’s needs’. ... At some point individuals pursuing their own interests must clash in such a way as to make the term ‘common good’ meaningless.

Detailed defining of the ideological sentiment of what is meant by *good* is beyond the scope of this thesis as it would prove a lengthy and difficult task – more often associated with a

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<sup>124</sup> Hollenbach (2002:4) considers the word ‘city’ a problematic translation of ‘polis’. It could equally be referred to as ‘state’. What is clear, he argues, is the intention is to convey the idea that a larger good is realised in social relationships as opposed to individually orientated ones, but that in Aristotle’s context the ‘polis’ was a relatively small entity not reminiscent of society today (ibid:11).

philosophical study rather than a sociological one. I continue to see faith-based youth work in a non-suspicious sociological vein that has *prima facie good* intentions until the evidence of my investigation portrays otherwise.

What is clear is realising the collective common good involves more than the sum of the individual component parts (Aristotle 10f-1045a in trans. Lawson-Tancred 1998). Equally it is not about a majority good, but a shared universal good that benefits all (Jordan 1989:16) and excludes none (Argandoña 1998:1095-1096; Jordan *ibid*).

Notwithstanding these assertions, how the common good is achieved and when it is realised remain problematic considerations (Andre and Velasquez 1992): most notably these include 'increasingly irreconcilable' (Atherton 2003: 127) dilemmas about how the common good might work in a culturally diverse and plural society (Gorringer 2011:10). In the case of this investigation, for example, can the 'true human end which ought to shape our human endeavour' (Gorringer 2011:10) and meet the needs of both, say, Muslim and Jewish young people be equally satisfied as faith-based youth workers work with them? Furthermore, questions about how *the common* can be applied remain. Is it a geographical conceptualisation (Jewish Leadership Council 2010:8) applicable to a street, town, county, nation state, or global context? Is it more applicable to a group of specific people? For example, is there a common good just for young people that, in some way, feeds into a greater good? Finally, amongst these questions is the consideration that the common good might simply be a principle too far away for young people and faith-based youth workers who are simply trying to survive in a world that is, as already noted, often hostile and precluding.

Andre and Velasquez (1992) highlight an additional challenge; that where individuals:

... choose not to do their part to maintain the common good (and) become "free riders" by taking the benefits the common good provides while refusing to do their part to support the common good ...

This argument introduces and draws upon ideas of justice (Rawls 1999) regarding distribution of wealth, considering whether disproportionate gains can be enjoyed by some as long as they 'are to be of the greatest benefit [for] the least-advantaged members of society' (*ibid*:47). However, for Nozick (1974:32-33) this is an incorrect proposition. He argues that it is the motivations and actions of individuals that dominate and negate any common good possibilities: 'There is no special entity with a good that undergoes some sacrifice for its own good. There are only

individual people – different individual people with their own lives’. In the context of this investigation, this raises the question as to whether those undertaking faith-based youth work are primarily serving and meeting their own needs, or whether they are truly seeking to benefit and serve others.<sup>125</sup>

These dilemmas prevailing, they do not entirely negate the ideal of the common good and, even if this is ultimately the case, the very idea of the notion at least urges:

... us to reflect on broad questions concerning the kind of society we want to become and how we are to achieve that society ... while respecting and valuing the freedom of individuals to pursue their own goals, to recognize and further those goals we share in common. (Andre and Velasquez 1992)

It is this reflecting on *broad questions* and consideration of *the kind of society we want to become* and *how we want to achieve this* which has previously informed my professional practice and contemporarily motivated this investigation. The principle of the common good facilitates propositional thinking, frames my sense of vocation and resonates with my previously identified faith positioning. As such, it is an apt methodological telos that not only explores how we ought to exist, but also enables the data and evidence of my investigation to be fully considered, analysed and evaluated.

I now review common good literature having a faith and religious resonance.

### **3b.1.2 Faith Considerations, Human Flourishing and The Common Good**

I have already referred to the fact that this is not a theological investigation and, as such, I do not intend to undertake a theological critique of various faith and religious understandings regarding the common good. However, in this section of my thesis, I briefly consider the place of human flourishing and pursuit of the common good in different faith traditions to establish that such a notion is by no means confined to one particular domain.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> For studies of work motivations and ‘Quality of Work’ see, for example, Hackman et al (1975); ed. Mullins (1993:498-501); Greenhaus and Powell (2006).

<sup>126</sup> Faith representatives entered into a joint Act of Commitment stating: ‘We commit ourselves, as people of many faiths, to work together for the common good, uniting to build a better society, grounded in values and ideals we share: community, personal integrity, a sense of right and wrong, learning, wisdom and love of truth, care and compassion, justice and peace, respect for one another, for the earth and its creatures’ (Interfaith Network 2000).

... the concept of the common good is fundamental to Christian social theology .... Especially it is a call to each Christian ... to take civic responsibility seriously. We cannot think that God is concerned only with the well-being of Christians. ... We are globally involved with those of other faiths and philosophies ... we must assume God wants us all to flourish ... a common good must continually be sought. (Preston in Lovell 2000:305)

The principle of the common good in the Christian faith tradition appears as early as, possibly, the first and, at the latest, by the second century (Carleton-Paget 1994:9-29).<sup>127</sup> However, it was thirteenth century Catholic Dominican priest Aquinas (1981 trans.) that gave the common good principle considerable faith-based attention by reconciling ‘the philosophy of Aristotle with Christian doctrine’ (Stokes 2007:11). In the very generalising terms that space allows, I consider that he argued that ‘God is the common good of all things and reality’ (Gorringer 2011:4), and that people flourish when pursuing ‘God as the highest good’ (DeCrane 2004:60).

For both Aristotle and Aquinas, the principle of the common good ‘eudaimonia’ (Aristotle in trans. Barnes 1984:1095a 17) was located in the quest for happiness, well-being and human flourishing<sup>128</sup> – a life that goes well and ‘is well-lived’ (Wolterstorff 2008:5). Yale professor, Wolterstorff argues, eudaimonia is about ‘human activity’ and not ‘egoism’ (2008:6-8). Thus the key, he argues, is not about the individual flourishing in isolation, but more about how their flourishing and living-well contributes to others flourishing and living-well. This view underpins the ‘shalom-understanding’ (ibid:21) telos of my thesis as it considers how faith-based youth work exists in order to help young people flourish and live well so that we all live well.

Commentators argue the principle of the common good lost popularity<sup>129</sup> in the latter half of the twentieth century as western philosophy endeavoured to flourish by taking on an ever increasing individual egoism and rationale (Konstant 1996:9-13; Argandoña 2011:3; Gorringer 2011:23-24). It saw a return to more public prominence in the closing decades of the twentieth century as global worldviews<sup>130</sup> began to be questioned (Konstant 1996; Caldecott 2001:5;

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<sup>127</sup> For example, The Epistle of Barnabas (4:10) stating, ‘do not by retiring live alone as if you were already made righteous, but come together and seek out the common good’; the sentiment of the original language being about common welfare, inquiry and advantage. See, [www.earlychristianwritings.com/barnabas.html](http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/barnabas.html) for the original Greek.

<sup>128</sup> For further discussions about these quests, see McMahon (2007), Riordan (2011:207-215) and Atherton, Baker and Reader (2011).

<sup>129</sup> There were clearly ebbs and flows of influence as illustrated by popularity amongst sixteenth century Jesuit Ignatius Loyola and his contemporaries, whose orders proclaimed activities ‘should be directed “according to what will seem expedient to the glory of God and the common good”’ (in Hollenbach 1992:5).

<sup>130</sup> Such as, for example, communism, totalitarianism and capitalism.

Argandoña 2011; Ivereich 2010:9); consequently demanding new responses. The common good became incorporated alongside other foundational teachings to make up what has become known, since 1891 (Ivereigh 2010:19) as Catholic Social Teaching (CST) (Konstant 1996; Charles 1999; Caldecott 2001; Mich 2011). Ivereich (2010:21-24) asserts that there is no established 'canon' (ibid:21) to CST, but rather a series of 'classical encyclicals'; I discuss this further in Section 3.2 as a concluding collective discourse to this chapter.

In Chapter 1, I stated the common good as 'the sum total of the conditions that enable people to reach human fulfilment through the just ordering of society' (Pope Paul VI 1965:GS26). Whilst this describes what needs to happen in order for the common good to come about, it does not, as Argandoña (2011) rightly asserts, portray the common good 'as an end in itself'. This critique can also be applied to my *prima facie* definition from Rawls (199:217) and, that of Protestant theologian Brueggemann (2010:1) who assesses the common good as that which 'reaches beyond private interest, transcends sectarian commitments and offers human solidarity'. These sentiments focus upon the, no doubt valuable, *process* of flourishing towards, rather than determining the final envisaged *end product* of the common good.<sup>131</sup> Given the previously discussed accusations that faith-based work is prone to being divisive (Furbey 2009:37) and not always inclusive (Adshead 2011) in how it goes about its work, questions need to be asked about whether it can achieve these *process* considerations, yet alone any final *end product* telos. This is considered further in Chapter 8.

The common good is also a principle found in other major faith teachings: for example, a foundational principle of Sikhism is *Sarbat da bhalla* (Shani 2008:138) – this common good being 'the culmination of social skills in the hierarchy of social relations and realities' (Singh 1990:243). This understanding resonates with faith-based youth work as it seeks to develop social skills and build relationships. Similar narratives are present in:

- Judaism (Schorsch 1992; Mittleman 2001; Abrahams 2006);
- Hinduism (eds. Chapple and Tucker 2000; Das 2009), where it is argued the *sarva-hitā common good* is the 'highest ethical standard that ought to apply' (eds. Chapple and Tucker 2000:12);

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<sup>131</sup> Brown (n.d. in Russell 2012), writing from a Church of England perspective, highlights the process dynamic of the common good and positions this as: 'the pursuit of the common good is an aspect of personal discipleship, but also part of God's calling to the social and political structures'.

- Buddhism (Plamintr 1994); and
- Islam<sup>132</sup> (Motif 2005; Salvatore and Eickleman 2006; Bari 2011).

Indeed, Motif (2005), writing to an Islamic audience, argues for an ‘ecumenical space’ within which the common good can be pursued globally and collectively. Whilst Salvatore and Eickleman (2006:xxi) think that due to ‘historically known and contemporary debates’<sup>133</sup> this is unachievable even in just Muslim contexts, they do at least acknowledge it is a subject of significance both in Islam and the wider world: as religions seek to negotiate ‘the space between the state and more traditional religious authorities’ (ibid). If faith-based youth work is to realise the common good, then it too has to negotiate this space.

Having considered the historical roots of the common good principle and its association with faith and human flourishing, I now summarise how the common good telos might be achieved.

### 3b.1.3 The Common Good as Regulative Ideal and Guiding Point

Given these difficulties, it might be considered a common good telos is unachievable. Bretherton (2010:29) rejects use of the *common good* term at a political level on the basis that it is ‘an ever-deferred horizon of possibility, rather than a plausible political reality’. However, his consideration that it ‘may still operate as a regulative ideal or guiding point’ seemingly has resonance with wider idealistic pursuits; consequentially, I contend ‘it would be premature ... to conclude ... that the common good either does not exist or is beyond comprehension’ (Lutz 1999:125). Indeed, other absolutes such as freedom, equality, security and a fair deal for all might be similarly illusive, but this does not invalidate their desirability or render pursuit of them redundant.

Rawl’s (1993) ‘overlapping consensus’ approach offers one way of addressing these problems: enabling the common good to be seen as the type of ongoing idealistic project that reaches into the future, whilst recognising the challenges of the present. When this idea is combined with Volf’s (2011:78) assertion that ‘it is understandable that Christians seek social influence

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<sup>132</sup> It should be noted most Islamic worldviews see the roles of religion, society and the state differently to Grecian-Judaeo-Christian traditions typified by western societies. See, for example, Williams (2012c:81), Cox and Marks (2003) and An-An’im (2008).

<sup>133</sup> These being Islamic theological discourses – examination of which are outside the scope of this investigation.



[because] responsibility to ‘mend the world’ and serve the common good is inscribed into the very character of Christianity as a prophetic religion’, a representation of what might be possible emerges in a manner reflective of my own beliefs portrayed in Chapter 2.

Having highlighted key discourses associated with the pursuit of the common good principle, I contend that a summation can be made that my *prima facie* definition of the common good from Unwin (2011)<sup>134</sup> – used to begin this thesis – is a helpful proposition that can be used to appraise the extent to which faith-based youth work aides human flourishing and pursuit of the common good as a telos.

My proposed explanatory model of faith-based youth work asserts that the telos of the common good is the ultimate aim of such work – the ideal and guiding point. Contemporarily, this work takes place in the emerging policy context of the Big Society. I now critically review and analyse the notion of the Big Society and consider the extent to which it might enable the common good.

### **3b.2 The Big Society: A Smaller State to Mend Broken Britain?**

In this section I consider the impact of the Big Society notion on faith-based youth work. This is important because it represents the policy context within which such work takes place. In my investigation, consideration needs to be given to how the Big Society vision influences faith-based youth work organisations, the way it works, and the anticipated outcomes it achieves in order that my proposed explanatory model has currency in the policy environment it operates in.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the Big Society has its origins in a philosophical ideal that seeks to find the ‘optimal relationship between individual responsibility, local innovation and civic action’ (Smythe in Seddon et al 2011:5) to enable ‘social recovery’ (Szreter 2012: 39). It is David

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<sup>134</sup> Repeated for reference purposes: ‘The profoundly important belief, shared by people of all faiths and none, that every individual is precious, that everyone has worth, and that the hunger, need and despair of any, should rightly pain us all. A belief that in a good society we share the risks of our own vulnerability, can identify that which makes us collectively strong, and can contribute to the flowering of everyone’s capabilities, not just the achievement of the very few. A good society that recognises that what we hold in common is both important and valuable, and that jeopardising the common good for individual gain, diminishes us all ...’

Cameron's 'mission in politics' (House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee 2011:4) co-created with his former Strategy Director, Steve Hilton (Seldon 2012:11).<sup>135</sup>

As a key aspect of the Coalition Government's vision it endeavours to build society by:

1. promoting social action;
2. empowering local communities; and
3. opening up public service contracts (Office for Civil Society 2010:6).

It is a vision project about which:

There is little clear understanding ... among the public, and there is confusion over the Government's proposals to reform public services. In particular, the ambition to open up public services to new providers has prompted concerns about the role of private companies which have thus far not been adequately addressed by Ministers. (House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee 2011:3)

This part of my review examines discourses associated with faith-based work, the Big Society and how the relationship between individuals, the state and the market might foster the common good. Whilst it is beyond the scope of my investigation to critically review all the political, economic, legal, philanthropic, enterprise and well-being aspects<sup>136</sup> of the Big Society vision, key works are explored in order to provide a:

- brief summary of the Big Society notion – *An Aspirational Vision*;
- theoretical context and justification for the idea – *Changing Governmentality and Market, State and Civil Society*;
- summary analysis of the key determinants relating to faith-based work – *'We've Been Doing it for Years'*; and an
- abstracted discourse regarding the Big Society and youth work – *Young People and the Big Society?*

Perhaps coincidentally, but adding significance to some of the arguments proposed by this investigation, much of the early literature associated with the Big Society has been written by people with a faith or theological background. Blond, writer of the influential *Red Tory* (2010),

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<sup>135</sup> Who has since departed from his role, taking an 'academic sabbatical' (The Economist 2012).

<sup>136</sup> There are fully considered by, for example, Jordan (2010), Bishop and Green (2011), Hilton and McKay (eds. 2011), as well as by Blond (2010) and Norman (2010).

was an academic theologian.<sup>137</sup> Glasman, the principle architect of *Blue Labour*, (eds. Glasman et al 2011) is Jewish, whilst Millbank, influencer of both Blond and Glasman, is a Christian theologian. Some of the most robust evaluations of the Big Society notion have come from the Christian Common Wealth (2010) group of academics and the Jewish Leadership Council (2010). It would, therefore, seem apt to focus upon this literature – supplemented by other notable contributions from politician Norman (2010; 2011a) and academics Ishkanian and Szeleter (eds. 2012).<sup>138</sup>

A prelude to the main arguments presented here purports that Blond draws upon the work of Burke to engender a radical social-reform agenda that restores civic society, creates popular prosperity and places responsibilities upon individuals; thereby restoring moral virtues that will mend broken Britain. For Norman, it is the reform of politics, corporate governance and the restoration of a human touch that corrects a failing long-term overreliance on the state to restore fortunes. For Glasman, it is a return to societal involvement of trade unions, faith groups and voluntary associations that will achieve these objectives – with a ‘more relational democracy ... pursuing the common good, using community organising to challenge the power of the state and the market’ (Cox and Schmuecker 2013:2). The collective work of Ishkanian and Szeleter (2012) concludes that there is nothing new about the Big Society as it draws upon flawed understandings of the past, flawed current economic policies and flawed views of civil society. I now analyse these considerations and their impact.

### 3b.2.1 An Aspirational Vision

Cameron (2009a) has argued the ‘recent growth of the state has promoted not social solidarity, but selfishness and individualism’ and that a need exists for ‘a re-imagined state’ facilitating a process to ‘actively create the Big Society, directly agitating for, catalysing and galvanising social renewal’. However, in order to achieve this *re-imagining* the process requires that citizens are re-

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<sup>137</sup> Graham (2012) debates theology in Blond’s work. She notes the absence of any faith dynamic to *Red Tory*, questioning if this is because of secular demands to omit it, a strategic approach to make it more palatable, or a ‘deliberate clocking’ (2012:296) decision by Blond.

<sup>138</sup> I note that whilst some literature includes the phrase ‘The Big Society’, these are not actually works about the notion: notable examples being Bishop and Green (2011) and Rhodes (2011). Both address important topics (capitalism and environmental sustainability respectively), but inevitable conclusions must be reached that such titles are opportunistic flags of convenience rather than Big Society critiques.

shaped, re-guided and re-moulded (Dean 2010:193) in the manner previously discussed. In 2010 Cameron declared:

You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility. I call it the Big Society... the biggest, most dramatic redistribution of power from elites in Whitehall to the man and woman on the street. (Cameron 2010a)

Thus began a contentious aspirational vision for the future of British society.<sup>139</sup>

In contrast with other and more recent policies, the 'Big Society isn't about following a code of practice ... It's about empowering communities, empowering societies and letting them get on with it' (Stunell 2010:8). Thus it might be considered an outcome rather than a policy and a 'vision, not a plan' (Faithworks 2010:7). This has led to criticisms of it being overambitious, divisive, 'vague' (Lewis 2012:186), 'vaguely unsettling' (Powell 2013:13), incoherent (Seldon 2012:3) and both 'airy fairy and too granular' (Kruger in House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee 2011:Ev5) – with Kartuplis (2011) saying 'it is rare that so much has been said about something, and yet so little remains known'.

Given the visionary nature of the notion, what the Big Society means practically needs further dissemination. Whilst appeal is constantly made to the 'local', 'there has been no clarity on whether Big Society includes the elected and accountable local governments' (Szreter 2011:39). Big Society practice seems focused on local community as 'bounded by geography rather than values or belief' (Hilton 2011:90). Whilst this positioning has some attractions, it does nothing to clarify what the vision is about.

Norman (2010:195) endeavours to remedy this:

The Big Society is widely thought of as a political programme. But it is more than that. It is a set of interlocking ideas, even a philosophy; a concerted and wide ranging attempt to engage with the twin challenges of social and economic decline, and to move us towards a more connected society. It rests on a bold conjecture, that lying beneath the surface of British society today is a vast amount of latent and untapped potential energy.

It is this sense of lack of connectedness and untapped energy that perhaps has most resonance with many current challenges associated with work with young people.<sup>140</sup> Given the voluntary

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<sup>139</sup> I have set out a broader, less-academic, overview of the Big Society in *The Big View* (Pimlott 2011b).

<sup>140</sup> A sentiment highlighted by comments (from, for example, Diane Abbot, Ken Livingstone, David Cameron) post the 2011 riots that 'young people feel they have no stake in our society'. See also Morrell et al (2011), Singh, D. et al. (eds. 2011 and 2012).

association and informal relationship process of youth work previously outlined (Smith 2001, Nicholls 2012), there would seem to be significant synergy between the objectives of youth work and those of the Big Society. Drawing together my previous analysis of what youth work might actually be, it can be seen that there is a synthesis of argument between the historical fundamental imperatives of youth work and the Big Society. For both youth worker and Big Society proponent, state orchestration and laissez-faire societal frameworks need to be augmented by intentionality of relationship if they are to actualise the common good. It is this emphasis on relationships (Blond 2010; Norman 2010:78-117; Glasman 2011a) that is perhaps distinctly different to individual and market-dominated narratives of the recent past. However, as already noted, it must be questioned (Porter 2010) if government can ever top-down mandate people to develop technologies of agency and citizenship (Dean 2010:196), form relationships, increase what they give to others and take responsibility for not only themselves and their families, but their communities and local service provision.<sup>141</sup>

The Common Wealth (ibid) critique goes further fearing any quest to mandate relationships is nothing more than ‘an ideological disguise designed to maintain the status of the economically and politically powerful’ (ibid). Even if this is a correct critique, Daughton (2011) maintains, ‘the good thing about the Big Society is that it is founded on the positive anthropology that people do want to be part of and help wider society’; in so doing underlining its potential contribution to developing the common good.

The paradox Glasman (2011b) identifies is that whilst the vision seeks to bring people together to make things better ‘we seem to have a fear of people coming together!’ This is illustrated by the previously discussed national suspicion and hostility (Williams 2012a) when young people gather in the community. More often than not, they are simply passing the time of day as they have nowhere else to go. Rather than seeing this as a positive expression of togetherness it is viewed with suspicion and fear (Pimlott and Pimlott 2005).

If aspirations are to be realised, the ‘need to work with the most vulnerable not just the most proximate’ (Daughton 2011) remains a necessity. Whether or not this aspect of the common good can be fully achieved given our starting point and resource-base remains questionable, and

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<sup>141</sup> I note, however, that Seldon (2012:13) argues that one of the ironies of the Big Society is that government action is needed to make the vision a reality.

it might be that the Big Society aspiration is simply too utilitarian (Bentham 1789 in Schofield 2006; Mills and Crisp 1998) in requiring people to care for everyone else in society.

As previously considered, the role of the state, what it should pay for and provide, and what individuals should do for themselves has been at the heart of many historical political theory debates.<sup>142</sup> The current government is caught between the ideological premise of ‘crony capitalism’<sup>143</sup> and a new aspiration for responsible capitalism<sup>144</sup> that leaves many questions unanswered. If these questions are not appropriately addressed, too many people will be caught in the intervening gap between spending cuts, ongoing debate and an awaited illusive economic recovery. This danger is strongly apparent in the youth work sector as services have been cut and a void created (Butler 2013).

### 3b.2.2 Changing Governmentality

Given these considerations, it appears the Big Society is simply a contemporary notion of governmentality – a term coined by Foucault (Gordon 1991:1) – that reflects a continuing change in approaches to governance (Bevir and Rhodes 2003) in western democracies. As such, the Big Society ‘is part of a modern form of managing the conduct of individuals and communities such that government, far from being removed or reduced, is bettered’ (Bulley and Sokhi-Bulley 2012:4) as ‘the changing boundaries between state and civil society’ (Bevir and Rhodes 2003:42) are redrawn in an on-going discourse regarding how resources are allocated, control exercised and society co-ordinated (ibid).

Governmentality refers to the way government uses power to exercise control over its people to shape their minds and develop citizens best suited to fulfilling objectives and policies. Foucault defined governmentality as ‘the art of government’ (Foucault 1991:87) where governments exert their power via ‘institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit complex power’ (ibid:102) in order to

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<sup>142</sup> For example, see the differing theories of Weber, Durkheim, Marx; the ‘Great Society’ discourse (Harris 2011:27-38) and the Distributist League campaign (in Blond 2010:29-31).

<sup>143</sup> A term used to describe a close exploitative relationship between the capitalist market and the state. See, for example, Kang (2002). The term has been subsequently adopted by United Kingdom commentators, such as Jesse Norman (2011b; 2013), to critique the current context.

<sup>144</sup> A notion advocated by political party leaders; see, for example, Groom (2012). Bartley (2012) contends responsible capitalism ‘is an oxymoron akin to “well-mannered war” or “friendly famine”’.

achieve their objectives. Modern democracies endeavour to balance control against the freedom and liberty of the individual within society, whilst recognising individuals have to be ‘first shaped, guided and moulded’ (Dean 2010:193) in order to exercise their rights as individuals. Inevitably this embeds a ‘foundational dichotomy of state versus society’ (Bulley and Sokhi-Bulley 2012:6). This is aptly illustrated by policy agendas such as the Big Society where the state seeks to empower and liberate individuals for their common good (Foucault 1991:94-95) and well-being, but has to do so by intervening in people’s lives, actively directing and managing how they act and behave (Bulley and Sokhi-Bulley 2012:7). This dichotomy is at the heart of neoliberal governmentality: what is presented policy-wise as being about non-intervention actually requires strong intervention in order to construct and maintain it. In the same way that government has to construct and maintain markets by implementing policies to avoid monopolies, combat cartels and protect the environment, government is strongly intervening to ensure individuals and civil society conform to the neoliberal ideas I discuss elsewhere regarding commodification, philanthropy, coercion and the entire rationale of Big Society requiring smaller government.

Triantafyllou (2012:100) contends, whilst embracing the ideal of less government intervention, the coalition has created and imposed upon people, ‘an institutional setting conducive to [them] making the right lifestyle choice’. Whilst such interventionism might be seen as necessary to create space for a new hegemony and ‘reinventing government’ (Osborne and Gaebler 1993), suspicions emerge that suggest whole-scale social engineering, and a lack of trust in the market and civil society to realise the desired outcomes without governmental interference.

So, the Big Society notion might be said to typify contemporary governmentality as it seeks betterment in a particular prescriptive manner. It suggests a government standing back from too much interference in people’s lives; instead ‘offloading responsibility away from the state’ (Kerr, Byrne and Foster 2011:202), embracing thinking that enables people to be empowered, enterprising and responsible for their own destiny – what Burchell (1996:29) terms ‘responsibilisation’. However, far from being liberated, citizens are coerced – or driven by a narrative of ‘threat and ... fear’ (ibid) – into self-regulation and activism within the narrow and prescriptive parameters of neo-liberal (Harvey 2005) market mechanisms which – whilst portrayed as freedom and non-interference – are, as I contend and discuss further shortly, littered with highly paradoxical imperatives where government ‘defines what is right’ (Bulley and Sokhi-Bulley 2012:16) to the exclusion of critique and dissent.

For Dean (2010:193), these 'practices of liberty' where governments:

contract, consult, negotiate, create partnerships, even empower and activate forms of agency, liberty and voices of individuals, consumers, professional, households, neighbourhoods and communities [but] set norms, standards, benchmarks, performance indicators, quality controls and best practice standards, to monitor, measure and render calculable the performance of these various agencies (ibid)

result in 'technologies of agencies and ... citizenship' (ibid:196) that charge the citizen with the responsibility for self-governing and shaping society – an analysis highly reflective of a Big Society narrative. The challenge here is that if the *right* people do not respond and rise to these challenges, then other less able, less moral (Jordan 2010) and less communally motivated people might step into any vacuum and exercise empowerment. The consequence, as Bishop and Green (2011:72) observe, is the risk that 'governments people the world with fools' – an argument civil society and faith-based representatives might well assert regarding commodification agendas within Big Society notions, as I discuss shortly.

Whilst there may be virtue in empowering and placing 'responsibilisation' (Burchell 1996:29) on the population, in the Big Society, this is done by diminishing the role of the state and increasing the influence of the market: I think this is an unwelcome shift. For some areas of social life – transporting prisoners and outsourcing Local Authority back-room administration tasks, for example – this mechanism might operate well. However, it does not work well for all areas of life. What can happen is that a vacuum materialises because state services are cut, but individuals and/or civil society do not respond to fill the vacuum. Domestic violence sufferers (Ishkanian 2012:177), the poor, and – in the context of my study – youth work, for example, become the victims: victims, Gillies (2013:92) argues, of the type of symbolic violence previously discussed. It would thus appear that the Big Society is caught in a conceptual trap. As Joseph (2012:13) notes, 'with neoliberal governmentality we see the extension of the norms and values of the market to other areas of social life'. Because the dominant language and objectives of contemporary governmentality are primarily orientated around neoliberal economic concerns, those areas of life that do not easily yield a profit, are at once vulnerable to diminished prevalence and reduced consideration. Welfare orientated work with the poor, homeless, and youth work, for example, will always need some form of underpinning resourcing because there is no obvious profit to be made from such work. Thus, for the Big Society it must be questioned if neoliberal governmentality is a fully usable framework for practice.



I now turn to consider whose responsibility it is to fill such any voids resulting from austerity cuts; particularly considering the space faith-based youth work occupies within the competing dynamics of the market, the state and civil society.

### **3b.2.3 Market, State and Civil Society: How Best to Achieve the Common Good?**

In this section I consider that whilst faith-based youth work began in civil society (Seligman 1992; Walzer 1995; eds. Douglas and Friedmann 1998; Anheier 2004; Alexander 2006; Wagner 2006; Edwards 2009; Carnegie Trust 2010, Powell 2013), it is now being pulled in different directions as it helps young people flourish in pursuit of the common good.

Jeffs and Smith (eds. 2010:3) assert that ‘youth work was born, and remains fundamentally a part, of civil society – that space located betwixt the realms of the state and the market, wherein individuals and collectives seek to serve and provide for other citizens’.<sup>145</sup> The Big Society notion is underpinned by this individual and collective approach that looks to accomplish this *servicing* and *providing*. ‘The Big Society is what happens whenever people work together for the common good. It is about achieving our collective goals in ways that are more diverse, more local and more personal’ (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010:2). However, if people coming together is key (Norman 2010:78-117), contention arises over how best to organise such relationships in order to achieve the common good. For Dean, this is the modern challenge for governmentality: ‘getting the balance right between governing and not governing, state and civil society, state and market’ (Dean 2010:263). In short, should the forming and resourcing of relationships be left to individuals, organised voluntary groups, state-backed bodies and/or commercial enterprises seeking to make a profit? Thus, in my context, is civil society, the state and/or the market the best vehicle(s) to help young people flourish and realise a ‘well-being for all’ (Atherton, Baker and Reader 2011:124) common good?

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<sup>145</sup> Whilst Ivereigh (2010:51) positions civil society as ‘the place where people come together voluntarily to act in and around shared interests and values’, Anheier (2004:1) determines no one has ‘yet found the conceptual and methodological repertoire adequate for discussing civil society’, and that it might be considered ‘the sphere of institutions and individuals located between the family, the state and the markets in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests’ (Anheier 2004:22). Notwithstanding these considerations, I have not presented a full review of civil society literature as I am not seeking to critique theory associated with it. Furthermore, whilst noting the challenges associated with civil society discourses, I am only considering concepts that have bearing upon my investigation.

Szreter and Ishkanian (2012:4) suggest that the Big Society initiative is just the latest attempt to bring coherence to the ‘vast and diverse ecological social space’ that makes up civil society with the notion located between ‘the entire gaunt of institutions, associations and activities that lie between those of the tax-funded central state, the market and the elementary social unit of the household’. It is these debates that have given new emphasis to how the individual, the state, the market and civil society<sup>146</sup> interrelate for the common good (Jordan 1989:73).

As already noted, who undertakes youth work, how it is defined and organised and what it does are multifaceted considerations. Faith-based youth work has found itself competing with others as civil society, the state and the market posture and interact in what is a tripolar, fluid and complex relationship. This can be represented within the following triangular conceptualisation:

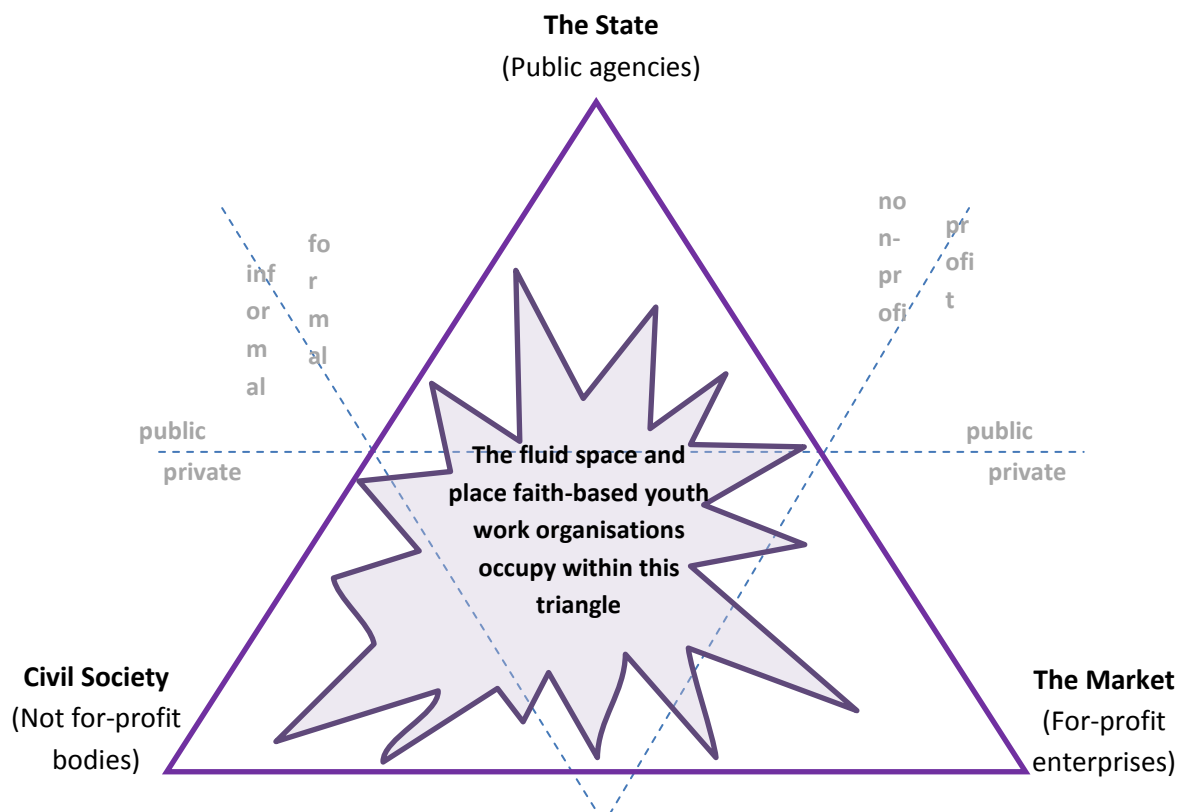


Figure 4. The space faith-based youth work occupies – adapted from: Pestoff (1992) and Evers and Laville (2004:17).

<sup>146</sup> For a broader analysis and critique of state, market and voluntary sector structures, see Alcock (2008:125-163).

Claiming that thinking has been ‘blinded’ (2010:94) by the work of writers such as Hobbes (1660), Norman contends that the ignoring of civil society intermediaries (such as youth workers in my context) between the supreme authority of the state and the individual – representing the ‘will of the people’ (Norman 2010:103) – has been erroneous and that an alternative response is required that embraces flourishing relationships that ‘link us all together and give fulfilment to our lives’ (ibid:103).

Arguments about some form of *social contract* (Aquinas 1981 trans.; Hobbes 1660; Locke 1689 in 1988; Rousseau 1762 in Cole 1973) have provided the backdrop to continual debates about the ways individuals, communities and the state coexist so that order is maintained, protection assured, freedom granted and the common good achieved (Glasman 2012). Blond asserts that the ‘culture of individual rights has also grown up at the expense of the very important rights of religious and other corporate bodies that preserve and encourage values that may be at odds with the nihilistic culture of economic liberalism’ (2010:156). It is with this in mind that he proposes a new understanding of ‘the civil state’ (ibid:239-279): the principles of which underpin the Big Society notion.

Edmund Burke has been described as the ‘patron saint of the Big Society’ (Marquand 2010). His thinking that we are natural social beings, whereby our humanity does not need constant state mediation, is seen by Norman as fundamental in achieving ‘the connected society’ (2010:102-117). Perhaps in a manner similar to that witnessed when faith-based youth work first began, he sees people as social animals: where human beings find self-expression and identity in relation to each other, thereby helping people create social institutions that shape them and society. Some of these institutions stand between the individual and the state (2010:104-105) – thereby, he concludes, enabling and building the Big Society.

Whilst Norman encourages wider market competition (ibid:167), the weakness of his argument overstates the role of the market in helping the poor (Glasman 2012), and understates the potential abuses of capitalist markets<sup>147</sup> that ‘puts profit before people’ (Millbank 2011b). Carnegie Trust (2012:17) notes, ‘civil society provides a counterweight to the tendencies to monopoly which are found so strongly both in markets and politics which can turn against the

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<sup>147</sup> For example, the failure of care home provider, Southern Cross (Mundy 2011) and alleged fraud of welfare to work contractor, A4e (Neville 2012).

public interest'. As long as faith-based youth work remains part of civil society, it is in this respect that it has a clear role to play.

For Edwards (2009) civil society comprises three key elements. Civil society as:

1. *associational Life* – aiming for social, economic and political progress (ibid:18-44);
2. the *Good Society* – providing opportunities for people to act together: developing values and skills (ibid:45-62); and
3. the *Public Sphere* – a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good (ibid:63-81).

Chandhoke<sup>148</sup> (2005) criticises Edwards and debates the impossibility of 'the common good' in a plural society believing it unlikely civil society organisations can ever untangle themselves from the forces of the state and the market; a point also made by Hall and Trentmann (2005:2).<sup>149</sup> Notwithstanding this, Edwards' ternary understanding offers a further 'a priori specification of constructs' (Eisenhardt 1989:536) enabling my investigation to assess the nature of civil society in faith-based youth work.<sup>150</sup> However, recognition is given to two distinctive and potentially conflicting understandings of civil society (Foley and Edwards 1996; Anheier 2004:21) that have further bearing upon my analysis.

Firstly, there is the view advocated, for example, by Putnam (2001) and de Tocqueville (trans. Bevan 2003) that civil society is about developing 'un-coerced human' (Walzer 1995:7) associations to democratically develop the common good. Secondly, there is a view that it is more about challenging the state (and for that matter the market) to be more democratic and just – a perspective shared by, for example, Alinsky (1989). And herein lies a potential problem for youth work in that policymakers would like such work to be the former (Lister et al 2005) – literally building society. In contrast many youth workers see young people in society as

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<sup>148</sup> Space does not allow a full critique, but Chandhoke (2005) challenges Edwards perspective believing it fails to adequately consider 'the downsides and the dark sides of democratic life'.

<sup>149</sup> I note *The National Service of Thanksgiving to Celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen* (2012) sought to bring these dynamics together, rather than untangle them and contained the following prayer: 'We pray that we may grow closer together in our partnership of government, business and civil society'. The prayer was given added poignancy within my investigation as it was read by a young person, highlighting the contemporary significance of these debates in faith settings.

<sup>150</sup> For further reference, see Chapter 5.

marginalised victims of demonising approaches and, want the latter – ‘going against the grain’ (Nicholls 2012:189).<sup>151</sup>

I agree with Anheier (2004:21) and consider it this is not an *either or* contradictory discourse, but rather a complementary one that Alexander (2006:4) refers to: as one that ‘generates the capacity for social criticism and democratic integration at the same time’. I would argue faith-based youth work needs to embrace both perspectives if it is to achieve the common good and serve young people effectively. However, the challenge for the Big Society vision is that if it is to work, government must become involved in civil society and shape how it works. As Foucault has noted, these types of dilemma are not new – government has always had to exert control to achieve objectives. He reflects that as far back as the sixteenth century:

‘*Government*, did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather, it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups, might be directed – the government of children, of souls, of communities, of the sick ... To govern, in this sense, is to control the possible field of action of others’ (Foucault in Dreyfus and Rainbow 1983:341)

The work of Giddens (1994; 1998; 2003) gave new energy to these debates. His *Third Way* (1998) analysis helped change the policy landscape as services, previously the exclusive domain of the state, were increasingly delivered by market and civil society organisations. Mearn’s (2012) assertion that ‘New Labour was the midwife for many of the Coalition Government’s policies’ reflects Chanan and Miller’s view of governmentality that what has occurred ‘is in fact a refreshment and amplification of a cross-party theme that has been building up for decades’ (Chanan and Miller 2010:2);<sup>152</sup> a paradigm shift that ‘drives attention away from government and towards the responsibility of others’ (Szreter and Ishkanian 2012:10). It is in this environment, where ‘third way discourses have become hegemonic’ (McAnulla 2010:287), that faith-based youth work operates.

If Giddens provided the theoretical framework for New Labour, it was the work of Willetts (1994) that provided a tipping point in Conservative party thinking resulting in much of the

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<sup>151</sup> For further insight over such dualism discourses, see Layder (2006) regarding agency and structure.

<sup>152</sup> This cross-party theme is reflected in a number of works all using colours in their titles: The aforementioned *Red Tory* (Blond 2010) and *Blue Labour* (eds. Glasman et al 2011), also, *The Purple Book* (ed. Philpot 2011b) and the Liberal Democrat’s *Orange Book* (eds. Laws and Marshall 2004). For a critique of international comparisons, see McCabe (2010:4-6); Office for Civil Society (2011); and Ketola (2012:158-167).

present policy positioning.<sup>153</sup> By contending that ‘strong [community] institutions thrive in a free market with limited government’ (ibid:55), he presented a post-Thatcherite response to address the ‘caricature that all she stood for was individualism, selfishness and the profit motive’ (Willett 2005:27). The emerging Big Society language of ‘empowerment’, ‘community activism’ and, what has become known as, ‘localism’ (ibid:30-31) can clearly be seen in his thinking.

Willett’s also advocated for ‘reliable core funding for projects that work’ (ibid:31) in the voluntary sector considering it to be what they most want. I consider it regrettable that the Big Society has not been embraced this proposal. Whilst this may be blamed on the global economic crisis, it threatens to undermine the very core of what the notion aspires to. In a damning critique of the current approach, Edwards (2011) argues:

... the coalition is trapped in a piecemeal approach that’s incapable of reproducing any of the conditions under which civil society has flourished. It’s an approach that’s akin to building a house while simultaneously weakening the foundations, and hoping that new wallpaper and other special touches will paper over the cracks that result. More community organisers, social enterprises and the Big Society Bank (Capital) will never compensate for the erosion of human security that is taking place through budget cuts, the privatization of public services, and the changing structure of the economy.

Along with Norman (2010) and Ivereigh (2010), Blond (2010) argues the post-war years witnessed the ‘disappearance of civil society’ (ibid:3).<sup>154</sup> Overseen by governments of both left and right political persuasions, he argues there has been a collective neo-liberal<sup>155</sup> (Harvey 2005) failure that, whilst seeking to liberate and prosper society, has simply allowed the market to increase inequalities and the state to become more powerful and controlling. In advocating a return to a virtuous culture (ibid:159), recapitalisation of the poor (ibid:205) and a strong and vibrant civil state (ibid:239) he concludes that a new civic conservatism can be achieved. Whilst offering a compelling argument, Blond does not fully define these assertions: perhaps he

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<sup>153</sup> Described as ‘the real father of Cameronism’ (Nelson 2006). I visited David Willett’s ministerial offices to obtain a photocopy of *Civic Conservatism* (as out of print) and wish to record my thanks to him regarding this.

<sup>154</sup> Although, Hall and Trentmann (2005:1) argue civil society has undergone a re-emergence and become a ‘remarkable triumph’ in the last three decades, Hilton (2012:81-102) argues views about the state of civil society depend on how you evaluate it.

<sup>155</sup> For a definition of neo-liberalism see the Glossary. For a further discussion see, for example: eds. Saad-Filho and Johnston (2005); Giroux (2011b); Nicholls (2011; 2012:47-84); Sandel (2012).

underestimated (or was not fully anticipating the impact of) the global economic crisis?<sup>156</sup> These factors have gone some way to undermining some of the presumptions made.

Ivireigh (2010:21) considers that 'the dislocation brought about by modern capitalism' has resulted in a:

... shrinking of civil society and the growth in the power of the state and the market, a process which has resulted in the increasing breakdown of society and the weakening of the mediating institutions (such as churches) which make life meaningful and hold the state and the market to account.

There have been accusations that the Big Society has just been an excuse for cuts (Common Wealth 2010; Bradford 2012:133; Nicholls 2012:224) and, an attempt to further introduce 'false worship of markets' and mechanisms to do the job of government (Common Wealth 2010) where people 'feel compelled to buy into the rhetoric and to engage' (Szreter and Ishkanian 2012:11). This is why Nichols (2012:29) argues that as youth work funding has reduced future work is being shaped by a 'market-driven imperative'.

Whilst there may be some who have taken advantage of the economic situation to achieve their ideological objectives, the fact that these *civic conservatism* ideas have been in development for many years would seemingly negate some of these accusations. However, such concerns cannot be ignored if the notion is to become a reality. Perhaps ignoring these concerns has put the Big Society initiative at risk. Whilst the actual ideology associated with the notion may well continue to inform and shape policy, the use of the name itself appears diminished. It would be regrettable if any negative Big Society perceptions inhibited future ambitions to empower people, promote the role of communities and support civil society.

Arguably in this current time of austerity it is the state and the market which are dominant forces.<sup>157</sup> Jameson (2010) argues that 'the civil sector is still the weakest of the three sectors. The market is the biggest adversary, and 'we need to rethink the role that markets should play in our society' (Sandel 2012:7) so that they can be more just, humanising and collectively advantageous. As Millbank (2011b) reminds:

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<sup>156</sup> For example, the UK recession threatens a reduced civil society (Independent Action 2011a:1), a disproportionate impact on poor communities (Tunstall 2009:4-6; Brewer, Browne and Joyce 2011), and has simultaneously witnessed public scandals and civil unrest: such as the G20 protests of 2009, protests against student fees in 2010 and riots in England, 2011.

<sup>157</sup> For a discussion regarding this, see National Coalition for Independent Action (2013).

The market is an impersonal brutal mechanism, so the state has to step in to rescue people from the market. The state then ends up doing the same as the market. ... the state and the market need to be subservient to society ... if you have justice in the first place then you don't need the state to step in to rescue it.

Glasman (2011b) concurs:

... if the state goes into alliance with the market, there is no democratic representation to challenge the risks ... the two dominant institutions of the market and the state lead to enormous spaces of lack.

The lack of 'intention to take on market power' (Glasman in House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee 2011:Ev7) results in imbalance and a lack of focus in promoting justice and equality.<sup>158</sup> This threatens the success of the Big Society notion (Common Wealth 2010).<sup>159</sup> The answer according to Atherton, Baker and Reader (2011:67) however, is not 'the severe reduction' in the power of the state and market's influence but a 'widening of civil society's principle of reciprocity'.

In different economic circumstances the chances of the Big Society achieving its objectives may have been significantly higher; funding could have increased to support the development of mutual enterprises,<sup>160</sup> voluntaryism, charitable organisations and civic collectivism. Rather, such funding has been curtailed resulting in a contraction of these objectives amply evidenced by what has happened in cuts to youth services (National Council Voluntary Youth Services 2011). As Blond (in Heywood 2011) summarises, 'If he is not careful, Cameron risks presiding over the incoherence of a recapitulated free-market economics allied with a compassionate and impotent version of socially concerned conservatism'. Perhaps the antidote to this scenario is 'for civil society to set the agenda of the Big Society and community organising, not the government' (Jameson 2010). If this were the case, then I perceive faith-based youth work would be able to occupy a more significant space and place.

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<sup>158</sup> Such an analysis is not new and has often ruefully resonated in faith settings. For example, Church leaders sided with Victorian industrialists in allowing workers to be exploited for six days a week as long as they attended church on the seventh. See *Victorian Manchester*, (Moss 2009). Nineteenth century Jewish immigrants found themselves at odds with the demands of capitalism, 'work rules conflicted with religious imperatives' (Gutman 1996:23). Indeed, Marsh (2006:48), referring to the work of Montagu (Spence 1999), argues that emerging Jewish 'youth clubs and movements were seen as a solution to the emerging clashes of culture and class'.

<sup>159</sup> Stevens (2011), for example, considers any notion of the Big Society must address the oligopoly of supermarket retailers, if it is to have integrity in advocating decentralising and localism agendas.

<sup>160</sup> There has been funding made available, but in the context of austerity cuts (Charities Aid Foundation 2012) this has not been significant. See also, Crown Copyright (2012). Furthermore, 'youth services' have made the most enquiries about becoming a mutual (Puffett 2013).



Stunell (2010) states, ‘the faith-based sector was there long before the state sector and will probably be there long after’. I now reflect upon such a view and consider claims that the Big Society is something the faith-based sector is already doing.

### 3b.3.4 ‘We’ve Been Doing it for Years’

Many faith groups have stated they are already doing, or at least should have been doing, the Big Society and some have been doing so for a long time (Faithworks 2010:7; Jewish Leadership Council 2010; Brandon 2011:6; Singh, U. 2011). In this section of my review, I consider the extent to which this might be true and, how the relationship between the faith sector and the state might be reciprocally beneficial. Before doing so, however, I wish to establish a context and rationale that briefly considers why faith-based communities might assert they have been ‘doing it for years’.<sup>161</sup> This will enable comparisons to be made between existing faith-based theories and approaches, policy narratives, and identifying shortcomings in both – thereby informing my investigation.

I have sought to minimise theological discourses in this review considering that they have the potential to overshadow the key arguments and cloud analysis of faith-based youth work and policy considerations.<sup>162</sup> However, there is need for a general reflection to enable a critique.

Most, if not all, faith-based worshipping communities would embrace the following ethical positions – a:

- belief in the ethic of reciprocity (The Golden Rule<sup>163</sup>);
- desire for justice;
- promotion of tolerance; and
- desire for the common good.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Blair (2012b) argues that policymakers are often behind faith groups in their thinking and act ‘as though no one had debated these issues before ... [whilst] religion has been debating them for literally thousands of years and has developed a wisdom that is applicable to some extent to everybody’.

<sup>162</sup> Glasman (2011c) highlights the need to do this in the work of London Citizens, and attributes the success of that movement to this positioning, determining instead to focus on campaigns based on justice and the common good, rather than theological considerations.

<sup>163</sup> See Glossary.

It is through this interpretive lens that I present this critique.

Cameron (in Moss 2011) acknowledges that people of faith have been doing Big Society type work for many centuries suggesting people, 'would be absolutely right to claim Jesus founded the Big Society 2,000 years ago ... I'm not saying we've invented some great new idea here'. Furthermore, Stevens (House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee 2011:6) states that the Big Society has 'resonances with a vision for society that is profoundly Christian'; a perspective Rabbi Sachs (2011b) extends to other faith settings: 'if we're searching for the Big Society, [places of worship] is where you may find it'.

Taylor (2010) offers a Hindu perspective that seeks to recognise the interrelationship between the notion of the Big Society and the role of faith groups: considering that they are so intertwined that the 'Big Society won't work unless faith-based societies fulfil their objectives'. Williams (2012c:265) draws further parallels with the Christian faith, highlighting that the Big Society is 'a politics ... of local co-operation and mutualism, rooted in a sense of political virtue and appealing to human empathy' – something he argues Christianity 'has always looked towards' (ibid).

Whilst this may be true regarding what might be called the 'embedded-micro'<sup>165</sup> Big Society ideals of localism, empowerment, voluntarism and providing services for people, the case is less convincing regarding involvement in long-term public sector reform, engagement in 'payment by results programmes', social investment bonds and commissioned activities.<sup>166</sup> Many faith-based organisations are 'below the radar' (McCabe 2010) and, consequentially, not set up for, interested in, nor have the power to engage (ibid) in these 'technical policy directions' (Albrow 2012:108). In acknowledging this is an indicative generalisation, open to critique and contradiction, it is, nonetheless, supported by my own reflections and significant practice experience.

The embedded-micro values of the Big Society run consistent with many expressions of faith-based work. These are day-to-day realities expressed in a plethora of local initiatives and

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<sup>164</sup> See, for example, Interfaith Network (2004).

<sup>165</sup> This term has been chosen because anecdotal evidence suggests these principles are likely to be current and actively embedded in local expressions of faith-based work.

<sup>166</sup> Concepts I term the 'macro-marketisation' aspects of the Big Society. This term has been chosen because anecdotal evidence suggests these principles are about external and economic aspirational solutions only relevant to large entities.

projects run by volunteers.<sup>167</sup> Whether there is capacity for faith-based organisations to take on more is open to question,<sup>168</sup> and whether the Big Society has increased this type of work is not known. For many faiths, such serving and giving work is central to their beliefs. Further evidence of this type of faith expression is the fact that embedded into many faiths are specific days, seasons and festivals where the goal is to sacrificially serve others and promote the common good.<sup>169</sup>

Of late, successive governments<sup>170</sup> have raised the profile of faith in the public sphere (eds. Ward and Hoelzl 2008; Dinham and Lowndes 2008; eds. Dinham et al 2009; Volf 2011; Williams 2012c). Presently, faith groups are actively encouraged to play their part as service deliverers in helping state agendas, in a way that Baker (2012a) declares is 'potentially mutually enriching and necessary'. Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles (2010) values 'the role of religion and faith in public life' and, sees faith communities as 'part of the solution' where 'the days of the state trying to suppress Christianity and other faiths are over'. Duly backed up by Minister of State at the Department of Communities and Local Government, Greg Clark (2010) who reflects:

Faith communities make a vital contribution to national life: guiding the moral outlook of many, inspiring great numbers of people to public service, providing support to those in need. A 'community of communities', they often have the experience, volunteers and connections that can put them at the heart of their neighbourhood. Everyone has a part to play in building the Big Society. The government's job is to make sure that religious groups ... have the space in which to get on with their good work ...<sup>171</sup>

In a critique of the New Labour Governments approach, Warsi (2010) has declared a desire to build on previous work reflecting that New Labour were:

... too suspicious of faith's potential for contributing to society – behind every faith-based charity, they sensed the whiff of conversion and exclusivity... And because of

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<sup>167</sup> See, for example, Jarvis et al (2010).

<sup>168</sup> A widespread criticism of the notion; see, for example, Coote (2010:16) and Baker (2012).

<sup>169</sup> For example, the Jewish *Mitzvah* day (Jewish Leadership Council 2010:149), *tikkun olam* (meaning 'repairing the world'), the originally Indian, but now global Sikh and Hindu *Sewa Day* (meaning, 'selfless serving'), the Christian festival of *Lent* and Judeo-Christian principles of *jubilee* and *shalom*, the Muslim principle of *zakat*.

<sup>170</sup> See, for example, *Doing God* (Chapman 2008).

<sup>171</sup> This quotation exemplifies the 'normative, resources and governance (and integration) rationale' thinking of Lowndes and Chapman (2005) that outlines why the state values the faith sector.

these prejudices they didn't create policies to unleash the positive power of faith in our society... The Big Society will.<sup>172</sup>

For Glasman (2011d) faith and state should work together: 'since the French Revolution people have been encouraged to believe that faith and state are opposed to each other. This should not be so'. Bretherton agrees highlighting the advantages of social cohesion, engaging hard to reach groups, infrastructure capacity, long-term application and cost-effectiveness as reasons why government should be working with faith groups (2010:41-42). He also highlights some of the challenges associated with such partnerships the most notable being the threat of 'institutional isomorphism':

... a process where religious organisations reshape themselves to fit government policy and thereby lose their unique characteristics, while taking on the same institutional shape and processes as state agencies. (ibid:43-44)

In youth work terms this is evidenced by 'funding streams tied to policies concerned with the control and safeguarding of young people rather than their development' (Davies and Merton 2010:46). In short, faith-based youth workers obtaining such funding potentially have to prefer working to government policies as a priority over and above their own missional objectives.<sup>173</sup>

This threatens their independence in a way that can 'be a gradual, almost imperceptible, process that was neither intended nor foreseen; it can also be contagious, as organisations compete with one another at a time of scarce resources. It may be defined by what is not said, or not done, rather than by what is' (Owes et al 2012:7). These challenges are not new – as Handy (1988:7) noted:

Many ... have found themselves agents of their paymasters, be those paymasters a government department (or a) local authority. Having no clear goals or precise definitions of the task to be done leaves the door open to what amounts to a take-over. What price democracy and voluntarism when he who pays the piper is free to call the tune?

Many have been 'drawn into the latest fashions of government policy agendas because that is where the funding is' (Craig in Shaw 2004:42). Such challenges appear to have added significance in the current resourcing climate where the resultant risk of being 'dominated by the policy and political context rather than creating it' (ibid) is an ever-present consideration.

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<sup>172</sup> Warsi was subsequently appointed Minister of State for Faith and Communities in 2012.

<sup>173</sup> Some faith groups choose not to seek government funding (Nijran 2012).

Baker (2012b:570-571) differentiates between faith-based work that has a *'being there' modality* (that is largely organic and voluntary in nature), a *mainstream modality* (that is more professionally orchestrated delivering state contracts and schemes) and an *alternative modality* (that challenges prevalent hegemonies). This not only provides a potentially helpful descriptor for types of faith-based youth work, but highlights how these modalities need to be held in tension as faith-based organisations seek to balance their missional objectives, available resources and organisational aspirations.

Those working from a mainstream modality position seem particularly prone to being influenced by the institutional isomorphing principles identified by DiMaggio and Powell (1983).<sup>174</sup> 'Coercion', 'mimicking' and succumbing to 'normative' (ibid) state prerogatives all conspire to, in a church sense but applicable to all contexts, 'distort its ministry and mission and re-mould its witness around the instrumental requirements of the state' (Bretherton ibid 45). Anecdotal evidence indicates this 'mission creep'<sup>175</sup> (Dolnicar et al 2008) appears well-established in faith-based youth work.<sup>176</sup> If not addressed and responded to, this causes distortions to erode the distinctiveness of the work leading to what Dinham (in Furness 2012) calls 'subconscious secularism' – thereby potentially rendering it no different to any other type of youth work.<sup>177</sup> The extent to which this is actually the case is examined in Chapter 8.

Bartley (2006) identifies that throughout its history the church has oscillated between being a friend of the state and its enemy. Whilst acknowledging the benefits of being the friend – namely: funding, protection, influence, credibility and identity (ibid 140) – the relationship is based on a no longer appropriate Christendom model of church and state mutuality. Plurality, globalisation, institutional decline and a post-9/11 world have redefined many relationships (Murray 2004) negating the 'monism, both Christian and classical liberal' (Furbey 2009:38) hereto experienced. More equitable responses embracing of all faith traditions (including secularist, humanist and atheist) and other underrepresented and minority groups are thus demanded – to include those presently 'unable to enrich public life through their particular experience, knowledge and tradition' (ibid).

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<sup>174</sup> In a revisiting of Weber's (1958) *Iron Cage* analogy.

<sup>175</sup> Originally a military term; now applied more widely.

<sup>176</sup> See Pimlott (2012c).

<sup>177</sup> This tendency is highlighted by Cressey (2007).

The impact of these perspectives on faith-based youth work has already been examined, but unanswered questions remain about what form future relationships between the state and faith bodies will take. Whether faith-based organisations will, or should, form the bedrock of Big Society type work, be the dissenters and counter-cultural exponents of it, 'pick up the pieces from somebody else's train crash' (Williams 2012d), or, opportunistically, pick and mix the elements they consider worthy is uncertain. It is into these uncertain and ever-changing waters that faith-based youth work sails.

Having examined the Big Society vision, the space and place faith occupies within the notion and how it relates to faith-based work, I now review responses to young people and the philosophical shape of youth work in the Big Society landscape. This approach mirrors the metaphorical floors in my explanatory model enabling comparisons to be made and salient factors considered.

### **3b.3.5 Young People and the Big Society? Citizenship, Deficit Models and Commodification**

#### *Young People and the Big Society*

There is a general lack of knowledge and critique regarding the place of young people in the Big Society debate. As Fisher and Gruesco (2011:4) note:

The connections between the Big Society agenda and children have not been fully considered. How do we ensure that children and young people – often members of a community with only a small voice – can contribute to building and can benefit from safe and friendly communities?

Whilst they are right to highlight this lack of consideration, they have largely done so within the limited discourse of keeping children and young people safe within society, rather than Big Society aspirations of empowerment, enterprise and transformation. Whilst the need for safety is paramount, in saying "keeping children safe" is a highly effective call to action in community development programmes' (ibid:6) they betray wider considerations and restrict possibilities of empowering young people for the greater good of all; their stance being ideologically distant from Glasman's 'granular conflict' where people confront any lack of representation, injustice and hold gatekeepers democratically to account (House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee 2011:Ev7).

In a similar vein, Bradley (2011:71-80) frames her argument within the context of the *National Citizen Service*, but talks almost exclusively about the approaches to young people's work in the 1900-1960 period. Whilst she critically questions if the *NCS* is simply 'an attempt to hark back to a golden age of disciplined young people who gave their time to their country and their community' (ibid:71) – rightly in my view arguing that the perception of such an age is largely inaccurate (ibid:72) – other than positioning the *NCS* within an historical context she does not provide further insight regarding young people and the Big Society.

Given such a lack of critique,<sup>178</sup> the nature of this investigation and its focus on work with young people, it is appropriate to consider specific aspects of the Big Society policy rhetoric that do relate to young people. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed critique of contemporary youth culture, the rights and wrongs of young people's values and behaviour and what they themselves think of the Big Society.<sup>179</sup> Whilst reference elsewhere has been made to the impact of government cuts relating to services for young people, I do not propose further analysis here. What I do consider is the one policy initiative that *prima facie*, brings together all the component dimensions of my investigation: the aforementioned *National Citizen Service*.

### *National Citizen Service: The Reinvention of Youth Work*

The *NCS*<sup>180</sup> is a voluntary, summer programme for sixteen and seventeen year olds in England. It was piloted in 2010 with eight thousand young people with a target to involve ninety thousand by 2014. The ultimate aim is that one day all will participate (Cameron in Cabinet Office and Department for Education 2012:2).

The *NCS* will 'act as a gateway to the Big Society' (Department for Education 2011b) embodying the core values of it: citizenship, volunteering, young people's participation, social action, community engagement and development, and cohesion objectives all feature highly. When compared to the definition of civil society put forward by Edwards (2009:viii) above, there is a degree of symmetry. Where comparisons, perhaps, break down is regarding the extent young

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<sup>178</sup> Williams (2011) claims to address this issue in a paper about the Big Society, Children and Young People, but her arguments are almost exclusively illustrated with reference to children, not young people.

<sup>179</sup> For information about young people's views see British Youth Council (2011) and V – The National Young Volunteers Network (2011).

<sup>180</sup> A further discussion of the *NCS* can be found in a chapter I have written in Smith, Stanton and Wylie (eds. 2013 forthcoming).

people will be allowed to engage in ‘broad-based debate [that] can define the public interest, not dictated by government. Such debates are the very stuff of democracy’ (Edwards 2009:65). In terms of governmentality theory, this is where the NCS is contentious as it:

incorporates governmental strategies ... that discipline and manage behaviour, producing and normalising ... the ideal citizen. The creation of the “ideal citizen” is troubling because it creates a ... category against which the ideal citizen can be readily recognised: the “delinquent citizen” or “thug”. (Bulley and Sokhi-Bulley 2012:12)

For Chanan and Miller (2010:11) this is problematic because there ‘must be a genuine element of influence and decision-making if it is to lead to active citizenship’. NCS advisor Oginsky (2012) contends that the NCS is about helping young people belong; to what and to whom they are supposed to be belonging is not stated, nor made explicit, rendering any defining of the ‘public interest’ (Edwards *ibid*) elusive and clouding understanding of what it might mean to be British (Conway 2009; ed. d’Ancona 2009; St Croix 2011:45).

In keeping with Big Society paradoxical neo-liberalism agendas (Bunyan 2012), the NCS ‘is run by private companies or voluntary organisations rather than Local Authority youth services’ (St Croix 2011:45). It endeavours to ‘promote a more cohesive society, a more responsible society and a more engaged society’ (Cabinet Office and Department for Education 2012:3) via a personal and social development programme. Cameron (2011b) has stated the NCS is ‘how we will build the Big Society’.

Glasman’s (House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee 2011:Ev6-7) general critique about Coalition approaches to citizenship is that they are designed to maintain hegemonic power, not transform unjust structures. The NCS development mantra is not about taking on unjust power structures (Buckland 2013), but about notional citizen development. This lack of radical community transformation<sup>181</sup> and organising approach à la Alinsky (1971) renders St Croix (2011:46) to call the NCS ‘far from egalitarian’, but instead designed to ‘reduce contestation and struggle’ (*ibid*:52). As such, the NCS is just another deficit-driven policy initiative more to do with demagogic political ideology than meeting young people’s needs.

Whilst NCS might support notional citizenship agendas, it appears somewhat naive to believe the stated objectives of cohesion, responsibility and engagement can be achieved in just eight

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<sup>181</sup> The 2012 *NCS Interim Evaluation Report* indicated young people were positive about the scheme, but any impact regarding community involvement was ‘limited ... and ... mixed’ (NatCen Social Research et al 2012:45).



weeks. As head of policy at YMCA England, Jason Stacey, asserts (in Williams 2011) ‘there are fifty-two weeks in a year. Where do they (young people) go on a cold November night when they want something to do?’

The *NCS* may be aiming for the same common good impact that my explanatory model aspires to; however, whilst not dismissing the value of it completely, it has been introduced as other valuable and commended existing work has been cut or closed. In the process of trying to develop citizenship and build the common good, government has dismantled many long-term pieces of work with proven track records of achieving these objectives; replacing them with a short-term course (Buckland 2013). As Jackson (in Taylor 2012) has commented, ‘it is as if youth work didn’t exist and such programmes had only just been invented and that, until *NCS*, no one was doing informal education and personal support and development work with young people’. This reality caused the House of Commons Education Committee to conclude that it could not ‘support the continued development of the *NCS* in its current form’ (House of Commons Education Committee 2011a:60) deeming it a worthy aspiration but very expensive. It advised that funds earmarked for *NCS* should be ‘diverted into year-round youth services’ (ibid:61).

The *NCS* is perhaps a good addition to services on offer to young people, but it risks becoming the only service available to many if cuts in other services continue. What role faith and spirituality have in the *NCS* programme remains unclear. Some faith-based providers have successfully tendered for *NCS* delivery contracts, but the latest organisations awarded delivery contracts (Holt 2011) reveals a list dominated by large regional and national bodies and companies rather than local faith organisations.<sup>182</sup> This is perhaps inevitable given the neo-liberal mechanism employed, but, again, somewhat ironically paradoxical given the stated localism and empowerment agendas.<sup>183</sup>

I now turn to evaluate the extent to which current youth policy agendas are merely the continuation of deficit thinking that sees young people as problems needing to be fixed (Jeffs and Smith 1999).

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<sup>182</sup> The only one faith-based organisation was the national Jewish Lads and Girls’ Brigade.

<sup>183</sup> For a feminist perspective on the *NCS*, see Batsleer (2013:226) who argues it is rooted in masculine ideas that are ‘anti-democratic’, located in ‘muscular Christianity and discipline – found in military traditions’.

### *Deficit Models: Seeing Young People as Problems*

The problem orientation imposes a deficit model that often masks the personal, family, or community strengths that constitute social assets to help youth navigate through troubled times. It leads to fragmentation in studying youth, placing greater emphasis on negative behaviours to the detriment of positive developments, and it can discourage collaborative efforts to identify common origins for problems that may co-occur among youth. (Chalk and Philips 1996:8)

I have previously referred to how the *Albemarle Report* (Ministry of Education 1960) set a course and approach in contemporary state-sponsored youth work that perceived young people as 'in deficit' (Podd 2010:30), rather than promoting an asset-based<sup>184</sup> approach (Foot with Hopkins 2010) that values and builds upon 'capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential' (ibid:6) 'capabilities' (Norman 2010:127-132) of young people.<sup>185</sup> I have also alluded to how a deficit or compensatory<sup>186</sup> driven approach has resulted in the demagogic demonising and marginalising of certain groups of young people categorising them as being in need of 'training and control' (Jeffs and Smith 1999), and fostering upon them notions of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990); this being exemplified by responses to the 2011 riots in England.<sup>187</sup>

Williams (2005:90) argues such violence arises when groups in an 'educational system ... have not been afforded symbolic power and, therefore, fall victim to symbolic violence', whereby 'the dominant group has made decisions about how best to educate those without power'. Whilst her analysis is located in an American context, it equally applies here as young people are dictated to regarding what is good for them with little opportunity to contribute to such debates. In this regard, they are truly 'without a stake in society' (Singh, D. et al. eds. 2011; 2012).

Regarding the *NCS*, it is not clear whether or not it embraces the analysis of Chalk and Philips (1996:8) and 'searches for measures' that help young people flourish, or simply enforces, as St Croix (2011:48) would argue, an 'ideologically imperialist, class-ridden and gendered natured' approach to citizenship reflective of its roots and origins that, in the previously considered

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<sup>184</sup> See, for example, [www.goodlivesmodel.com](http://www.goodlivesmodel.com) and *The Asset-Based Community Development Model* [www.abcdinstitute.org](http://www.abcdinstitute.org)

<sup>185</sup> See also, Rousseau (2007, original publication 1762) for a further account of the capabilities approach.

<sup>186</sup> For discussions about 'compensatory' approaches, see Bryderup (2004).

<sup>187</sup> As far back as 1997, Australian's Wyn and White (1997:98) noted how social policies marginalise young people, contending 'at a political level, one-sided exaggeration feeds particular policy and electoral responses to "youth issues"' leading to 'policing strategies and political campaigns designed to control and limit the activities of young people as a whole'.

governmentality discourse, seeks to control the 'delinquent citizen or thug' (Bulley and Sokhi-Bulley 2012:12).

I agree with Wood (2010:196) and, consider there is a need to go beyond deficit models of working if young people are to be democratically engaged as 'active citizens' (ibid) and play 'an active part in their neighbourhoods to demonstrate socially responsible membership of the community' (ibid). It is in this respect that faith-based approaches may well employ a more positive rationale being freer of state policy agendas and market profit imperatives that are usually orientated around deficit understandings – providing they can avoid isomorphic pressures.

Early statements by Cameron looked to a non-deficit approach of 'seeking to understand marginalised young people' (Jones 2011:39). Most notably, the now infamous 'hug a hoodie' speech (Cameron 2006) offered a new approach, but political opposition to this more progressive rationale meant these sentiments waned and became 'full of fluff' (Jones 2012:39). Consequently, and in a continuation of New Labour positioning, deficit approaches now dominate Coalition thinking (Positive for Youth 2011).

Before the recent demise of statutory provided youth work, deficit problems were identified and policy solutions developed to respond to them. Whilst these solutions were predominantly identified and delivered by the state, it enabled a balanced collective of work with young people as other providers, including faith-based, voluntary and commercial bodies, undertook youth work in different ways. These represented a diverse, creative and innovative portfolio of services for young people that resonated with the aforementioned common good 'overlapping consensus' suggested by Rawls.

However as sector demarcations have become blurred and 'voluntary and community organisations are in danger of losing their distinctiveness by mimicking business practices and values' (Carnegie Trust 2010:28), isomorphism threatens to erode such a portfolio of provision, rendering deficit model approaches as the only ones offered to young people. As the Carnegie report further comments, 'civil society associations can never be just providers of services ... civil society thrives best when it is an independent and confident spirit, when it is not beholden to the state or funders and when it is not afraid to make trouble' (ibid). Preserving such independence, confidence and capacity for agitation would go some way to ensuring youth work

does not become a *one-size fits all* solution to the many needs, challenges, hopes and aspirations young people embody.

Moreover, as civil society organisations and market mechanisms have been employed to deliver deficit orientated state policy objectives, young people have become units of commodification. Work with them is bought and sold: where the hegemony is 'that the only common sense way of doing things is social enterprise and for profit businesses' (Davies 2012b). It is this aspect of Big Society policy outworking that I now analyse.

### *Commodification: Selling Young People to the Highest Bidder*

As already noted, Blond's *Red Tory* is as critical of neo-liberalism as it is of an over-paternalistic state. However, as Giroux (2011c) cautions, neo-liberalism is not over yet and wages a 'soft war' targeting 'all children and youth, devaluing them by treating them as yet another "market" to be commodified'.

Indeed, it appears paradoxical how the Big Society has commodified many of its relationships and aspirations using neo-liberal 'business as usual' (Bone 2012) approaches to deliver many of its intentions. The dominant governmentality discourse regarding these matters paradoxically assumes a 'taken for granted way of doing things' (Dean 2010:31) that dismisses questioning of them. Whilst the Big Society endeavours to build community between people, develop the common good and promote civil society (Norman 2010:102-117; Office for Civil Society 2010), policy wise it seemingly chooses to do so via impersonal market capitalism (Glasman 2012); thus potentially undermining its very ethos.<sup>188</sup> Perhaps it is in this regard that the idealism of Blond and the reality of government are separate understandings: putting a price on something risks undervaluing it – threatening its potential to flourish.

For Glasman (2011b) this heightened commodification is a modern-day peril: things and people that were originally not for sale, are now for sale;<sup>189</sup> a peril Williams (2012b) declares is, 'trading

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<sup>188</sup> For a broader discussion see a paper, *The Influence of the Market of Faith-Based youth Work*, I delivered to the New Forms of Public Religion Conference, Cambridge University, 2012 (Pimlott 2012c).

<sup>189</sup> For a critique of commodification relating to Higher Education see, for example, Molesworth and Scullion (2011).

in the souls of men'.<sup>190</sup> Contracts are awarded and work commissioned predominantly via economic mechanisms – not relationships and reciprocity. Youth work has been at the forefront of these developments in the voluntary sector (Gann 1996:7-21). Decisions that used to be based upon need are now based upon money. In the language of my proposed explanatory model, it might be suggested that profit has become the foundational motivation for work. Capitalism has put a value on the processes and mechanisms that define the common good and turned them into commodities.

This trajectory has particular resonance regarding work with young people where local communities, organisations and faith communities potentially all compete (Independent Action 2011b) to operate faith schools, undertake youth projects and build youth centres.<sup>191</sup> In some settings, youth workers even compete within organisations for the same work (Coburn 2011). Youth work that seeks to respond to social challenges is procured and increasingly 'payment is by results' (House of Commons Education Committee (2011a:28-41); the process for which is being rolled out in a Foucauldian 'swarming disciplinary mechanism' (Gutting ed. 2003:100) potentially promoting a more subtle form of societal control than outright neo-liberal managerial paradigms (Duménil and Lévy 2011, Bradford 2012:35-37).

Whilst it might be argued that some work with young people be supplied in this way, it is, as Cox and Schmuecker (2013:11) argue, a highly problematic solution for those 'activities that operate outside of the market'. For example a youth club might 'provide services for free, [being] aimed at people who are unable to pay for such services'; thus 'making it highly improbable if not impossible that they can be traded' (ibid). This has led to call from Jozwiak (2013a) that government should 'give big society funding to youth clubs' – a seemingly unlikely prospect leaving unanswered the question about how these types of services will prosper in the Big Society.

Whilst there have been calls for a return to a philanthropic age (Bishop and Green 2009; Blair 2012a) these have also, often, been clothed in commodification rhetoric rather than compassionate concern as a way to reduce bureaucracy and speed up response times (Blair

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<sup>190</sup> A reference from the New King James Bible (Book of Revelation 18:11-13), rather than use of deliberately discriminatory language.

<sup>191</sup> Most notably over the government *myplace* initiative.

2012a), rather than challenge injustice and inequality.<sup>192</sup> In Victorian times, philanthropy was a ‘trajectory toward the welfare state’ (Singh, G 2011) responding to destitution in the absence of any state welfare provision. Now philanthropy has become synonymous with ‘the privatisation and disestablishment of state-run public services ... a refashioning of the voluntary sector ... according to the financial tools, language and mentality of modern capitalism’ (Kennedy 2011).

If the common good is to be realised, it can only be hoped that moves to ‘social return on investment’ (Ghelani et al 2011) models ‘capture the social and environmental impacts of public spending’ (ibid) and that the *Social Value Act* (Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012) embeds a more holistic understanding. However, the lack of clarity in defining meanings too often appears to give precedent to economic judgements alone:<sup>193</sup> ignoring wider spiritual, ethical, long-term and holistic well-being considerations – these being the drivers that often motivate faith-based youth work.

The risk is that rather than build a Big Society, faith groups will simply retreat to their ‘distinct silos and sectors’ (Marshall 2005). Alienated by language and values, and finding that they do not ‘fit in consultative processes’ (ibid), faith-based work may be pushed back, marginalised from society. Even when individual ‘aims are profoundly altruistic and cooperative’ (ibid) competition, commodification and a quest for power threaten to undermine. The added tension faith organisations encounter is deciding whether or not to deliberately disengage and become obstructive to the Big Society idea. As Millbank (2010), referring to any Christian-based dissent toward the Big Society, reflects, ‘churches have no warrant to refrain from providing necessary services to make a political point. That would betray the gospel’. Such a rationale might also apply to other faith groups. As such, they might be ‘damned if they do, damned if they don’t’<sup>194</sup> as they consider whether to engage, support and make the Big Society notion work. Perhaps William’s (2010) ‘two and a half cheers’ for the Big Society aptly recognises this dilemma.

It is here – that the virtuous idealism of both Blond (2010) and Norman (2010) – even if it were fully defined is not implemented and any ideal of avoiding ‘making contracts simply to the satisfaction of two isolated self-interests’ (Blond 2010:188) is lost. Thus, the space within which

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<sup>192</sup> See also, Pharoah (2012:122-126).

<sup>193</sup> For example, Local Authority youth centres have been closed on economic grounds with little consideration given to long-term social, community development, participation and environmental considerations. See Duffy (forthcoming).

<sup>194</sup> Quotation in the public domain – original source unknown.

faith-based youth work operates is invaded by market forces and, whilst there has been public and political disquiet regarding similar policy trajectories in, for example, the National Health Service,<sup>195</sup> such sentiments have largely been absent regarding youth work provision. If state-backed funding of the type of work previously discussed as being in a *mainstream modality* ceases, then the very work envisaged as being at the heart of the Big Society is at risk of not happening at all. This leaves youth work in a perilous place. This does not undermine my proposed explanatory model: it simply means that there might be less of a body of work pursuing the common good and that what work does exist might be more located in the *being there* and *alternate* modalities. I now turn to the future of the Big Society notion – a future clouded in uncertainty.

### 3b.3.6 The Big Society: An Uncertain Future?

Despite the Big Society being ‘open to as many interpretations as there are ideological positions’ (Albrow 2012:107) there are a number of common arguments underpinning current debates:

- Something has gone wrong in British society over the last few decades.
- This is attributed to the failure of neo-liberalism that has promoted ‘radical individualism ... and a wholly terrifying tyranny’ (Blond 2010:145) of state-centralised managerialism<sup>196</sup> necessitating a return to a society based upon virtue and relationship pursuant of the common good.
- There is a degree of cross-party political agreement about how to put it right.
- Capitalist markets have become too powerful.
- People need to pull together locally to improve things (Coote 2010:12) acting in reciprocal ways.

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<sup>195</sup> See *Health and Social Care Act 2012* and the plethora of critique from The Kings Fund ([www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications)).

<sup>196</sup> Rudge (2011:11) illustrates this arguing ‘over the last few decades, UK public service has fallen thrall to a scientific managerialism’ and ‘public servants have learnt to be afraid of doing business based on relationships ... but what happens on the ground is often as much about the quality of relationships: the care provided, the concern expressed, the long-term familiar face’.

- Economic challenges demand new ways of working that potentially undermine aspirations.

The Big Society Audit<sup>197</sup> (Sloccock et al 2012) resonates significantly with my analysis in this Chapter. Whilst recognising the originality shortcomings in simply referencing the conclusions reached, the audit robustly confirms my own summations, namely:

- The space and place civil society organisations occupy is contested with Big society approaches being paradoxical; marginalising smaller organisations with a lack of resources reducing capacity within the sector (ibid:7-8).
- There is a ‘genuine sense of public interest in community empowerment and high degrees of social action’ (ibid:4) but ambiguity over understandings, difficulties competing in the market place and disabling funding cuts for the sector (ibid:7-8).
- Those who ‘practice their religion’ (ibid:17)<sup>198</sup> are at the heart of social action initiatives.
- The origins of the Big Society are multifaceted, historically long-rooted, philosophically, informed and have cross-party symmetry (ibid:20-23).
- Confirmation that a ‘Big Society gap’ (ibid:57-64) of understanding is evident.<sup>199</sup>
- There is a decline in social capital (ibid:64-66), participation and trust.
- The lack of a ‘buy in ... with hostility and suspicion’ (ibid:68) holds back engagement with the notion.
- Criticism of funding the *NCS* whilst cutting local services for young people (ibid:70).
- ‘The Big Society, despite its increased emphasis on a greater role for civil society’, (ibid:70) seems to represent a market-orientated ‘general thrust toward greater competition and larger contracts’ (ibid).

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<sup>197</sup> Published after my field work was undertaken; consequently not informing nor shaping it.

<sup>198</sup> Along with those middle-aged, having higher educational qualifications and, in professional careers.

<sup>199</sup> With those who are affluent, living in urban areas, white, educated and in the over sixty-five age range being most engaged in the notion; whilst those in deprived and rural areas, from ethnic minorities and under thirty-five least engaged.



- There should be an equality opportunity regarding the delivery of services ‘avoiding bias toward the private sector’ (ibid:73).

Whilst still talking about the idea as the ‘most important policy breakthrough of the past thirty years’, Blond (2011) now talks of the Big Society in the past tense: ‘It *was* the Tories chance to remake a broken society’. Bemused by a lack of clarity and coherence about what Cameron’s Conservatism stands for, coupled with ‘hegemonic crisis’ (citing Gramsci 1992) and swingeing funding cuts, he is of a mind ‘that the battle for the Big Society has probably already, needlessly, been lost’ (ibid). With missed chances to ‘tackle the excesses of those at the top [Cameron] will be betraying those at the bottom’ (ibid). Such a wide-ranging critical appraisal of the Big Society, by one of its key philosophical influencers does not bode well for its future prospects. When combined with Bubb’s (2013) assertion that the concept is ‘effectively dead’, it might be concluded that the notion should be written off; however, the ‘idea behind the Big Society is a good idea’ (Theos 2013), and the ideology that underpins it has taken root in policy rhetoric and delivery.

In referring to *Blue Labour*, Blond (2011) concludes that ‘the war’ about the need for paradigmatic societal change may well have been won. The advent of new political responses to civic challenges is developing. Whilst this may be true and that a new orthodoxy is developing for a new context, the orthopraxis of how this is acted upon remains disputed. Ransome’s (2011) critique that the Big Society embodies uncertainty of understandings disguises wider agendas of welfare reform, ignores public mandates regarding state roles and overestimates the capacity of individuals in society to give more, aptly evaluates the challenges any new orthopraxis has in bringing about a reordering of the roles of state, civil society and the market.

Pabst (2010) concludes that ‘the Big Society needs religion. It will not work unless it is formed by religious ideas of free and reciprocal giving’; this is no less true even if the ‘Big Society’ notion diminishes and is replaced by another vision that embraces similar ideals under a different guise – proposed by a different political faction. Economic, cultural and global impacts necessitate the need for rebalancing the roles the market, state and civil society play. A desire for local responses to local situations and, a renewed sense of promoting the common good in the interests of all humanity are likely to remain at the forefront of future debates, policies and practices. It is my contention that whatever form these new responses take they cannot ignore the role faith-based work undertakes.

### 3.2 A Collective Discourse

In Part A of this chapter, I established how youth work was begun by people of faith and, considered historical landmarks that shaped youth work and portrayed its contemporaneous intentions. In Part B, I set out understandings about the common good, establishing that the Big Society is the latest attempt to realise this telos. Faith-based youth work continues to aspire to good, helping young people flourish; doing so within a tripolar context operating between its historical place in civil society and space determined by the state and the market. Faith-based youth work has much in common with the Big Society but exists within it and not because of it.

A chapter summarising timeline diagram of faith-based youth work set against these parameters, landmark contributions and significant policy narratives would thus look like:

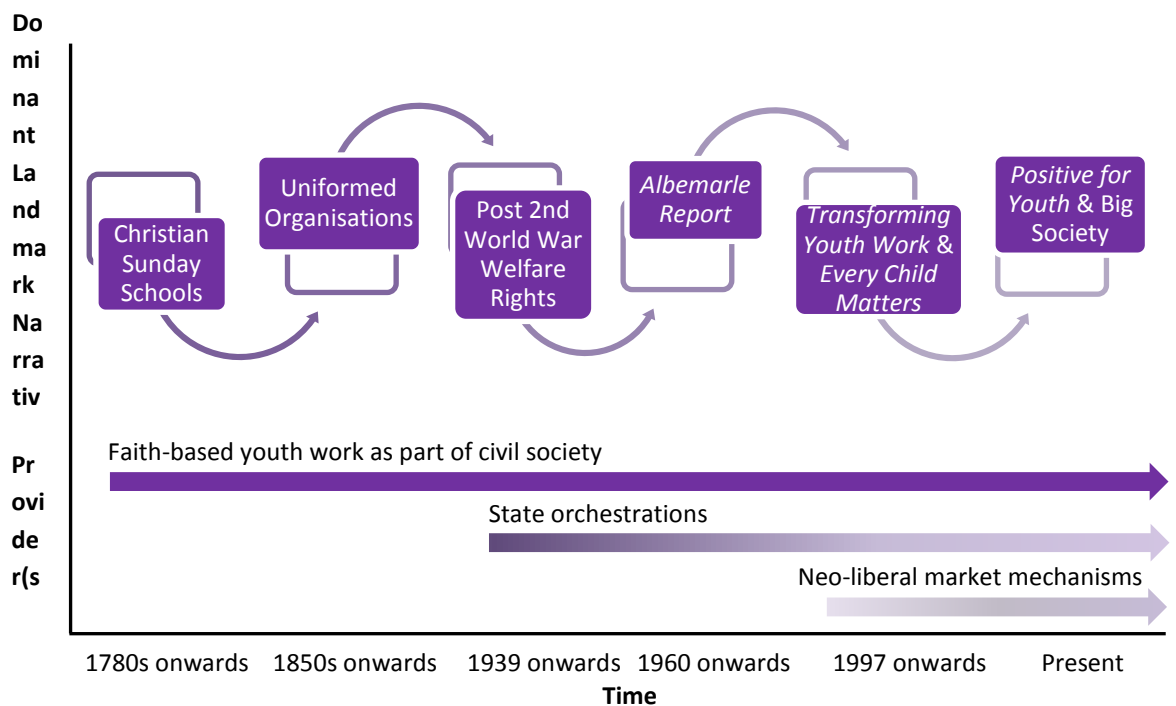


Figure 5. A timeline of faith-based youth work set against historical landmark initiatives and prevalent providers<sup>200</sup>

Whilst the Big Society has made an attempt to radically realign society for the well-being of all, uncertainties about it remain; ambiguity and disagreement continue about how it will work and be resourced, what the ideological motivations behind it are and what it is ultimately trying to achieve.

<sup>200</sup> Top portion of diagram inspired by Khan (2013:4).

The Big Society also appears to ignore equitable and holistic dynamics<sup>201</sup> considered so important in faith-based youth work. Work from a faith-based perspective embraces a fully flourishing human salugenetic (Williams and Holmes 2010) worldview<sup>202</sup> as a combatant to the malaise which threatens to engulf British society, and this is not reflected in Big Society notions.

As alluded to previously, whilst some of the micro-embedded language of the Big Society rhetoric has resonance with faith-based work, much of the macro-marketisation language remains clouded in governmentality paradox and mimicry of past failings. Although policy talk of community cohesion has diminished,<sup>203</sup> the challenges and opportunities associated with the notion have not disappeared. These factors, coupled with the need for a holistic approach worthy of being called *the common good*, necessitate that any theoretical explanatory model needs to: encapsulate both the understanding, aspirations and objectives of faith-based organisations; describe how faith-based youth work is philosophically undertaken; embrace its intended missional outcomes; and fully respond to societal challenges, opportunities and demands. I propose that the previously referred to tenets of CST offer a starting place from which consideration of such a model can begin because CST 'gives us both a plausible explanation of crisis and, a genuine alternative that can guide action' (Glasman 2012:7).

Therefore, as a summative conclusion to this Chapter I establish a further a 'priori specification of constructs' (Eisenhardt 1989:536) that informs my methodology and furthers my investigation. Whilst connecting CST with the Big Society notion has been previously considered (Brandon 2011:12; Dubois 2011, Glasman 2012),<sup>204</sup> I propose extending this analysis to evaluate the philosophical relationship between the Big Society and faith-based youth work; evaluating the effectiveness of this approach against my research data. I do this considering that these principles might best reflect a most apt way of enabling young people to flourish.

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<sup>201</sup> For example, notions of care, as advocated by feminist economist Nancy Folbre (2002), the quest for creative, humanising and compassionate models of being advanced by Wheatley (2007, 2009), the mission to consume less and live more simply (Schumacher 1973) and a general appeal to live graciously and free from oppressive restraints (MacKenzie 1996).

<sup>202</sup> In its broadest societal rather than Christo-centric sense (Williams and Holmes 2010:140-142).

<sup>203</sup> For example, OFSTED (2012) no longer have an explicit duty to report on schools' contribution to community cohesion.

<sup>204</sup> Woodhead (2013) considers that 'CST is more influential than protestant models in contemporary social policy'. Published post my research, Loughlin, Allott and Crellin (2013) also report on the connections.

My a priori specification is that four benchmark ideas of CST (Caldecott 2001; Brandon 2011:12; Vallely 2011; Mich 2011)<sup>205</sup> encapsulate the arguments made in this chapter, namely the:

- belief in **Human Dignity** – where every person is important, valuable and has equal rights to respect, freedom, justice and peace;
- determination to have **Solidarity** with young people, helping them flourish;
- commitment to **Subsidiarity**<sup>206</sup> that empowers people and works at a local community level so that ‘nothing should be done by a larger and more complex organisation which can be done as well by a smaller and simpler organisation. In other words, any activity which can be performed by a more decentralised entity should be’ (Bosnich 1996:9);<sup>207</sup>
- teleological quest for the **Common Good**.

Therefore, it is from this position that my investigation is developed.

Throughout this chapter, I have considered a number of theories and theoretical lenses relevant to my study. In Chapter 1, I identified and provided a rationale as to which lenses I was going to use in my investigation to inform my analysis. As I conclude this chapter, I set out here a précis of the lenses I am not going to use and a rationale for my decisions.

A number of youth work theories are now somewhat dated and relate more to historical perspectives rather than contemporary interpretations. For example, the work of Baden-Powell (1908) helped inform debates about the nature of youth work when written, but now lacks specific application to contemporary discourses and policy considerations. I have, therefore, not used older historical theoretical models to aid my analysis, but have instead chosen to focus on more contemporaneous youth work theories and lenses.

European and continental models of youth work, for example, Verschelden (2009), aid wider understanding, but have limited direct application to British discourses – particularly those associated with the Big Society and any accompanying austerity measures. Consequently, I have

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<sup>205</sup> Other elements of CST, regarding birth control (Caldecott 2001:40-42) for example, do not have resonance.

<sup>206</sup> Identified by Blond (2009) as important to global economic survival.

<sup>207</sup> For more nuanced definitions see the Glossary. For a discussion about ‘government, solidarity and subsidiarity’, see Booth (2009:134-158).

not referred to such models in my analysis, but have instead concentrated on those theories that have direct application to the British context.

Models of youth ministry (Thompson, 2007; Nash 2011) provide helpful descriptors for work undertaken in or from places of worship, but such work is not that which I am investigating here. Whilst such theories enable comparisons to be made across different types of faith-based youth ministry they do not offer sufficient breadth regarding the type of work actually undertaken in my study to enable a full analysis to be considered.

Pugh's (1999) four-themed spectrum analysis of Christian youth work attempts to analyse secular through to faith-based work. Whilst this is a worthy lens through which specific pieces of youth work can be considered, it lacks nuance regarding faith-based work at an organisational level because, as she herself notes, such work is 'not an either or dichotomy' (ibid). It is a model that is able to be applied to specific pieces of work at a particular time, but somewhat impossible to use in appraising the overall work an organisation undertakes.

Smith and Sosin's (2001) study of American faith-related work embraces a sphere of work that is much broader than I consider. Consequently, I determine a more precise lens is required to analyse my investigation: one where comparison can be made more directly with the type of work I am investigating, rather than any considerations regarding general linguistic reframing of faith-based work narratives. Similarly, and as previously noted, both Monsana (1996) and Jeavons (1997), concentrate on degrees of religiosity and not specific understanding of faith-based organisations and work. Consequently, I employ the work of Sider and Unruh (2004) as a more apt lens through which faith-based work can be analysed because it offers focus, comprehension and certitude.

Detailed theoretical analysis of the common good associated with economics (Polyani 1996), justice (Nozick 1974 and Rawls 1999), the environment (Daly and Cobb 1994) and matters relating to formal education (Riordan 2008) has not been employed as these domains are largely outside the remit of my study. Whilst the conceptualisations apparent in each have bearing on my overarching subject matters, they lack distinction relating to the specifics of my investigation. This consideration potentially distracts from the aims and objectives of my study and I have therefore, chosen to focus on common good principles connected with faith and human flourishing.

Philosophical and historical theories, such as those offered by Hobbes (1660), Locke 1689 and Rousseau (1762 in Cole 1973), have helped inform contemporary political discourses that have pointed toward the establishment of the Big Society notion. However, it is beyond the scope of my investigation to fully critique these works, and whilst their work has been referred to, I have not used their conceptualisations as a theoretical lens in my analysis. This is because I have sought to focus on developing a model designed to develop a praxis for future faith-based youth work, rather than comparison with historical narratives.

It might be argued that too much space has been devoted to this Chapter. However, I assert that in order to understand faith-based youth work in the Big Society and what it means to flourish in pursuit of the common good, a rigorous and robust approach is needed to address the shortcoming in literature specific to my topic. In short, I consider this volume of work has been required in order to get the job done of appraising, analysing and critiquing my subject matters – thereby bringing theoretical clarity to my investigation.<sup>208</sup>

Having undertaken an in-depth investigation of the literature and context relating to my field, I now turn to present my research methodology and strategy.

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<sup>208</sup> Further discussions about my subject matters can be found in papers I have delivered as a result of my investigation (see Pimlott 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2013a) and a commissioned book chapter (see Pimlott 2013 forthcoming).

## Chapter Four

### 4. Interdependent, In All Directions and Multi-Purpose – A Robust Methodological Strategy

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of my investigation. It sets out my overarching ideology and approach, ontological and epistemological paradigms, theoretical perspectives and strategic rationale employed. For ease of reference, these elements are set out in a systematic manner. I do not imply that each consideration is autonomous or that the relationship between them is hierarchical: rather it is interdependent and goes ‘in all directions’ (Crotty 1998:12).

The reality identified in Chapter 3 regarding a lack of theoretical models associated with faith-based youth work and limited critical accounts regarding the Big Society has methodologically shaped my investigation. My study is focused upon understanding the context and reality of those involved in the research, obtaining multiple participant meanings, making sense of social settings, and constructing a new theoretical model (Creswell 2009:6-8) in order to identify a new knowledge of faith-based youth work in the Big Society. This suggests my investigation is primarily located within the pedagogical research domain of constructivism (Silverman 2006:128-132), whereby there is the need for an investigation that has ‘a concern with meanings and the way people understand things’ identifying ‘patterns of behaviour’ (Tesch in Denscombe 2003:267) in an expansive set of variables. In this regard, my investigation is a qualitative one (Hammersley 1989; eds. Denzin and Lincoln 2003a; 2003b; ed. Silverman 2004; 2006; Silverman and Marvasti 2008).

However given the lack of knowledge about the Big Society, I also needed to determine how overarching views about it varied and were distributed. This required a quantitative (Morris 1996; Black 1999; Balnaves and Caputi 2001) approach that considered more controlled variables that would subsequently help further position my investigation and, develop more nuanced understandings about my subject matters.

Consequently, it might be argued my investigation is neither exclusively qualitative nor quantitative in design, but rather from the mixed-methods (eds. Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003; Brannen 2005; Creswell 2009), ‘third chair’ paradigm (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004:15). For Morse (2003:192), mixed-methods design ‘is a term that is applied when research strategies are

used that are not normally described as part of that design.’ For Gu (2012) this is not the issue; what is paramount for her is the ‘paradigmatic lens through which the investigation is conceived’.

Whilst considering that there is a continuum (ibid Johnson and Onwuegbuzie; Niglas 2007) between the quantitative and qualitative philosophical schools of thought, my investigation is significantly weighted<sup>209</sup> toward the qualitative end of the spectrum. Although my investigation contains quantitative elements that seek to ‘increase the scope and comprehensiveness of the study’ (ibid Morse), it is conceived through a qualitative lens that seeks the ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973): endeavouring to answer the primarily subjective questions associated with my topic. I therefore contend that a multi-purpose strategy<sup>210</sup> and ‘mix-of-methods’ terminology more aptly portrays my approach, and it is this terminology I use throughout my study.

I discuss fully the qualitative nature of my investigation shortly, but note here that any quantitative (Bryman and Cramer 1990) elements to my investigation have been analysed using simple statistical techniques such as determining percentages and averages.<sup>211</sup>

Paramount to my investigation is the need to break ‘down the research question from the original statement to something which strips away the complication of layers and obscurities until the very essence – the heart – of the question can be expressed’ (Clough and Nutbrown 2002:33). The Russian<sup>212</sup> doll principle described by Clough and Nutbrown (ibid:37) is a helpful mechanism aiding the design of my methodology. My investigation design has been subject to reflective practice approaches, theoretical interrogation and been continually taken apart to reveal the *tiny* doll, or essence, of my study.

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<sup>209</sup> Perhaps, subjectively assessing the amount of data collected, as much as ‘90-10’ toward being qualitative.

<sup>210</sup> Using Creswell and Plano Clark’s (2011:100-106) terminology, my investigation embraces elements of being ‘multiphase’; albeit smaller in scale and shorter in time-scale than they portray, but nonetheless a study that is ‘sequentially aligned, with each new approach building on what was learned previously to address a central program objective’ (ibid:100).

<sup>211</sup> I have not undertaken any variable analysis that has sought to identify causality or correlation. This was not the purpose of this element of my investigation. For a discussion regarding this, see Bryman and Cramer (1990), Bryman (2008:314-338).

<sup>212</sup> Termed ‘Russian’ dolls by Clough and Nutbrown, but they are actually Matryoshka Dolls. The term ‘Russian’ has been retained for purposes of consistency.



Having described in Chapter 3 the scope and interrelationship of my investigation subject matter, three specific methods are identified as the most appropriate to examine and critically explore my key research questions. These are:

1. A qualitative (with some quantitative elements) *scoping survey* to investigate what faith-based youth workers think of societal issues and Big Society notions: an initial stage of my investigation evaluating general views regarding what faith-based youth workers consider about the research subject matter.
2. A series of qualitative (with some quantitative elements) focus group *positioning consultations* designed to inform and develop a consensus of emerging themes: a second stage of my investigation analysing worker views and refining the focus of my research.
3. Four qualitative *case studies* from which an explanatory hypothesis is developed.

Whilst the scoping survey embodies elements of the quantitative positivist approach, this is done primarily to establish some 'macro' (BERA n.d.) generalisations, baseline assessments and *prima facie* understandings of what faith-based youth workers views are regarding the topics being investigated. This is done in order to provide sequential (Creswell 2009:18) shape to the subsequent focus group and case study research – designed to discover what is taking place at the 'micro' level (BERA n.d.).

Before fully exploring these methods,<sup>213</sup> I set out my research ideology, the reasons behind my ontological and epistemological premise along with my overarching theoretical perspective and methodology adopted. I do so primarily with reference to Crotty (1998) whose 'scaffolding' approach (ibid:4-17) aptly provides a rationale helping unpack and clarify assumptions (ibid:17), offering a theorising that embeds my research (ibid) in a manner consistent with the prerogative of my investigation. As social research language and terminology is often conceptually interchangeable (ibid:10), philosophically diverse (Creswell 2009:6) and difficult to untangle (Gomm 2009:114),<sup>214</sup> reference to his work also provides a consistency and clarity regarding the meanings of the various terms used throughout this investigation – these are set out below:

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<sup>213</sup> In Chapter 5.

<sup>214</sup> For example, some researchers use the terms 'scientific' and 'naturalistic' (Guba and Lincoln in Fetterman 1988), whilst others use 'positivist' and 'constructionist' (Crotty 1998); I have adopted the latter

Domain	Meaning	Description of my paradigm
Ontology	The study of being and 'what is'	An evolving field of social practice that is 'informal education contributing to the "common good"' (Davies et al 2011:7): fluid, multifaceted and contextually responsive.
Epistemology	The theory of knowledge	Pragmatic with Constructivism and Advocacy/Participatory traits.
Theoretical Perspective	Philosophical stance	Interpretivist
Methodology	Plan of action	Composite: phenomenological, grounded.
Methods	Data collection approach	Mix-of-methods: survey, focus group consultations, case studies.

Table 2. The meanings of methodological terms used in my investigation

#### 4.2 Ideology, Approach and Dilemmatics

As previously considered, youth work, faith and the Big Society are theoretically emerging notions that are continually developing. Reflexively, the methodology chosen for my research needs to have both theoretical robustness and professional youth work practice symmetry and integrity. I will, thus, reflect these developmental dynamics embracing the analytical findings of the literature reviewed and the spirit of informal education I consider key in faith-based youth work. The youth work principles of voluntary participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity (National Youth Agency 2007) underpin my rationale – embracing reciprocity and the foundational relational frameworks analysed above enabling my research to be undertaken in a reflexive, non-oppressive and non-confrontational manner (McLaughlin 2007:114-133).

Taking these factors into account, I contend that there is no one ideal methodology to address my overall research questions, but rather a series of research choices each embodying a number of relative strengths and flaws.

McGrath's (1981) metaphorical dilemma of grappling with the 'three horns' of research evidence investigating how subjects are: firstly, actors doing something; secondly, behaving in a certain way; and thirdly, doing so in a specific context (ibid:183) resonates strongly with the parameters of my investigation and dovetails with the previously described 'Russian doll' metaphor. His consideration that a research project has to wrestle with 'a series of interlocking choices'

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to ensure consistency with the overarching stance of Crotty. Furthermore, writers such as Bryman (2008:19-21) refers to 'constructionism' ontologically rather than, as Crotty does, epistemologically.

(1981:179) that need to be 'lived with' (ibid) forms the backdrop to my methodological approach.

McGrath's 'dilemmatics' can be criticised for being over-pessimistic (Wild 2006:29) in outlook, but his assertion that any researcher must choose a methodology that is the 'lesser evil' (McGrath 1981:186) and that it 'can't be flawless' (ibid:188) is both an actuality and reality of this type of investigation where so little empirical knowledge is known about the subject matters. The issue is thus: not how I might 'avoid the choices ... pretend the dilemmas don't exist ... [and seek] the right choices' (ibid:209) but design a strategy that effectively addresses the identified challenges.

My investigation embraces two distinct yet connected areas: faith-based youth work and the Big Society that, in research terms, 'dance' (Janesick 1994:209-219) together. I have, therefore, designed a methodology that seeks to collectively investigate these and analyse their inter-relationship.

I consider my tripartite (*survey, consultation and case study*), mix-of-methods approach enables me, in the metaphorical terms described, to *grab* as many of McGrath's horns as possible, revealing the *smallest size doll*, pursuant to developing an original contribution to knowledge.

Before examining my overarching epistemological, theoretical and philosophical considerations, I consider the issue of trustworthiness in my study.

#### **4.3 An Investigation that is Trustworthy and Authentic**

Taking into account my investigation aims, desire for academic credibility and intention to develop a new explanatory model for faith-based youth work, my research methodology, findings and conclusions need to be trustworthy (Lincoln and Guba 1985:189 and 289-331). This demands that they are credible, dependable, valid and reliable.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider the concepts of *validity* and *reliability* can only be applied to quantitative research and that different criteria apply for qualitative research. Initially they defined *trustworthiness* as the 'credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability' of a research investigation (1985:189 and 289-301) but later (Guba and Lincoln 1989) added the concept of 'authenticity' to the list.

Notwithstanding this, in my survey and consultation investigation components there are identifiable dynamics of 'validity and reliability' (Gomm 2008:13):

- 'Internal validity' (Bryman 2008:32-33) that helps consider the causal relationship between faith-based youth work and policy developments that inform my subsequent case studies.
- 'Measurement validity' (ibid) that enables a degree of quantitative measurement to be disseminated regarding fluctuations across the various consultation groups.
- 'Ecological validity' (ibid) that seeks to engage participants in a manner reflective of youth work principles and perspectives: in participative, empowering and equitable ways, reflecting an informal education pedagogy.
- 'External validity' (ibid) that might mean similar results might be expected if a similar study was undertaken using the same methods at a similar time.

As case study work is more concerned with 'subjective judgements' (Yin 2009:41), making specific claims of validity and reliability is more problematic. Thomas (2011:62-66) argues that the case study approach need not be concerned with issues of validity and reliability at all; primarily because he deems they serve no purpose other than achieving a box ticking notion of 'criteriology' (citing Schwandt 1996 in Thomas 2001:63). Whilst having sympathy with this rationale, I contend that in my context it is important to give these criteria some consideration; given the Christian faith-based domination of my case studies and the possibility that future replication studies might be undertaken with cases from other faith and societal cohorts. To this end, some degree of reliability and validity is considered desirable: reliability in terms of data collection and the accurate recording thereof (Silverman 2004:285-289) and validity that observations and data are accurately 'called' (ibid:289).

However, I accept the critique of Guba and Lincoln relating to qualitative research that the terms *validity* and *reliability* are problematic and too positivist in orientation given the overall methodological positioning of my mix-of-methods investigation. Thus, I have analysed the extent to which the qualities they identify ensure my investigation is trustworthy. This avoids 'straining the data to meet the concept(s) [of validity and reliability] and losing the meaning in the process' (Simons 2009:128). Appendix 1 sets out these qualities as a series of summary tables. I have used the language and criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1989), Bryman (2008:377-380) and

Cohen and Crabtree (2008) as a theoretical template to appraise the trustworthiness of my investigation.

In continuing the metaphorical analysis of the Russian doll, the survey achieves a degree of generalisability with respect to the population: in this case, a broad sample of faith-based youth workers across the country. On its own, this is too non-specific and representative of one of the larger dolls. The focus groups build upon the survey findings and investigate in more detail measurement of the variables that relate to faith-based youth worker behaviour and, look toward a *smaller dolls* focus. The case study element of the research is located in the actuality and realism of an observational and investigative context: representing the very smallest doll. Collectively, therefore, my mix-of-methods investigation design achieves the desired high degree of trustworthiness and rigour and embodies the ideals of 'triangulation, facilitation and complementarity'<sup>215</sup> proposed by Hammersley (in Richardson 1996:159-174).

Within the case studies there are 'multiple sources of evidence' (Yin 2009:116-118) – i.e. four cases – and these enable triangulation (Yin 2009:116-118) to take place across the cases: thereby 'providing multiple measures of the same phenomenon' (Yin 2009:116-117).

Furthermore, convergent triangulation, facilitation and complementarity can then be applied that takes the findings from the case studies and analyses the extent to which they coincide with those of the survey and consultation work.

This entire methodological design can thus be represented diagrammatically:

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<sup>215</sup> Where: 'triangulation' enables qualitative research findings to corroborate quantitative research findings or vice versa, 'facilitation' enables one research strategy to aid another and 'complementarity' is when two research strategies are employed in order that different aspects of an investigation can be dovetailed (in Bryman 2008:607).

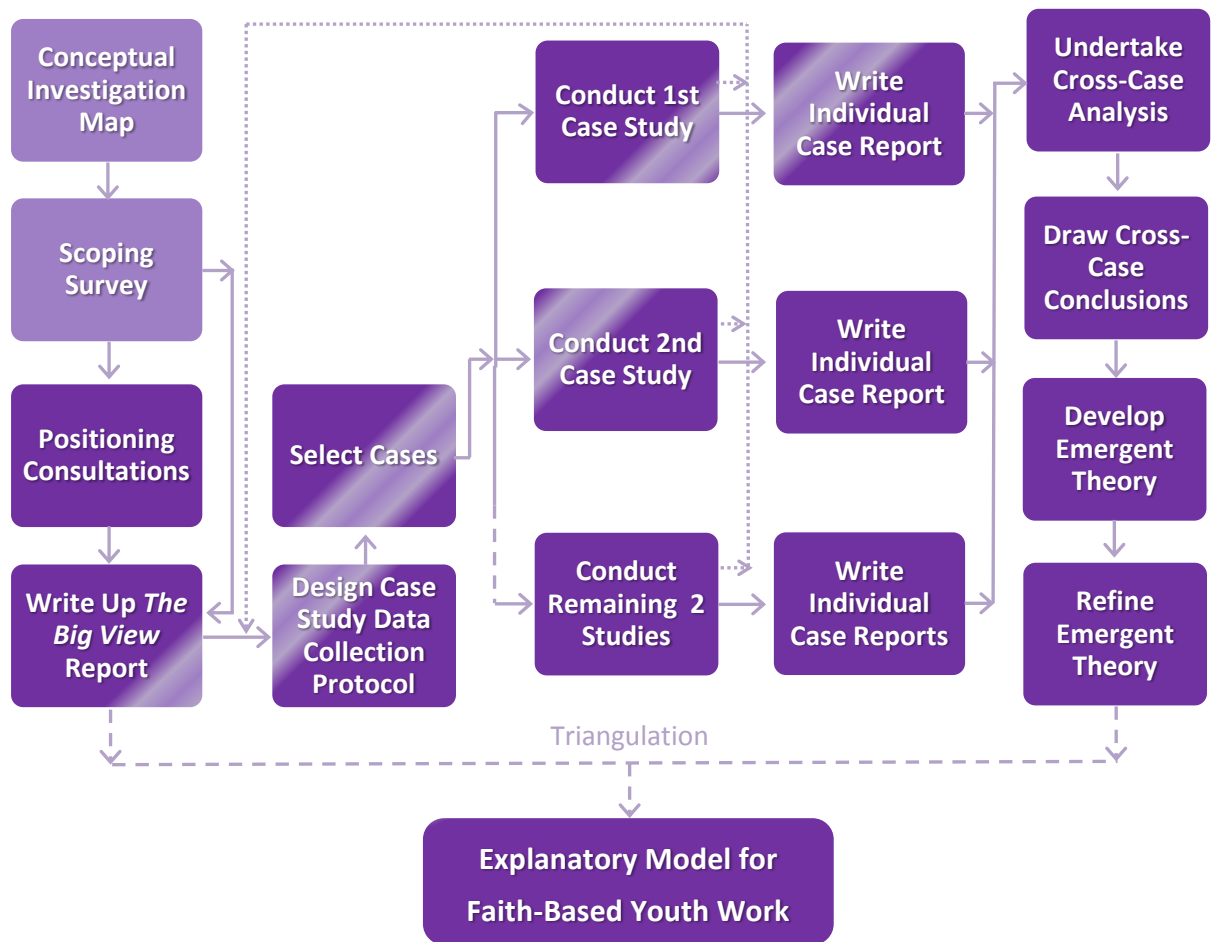


Figure 6. Conceptual methodology map – adapted (significantly) from Yin (2009:57)

This map establishes a clear rationale and process for my studies embedding trustworthiness into my investigation. I do not make any claims that any propositions and emergent framework resulting from my investigation can be applied to other types of faith-based youth work. However, I endeavour to find trustworthiness and display rigour – not in approaches common in positivist research that seek to ‘strip out’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007:137) external and contextual variables (ibid) – but in an approach that accounts for the social and policy environment and natural ontological settings of the groups and organisations being studied. I now turn to analyse this ontology.

#### 4.4 Ontology: The Reality of my Investigation Subject Matter

Ontology is ‘the study of being’ (Crotty 1998:10): an account of existence and an explicit ‘specification of a conceptualisation’ (Gruber 1993:200) that offers a way of understanding ‘what

is' (Crotty *ibid*) in a given context. In Chapter 3a I established that in faith-based youth work the nature of reality is an evolving informal education tradition that is fluid, multifaceted and contextually responsive.

This understanding is reflexively supported by my practice experience and, when viewed through a non-suspicious sociological lens that considers such work is aspiring to achieve the common good, enables the 'what is' of my investigation to be perceived. Philosophically, a number of 'a priori constructs' (Eisenhardt 1989:536) enable an investigation to begin about how faith-based youth work might be represented in the field regarding its foundations, grounding, philosophy, pedagogy and outcomes. These have been established in order that the nature of the work and its relationships with policy drivers can be investigated.

Drawing on the work of computer scientists Ding and Foo (2002), my ontology looks to avoid being a static model, but rather one which has 'the capacity to capture the changes of meaning' (*ibid*:1) and embrace the diverse and responsive nature of faith-based youth work in the Big Society. The metaphorical associations of such work having a collective resonance with the fluid, dynamic and rapidly developing nature of the computer science world.

#### **4.5 Epistemology: Making Sense of Reality**

My research process is designed to investigate perspectives about faith-based youth work and contemporary social drivers; as such it is an explorative study seeking to develop a theory by bringing together what is already known with new knowledge emerging from my data. Given the existence of different epistemologies, none of which Crotty (1998:9) determines are 'watertight compartments', I contend my investigation reflects a pragmatic philosophy with constructivist and advocacy/participatory characteristics:

- pragmatic as it uses a mix-of-methods and is 'not (exclusively) committed to one system of philosophy and values' (Creswell 2009:10);
- constructivist as understanding is 'sought of the world in which (people) live and work' (Creswell 2009:9); and
- advocating and participatory in seeking an 'action agenda to help a marginalised' cohort (Creswell 2009:9).

Whilst *meaning* is literally 'constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting' (Crotty 1998:43), my investigation uses a mix-of-methods to *pragmatically* draw on working with the 'something' that is in the world and the reflexive bringing together of objectivity and subjectivity (ibid:44). It holds to the values of the *advocacy/participatory* philosophical approach, seeking the development of faith-based youth work and addressing the social dynamics of contemporary policy drivers.

Before examining this philosophical notion, I briefly determine why other theories of knowledge, namely objectivism and subjectivism, embody rules and principles within which my investigation does not sit. For example, my epistemology is about:

- recognising human beings and organisational behaviour can only be understood and built up from actions, experiences and perceptions – rather than through the use of general scientific laws;
- seeking formative values – rather than just determining purely objective facts;
- indicating contextual propositions – rather than mathematical and scientific exactness;
- demonstrating provisional – rather than emphatic overtures;
- embracing uncertain, ambiguous, idiosyncratic and changeable (Crotty ibid:28) inclinations – rather than highly systematic, predetermined and 'tight-grid' (ibid) dynamics;
- recognising my own values within my practice and research could not maintain a detached position (Brannen 2005:11) – rather than asserting I am working via value-free objectivity;
- understanding that the faith-based youth work field is unlikely to ever yield 'constant conjunction' (Hume 2009) explaining cause and effect – rather is made up of a kaleidoscope of actor's (worker's and organisation's) behaviours; and
- generating and making meaning from individuals and groups via critical realism (Bhaskar 2008) – rather than 'apprehendable' reality (Guba and Lincoln 2005:193).



#### 4.5.1 Constructed Meaning

Constructionism as a philosophical view has developed to take on many forms.<sup>216</sup> It is beyond the scope of this investigation to give full consideration to them all; instead I will focus upon that considered most relevant here: pragmatic<sup>217</sup> constructivism.

Deriving from the work of Peirce, James (2008), Mead<sup>218</sup> and Dewey<sup>219</sup> and referring to the more contemporary thinking of Cherryholmes (1992) and Morgan (2007), Creswell (2009:10-11) describes the pragmatic philosophy as one that:

- is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality;
- enables the researcher to choose a variety of methods, techniques and procedures;
- recognises the need to seek the best understanding of a research problem at a given time and, find truth within that timeframe;
- focuses on the *what* and the *how* to research – based on the intended consequences;
- agrees that research takes place in a social, historical and political context: embracing a postmodern turn and theoretical lens reflective of social justice and political aims – an apt summary of my contextual analysis and research objectives;
- believes in an external world independent of the mind and, that questions about reality and the laws of nature are not paramount; and
- in conclusion, opens the door to different worldviews, assumptions and forms of data collection and analysis.

This portrayal describes my general philosophical positioning but, reflexively, it does leave an ideological hiatus and level of unease that fails to fully embrace my epistemology. This hinders the type of reflection and examination of the field that will help explain the intention and shape and inform future faith-based youth work. In short, it is the criticism widely made about

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<sup>216</sup> For example, Individual (Piaget and Inhelder 1969); Radical (Von Glaserfeld 1996); Social (Vygotsky 1978,); Cultural (Hutchinson 2006); and Critical (Fluery in Larochelle et al 1998).

<sup>217</sup> A term originally coined by Peirce who later redefined his understanding as ‘pragmatism’: wishing to distance his thinking from contemporaries whom he felt had ‘kidnapped’ his original ideas. See, eds. Hartshorne and Weiss (1991).

<sup>218</sup> See, for example, Cook (1993); Morris (ed. 1967).

<sup>219</sup> See, for example, Hickman, Neubert and Reich (eds. 2009).

pragmatic constructionism: that it is simply not critical enough (Crotty 1998:61-62) and prone to simply adopting the culture of the day (ibid:63) rather than being a 'battleground of hegemonic interests' (ibid:63). Therefore, I have sought to employ a broader critique and presented my philosophy as pragmatic but with constructed *meaning* associations and advocacy/participatory *values*.

Having set in Chapter 2 my reflexive approach, I now analyse further the values underpinning my investigation and discuss how these have impacted upon my methodology.

#### 4.5.2 Advocacy and Participatory Values

Given the contemporary propensity to see young people as being *in deficit*<sup>220</sup> and the social justice debates and considerations relating to Big Society discourses, I consider that a pragmatic constructionist research approach, even a fully reflexive one, does 'not go far enough in advocating for an action agenda for reform' (Creswell 2009:9) that informs the intention and shape of faith-based youth work. It is this analysis that compels my investigation to critically address 'issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression and alienation' (ibid) that both provides the context of and focus for my investigation.

Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998:21-31) summarise this approach in asserting that advocacy research aims to:

- investigate reality in order to change it;
- help individuals free themselves from the constraints found in the media, language, work procedures and educational power relationships;
- unshackle people from the unjust structures that limit self-development and determination; and
- undertake collaborative research with participants.

Whilst this investigation was 'a solitary process of systematic self-reflection' (ibid 22) rather than the collaborative ideal, it focuses on 'studying, reframing and reconstructing practices' (ibid) in

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<sup>220</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3.

order to develop new knowledge parameters identified in my proposed explanatory model. This is done via a social, participatory, practical, emancipatory, critical and reflexive process (ibid 23-24) that fully recognises the dangers of ensuring my data (particularly my interview data) was used in an 'even-handed fashion' (Gillham 2005:8) and not just to serve my own 'ideological and populist purposes' (ibid).

This descriptor, set in the context of Creswell's view that such 'research needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda' (Creswell 2009:9), establishes further coherence regarding my research motivations, aims and objectives as I seek to 'inquire *with* others rather than *on* or *to* others' (Fischer 2010:141). I do not seek to hide this 'critical' (Horkheimer 1937 in Crotty 1998:130-131) dynamic, but, instead, acknowledge that I seek an investigation that 'changes the situation ... (and) brings together philosophical construct and empirical detail' (Crotty 1998:130-131) in order to develop, raise the profile and esteem, and promote just models of faith-based youth work within contemporary policy situations. Given the nature and context of my investigation, I do not propose further analysis and critique of the merits of advocacy, participatory and critical inquiry approaches, but I note their significance in my investigation.

#### 4.6 An Interdisciplinary Theoretical Perspective and Research Philosophy

Given the multidimensional nature of my epistemological positioning, this investigation is similarly philosophically and paradigmatically rooted across a number of traditions.

The qualitative dimension points to the 'Chicago School' interpretivist tradition.<sup>221</sup> This endeavours to examine whole needs, contexts and situations in order to develop understanding regarding the relationship between faith-based youth work and contemporary social policy drivers. Within this, the plurality of views and knowledge identified in Chapter 3, my questioning of views and desire for transformation suggest a postmodern dynamic, whilst my partisanship with the marginalised and anti-capitalist praxis is indicative of Marxist traditions (Fuchs and Sandoval 2008:123). Furthermore, my reflexive awareness and conviction that reality and experience is shaped by powerful hegemonic structures finds resonance with post-Marxist critical theorists and approaches.

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<sup>221</sup> See, for example, Bulmer (1984).

Such an interdisciplinary philosophy is open to criticisms of lacking anchor and, being too fluid, random and contrived. Rather than be seen as a shapeless and unconvincing hotchpotch of theoretical perspectives, I consider it uses comprehensive architecture and scaffolding<sup>222</sup> from which my research is undertaken, data collected and new knowledge conceived; it does so seeking to make sense of reality and the variables of my subject investigation. In the spirit of Vygotsky's 'Zone of Proximal Development' (1978:86), my rationale is to employ a process that takes full account of my context and purpose, and endeavours to solve the problems embodied in my research questions via 'the development of a practical orientation into which are embedded various philosophical assumptions' (Hammersley 2005a). It would be contrived to adopt a singular philosophy simply to make one fit or for the sake of convenience or compliance.

The kaleidoscope<sup>223</sup> metaphor offers a picture that describes my approach and considered rationale. The word, kaleidoscope, is made up of three Greek words meaning 'an observer of beautiful forms' (Rodgers 2010):

- *kalos* = beauty – as it reflects my aims and objectives, takes account of my research subjects and context, operates using faith and youth work principles, employs a range of taxonomies and embodies who I am;
- *eidōs* = shape – illustrated by a three phase sequential mix-of-methods process that functionally gets the job of research done;
- *skopos* = examination – in being open to scrutiny, promoting validity and collecting data from which clearer pictures and new revelation can emerge.

Although it might be argued that positivist and constructivist epistemologies and their associated philosophical perspectives are irreconcilable, there is also the view that they are not totally mutually exclusive (Cupchik 2001). In recognising the associative merits and pitfalls of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, I propose 'staying in the field and out of the debating forum' (Miles and Huberman 1984:21), minimising 'paradigm wars' (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003:7-8) as such debates 'do not get research done; they are "not a dichotomy"', but an 'epistemological continuum' (ibid) that aptly describes the kaleidoscope framework of my investigation.

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<sup>222</sup> A term associated with, but never actually used by, Vygotsky. See Bruner (in Wood et al 1976).

<sup>223</sup> Patented by David Brewster in 1817.

In summarising my ontological, epistemological and theoretical philosophy as incommensurable (MacCleave 2006:2-12) and not preordained (Paley 2000:148), I do not imply a poorly managed laissez-faire approach that has 'plucked off the shelf' (Crotty 1998:14) a number of possibilities and merged them into one convenient conglomerate 'epistemological eclecticism' (Hammersley 2005a). Rather, it is an intensively managed strategic project with a nuanced rationale and critique set against a specific intention whereby each presupposition is fully evaluated (Crotty 1998:14). This 'cross-disciplinary fertilization of ideas' (Lather 1992:88) shows the value of a well-planned and effectively executed interdisciplinary approach.

My epistemological continuum kaleidoscope framework ensures my mix-of-methods methodology will tell me what I need to know in order to achieve my research aims, 'reduce ignorance' (Wagner 1993:18),<sup>224</sup> and minimise potential 'blind and blank spots' (Wagner 1993) that a singular approach might encounter.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:15) suitably encapsulate this philosophy:

... epistemological and methodological pluralism should be promoted in educational research so that researchers are informed about epistemological and methodological possibilities and, ultimately, so that we are able to conduct more effective research. Today's research world is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, complex, and dynamic; therefore, many researchers need to complement one method with another, and all researchers need a solid understanding of multiple methods used by other scholars to facilitate communication, to promote collaboration, and to provide superior research. Taking a ... mixed position allows researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions. Although many research procedures or methods typically have been linked to certain paradigms, this linkage between research paradigm and research methods is neither sacrosanct nor necessary.

Maintaining the terminology of Crotty (1998:5), I now examine my strategic methodology and plan of action.

#### 4.7 An Abductive Strategic Methodology

Given the nature of my investigation, it is appropriate for my strategy and approach to be inductive and theory-forming rather than deductive and theory-testing (Bryman 2008:9-13). The

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<sup>224</sup> Wagner argues, 'there is no end to what we don't know about perspectives, methods and theories' (ibid:19) and, consequently, whilst an approach may be helpful in developing understanding, no approach will ever be totally adequate.

previously considered fluidity of understandings regarding my subject matters made a deductive approach of simple theory-testing problematic. Additionally, the emergent theoretical nature of my subject matter embodies a significant number of ongoing ambiguities and contested uncertainties. As such a creative, visualising and potentially intuitive rationale is required that takes account of this conjectural environment in order to develop new and appropriate theoretical models; thus I consider an abductive reasoning strategy where I 'enter the world' (Blaikie 2009:19) of my subjects in order to 'discover [their] motives and meanings' (ibid) to establish a 'social scientific discourse' (ibid), is most suited to my investigation.

Abduction is described by Hammersley (2005b:5) as the 'development of an explanatory or theoretical idea: this often resulting from close examination of particular cases'. Josephson (1996:1) highlights that abduction is a relationship between data and theory development that is 'a form of inference that goes from data describing something to a hypothesis that best explains or accounts for the data'.

In my strategy, this entails 'data and theoretical ideas (being) played off against one another in a developmental and creative process' (Blaikie 2009:156). This happens across and within each of my tripartite stages (survey, consultations, case studies) so that:

Regularities that are discovered at the beginning or in the course of the research will stimulate (me) to ask questions and look for answers. The data will then be reinterpreted in the light of emerging theoretical ideas, and this may lead to further questioning, the entertainment of a tentative hypothesis and a search for answers (Blaikie ibid).

Although not without risk as my investigation engages in an abductive 'mental leap' (Reichertz 2010), this abductive reasoning determines my final hypothesis and reflects, takes account of and encompasses all the elements of my declared ontological, epistemological and theoretical philosophy. Risk will be both embraced and minimised as data is 'taken seriously' and any 'previously developed knowledge queried' (ibid) to prepare for new possibilities. Triangulating the findings (Silverman 2006:290-292) of my case studies against my preliminary survey and consultation work further reduces risks and, minimises the aforementioned blind and blank spots.

My composite taxonomy has sympathy with a number of historically identified methodologies. It is beyond the scope of my investigation to offer a full theoretical justification and critique for each of these, but their influence is noted. These include:

- Phenomenological approaches (Moran 2000) and ‘common-sense thinking’ aspired to by Schütz (1962:3-6). This has particular relevance in the fast-changing (Big Society) social policy environment being investigated; where new information and knowledge (ibid:149) is arrived at through shared common sense and, in this context, pragmatic youth work practice and experience that ‘glories in the concreteness of person-world relations and accords lived experience’ (Wertz 2005:175).
- Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) elements where data is abductively disseminated to develop a theory and explanatory framework (Reichert 2010).
- Components that embrace the thinking of Freire (1972; 1974; 1998) and the practical community work orientation of Alinsky (1989) in order to develop transformative and emancipatory practice (Mertens 2003).

In setting out my ontology, epistemology, theoretical perspective and strategic methodology, I have drawn upon a number of diverse, emerging and, at times, competing discourses. As a reflexive, critical, analytical practitioner and researcher with strong aspirations to bring about change in my chosen discipline, I have not been content to simply adopt one paradigm of thinking – even one paradigm associated with each tenet of my approach – that would aptly provide a summation of my overall methodology. I have not felt, nor considered it appropriate, to be ‘so purest’ (Crotty 1998:215); I do not believe this would have enabled me to determine the intention and shape of faith-based youth work in the Big Society.

Whilst it may be less work and easier to justify alignment with one consideration, I believe this lacks the personal and critical integrity necessary to underpin my investigation; it would not achieve the standard of strategic thinking and research planning I aspire to. I recognise ‘that the social world and the issues and problems researched are multidimensional and that different dimensions might exist in an uneasy or messy tension’ (Mason 2006:9). This acknowledges the ‘interplay, of distinctive ways of seeing ... which do not involve the squashing of these into one dominant methodological approach and one model of integration’ (ibid) – an interplay witnessed repeatedly in the field of faith-based youth work that, as outlined in Chapter 3a, resists any form of simplistic definition.

In summarising the possibilities, Mason (ibid:10) advocates a mixed rationale full of possibility and potential, that:

... can facilitate the researcher in asking new kinds of questions, 'thinking outside the box', developing multi-dimensional ways of understanding and deploying a creative range of methods in the process.

It is upon this maxim that I undertake this investigation to develop new theoretical understanding and my explanatory model. I now set out the precise mix-of-methods that are used to achieve my research aims and objectives. This is done with emphasis given to the case study element of my research: this being the culminating focus of my research.



## Chapter Five

### 5. A Tripartite Mix-of-Methods Investigation

In this chapter I highlight and reflect upon the individual methods used in my mix-of-methods approach. In previous chapters the diverse, multiplicitous and conceptually contested understandings of my subject matters and lack of associated theoretical models and academic analysis have pointed toward the need for a pragmatic and composite investigation. This will build my theory that faith-based youth work aspires to develop human flourishing and the common good, establish an emerging hypothesis regarding the intention and shape of such work and develop my explanatory house model that points toward a re-conceptualisation of faith-based youth work in the Big Society context.

As already highlighted, I conducted a scoping survey and undertook a series of focus group consultations to inform the design of my case studies. I briefly discuss here the design and effectiveness of the methods employed for both my survey and focus groups. I then analyse and evaluate in detail the method used for my faith-based youth work case studies. I critically analyse literature relating to the methods in questions, highlight salient issues as to why methods were chosen, identify good practice and establish a rationale for my approach. This is followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations involved.

My investigation chronology was:

	<b>Method Designed</b>	<b>Data Collected</b>	<b>Evidence Analysed</b>	<b>Findings Determined</b>
<b>Scoping Survey (2011)</b>	January	March-April	June-July	July
<b>Positioning Consultations (2011)</b>	April	April-May	June-July	July
<b>Case Studies (2012)</b>	January	February-May	June-October	November

Table 3. A timeline of my investigation

#### 5.1 Scoping Survey

My scoping survey established background data and, investigated what faith-based youth workers thought of societal issues and Big Society notions. Maintaining the metaphor of the Russian doll (Clough and Nutbrown 2002), this, 'big doll' of my investigation, was designed to

gain a generalisability from faith-based youth workers by facilitating a space for their voices to be heard. In order to provide resonance with the Big Society, I called it *The Big Survey*.

This section details the process and analyses its effectiveness. The research findings can be found in Chapter 6. A scoping study was employed as this mapped ‘rapidly the key concepts underpinning [my] research area and the main sources and types of evidence available’ (Mays *et al.* 2001:194). This was particularly appropriate in my investigative context as the subject ‘area [was] complex [and] has not been reviewed comprehensively before’ (ibid); thus reflecting my epistemological desire to bring together what was known and what needs to be known.

### 5.1.1 Survey: Design

The research took the form of a self-completed questionnaire (Bryman 2004:132). A copy can be found in Appendix 2 and a detailed timeline of the process in Appendix 3. Faith-based youth workers were made aware<sup>225</sup> of my research by email, face-to-face meetings, sector websites, worker gatherings and networks (Johnson 1994:40). The survey was available online and as hard copy.

Designed to produce qualitative data with some quantitative elements, it was informed by and designed with reference to: De Vaus (1993:83-95), Robson (1993:143-268), Foster and Parker (1995:96-103), Bell (1999:118-134), Bryman (2004:132-143), Davies (2007:82-100) and Gomm (2008:129-157) embodying questions that were both ‘tick-box’ and more complex:

- dichotomous – Questions 2, 9;
- multiple-choice – Questions 1, 8, 10;
- scaling – both rating and Likert (1932) – Questions 3, 4; and
- open-ended – Questions 5, 6, 7.

Representation and demographic data was also sought in order to evaluate the nature of those responding to the survey. In the development and pilot stage (Oppenheim 1992:47-64),<sup>226</sup> significant deliberations ensued regarding the religion and ethnicity questions. These

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<sup>225</sup> The survey was extensively promoted: see Appendix 4.

<sup>226</sup> For a summary of the pilot process: see Appendix 5.

endeavoured to balance inclusivity, ease of understanding and expediency. I eventually settled on criteria that were in common use<sup>227</sup> as these reflected the perceived needs of respondents, interests of minority faith and ethnic groups, and my research objectives.

I employed user-friendly terms (Gomm 2004:161-2), sought to be 'elegant and efficient' (Davies 2007:71) and embraced the attributes of the '*Total Design Method*' (Dillman 1978) exploring:

- behaviour – Questions 2, 3;
- beliefs – Questions 4, 5, 6, 7;
- attitudes – Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; and
- attributes – Questions 1, 8, 9, 10.

Question 4e sought to avoid habituation (by switching positive and negative phrasing) to stop respondents positive answering; thus negating any propensity to give the *right* or *most favourable answers*.

I endeavoured to incorporate a question using semantic differential (after Osgood 1957) that would gauge reactions to words and concepts. However, this was rejected after testing as it potentially embraced a number of paradoxical components that made the design vulnerable to misinterpretation by respondents threatening the transferability (Lincoln and Guba 1985:219, 297) of the data.

The survey results, *The Big View* (Pimlott 2011b),<sup>228</sup> are presented in lay terms to make the findings accessible to those who took part in the survey and the wider practice field.

### 5.1.2 Survey: Effectiveness of Approach

The following positive outcomes were achieved:

- the number of responses – 214 responses, 168 completed surveys;
- diverse ethnic, age and gender representations;

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<sup>227</sup> In reality, a combination of Big Lottery and Staffordshire University criteria.

<sup>228</sup> The consultation findings are also in *The Big View*.

- positive anecdotal feedback about the survey<sup>229</sup> – respondents said the questions were good, and the survey easy to complete, well designed and short;
- responses were insightful and informative – developing potential conceptual propositions (de Vaus 1993:18);
- data could be effectively analysed – aiding formative conclusions regarding future work; and
- stimulated interest in the topic and raised the profile of my wider investigation – leading to a number of seminar invitations.<sup>230</sup>

There were also a number of limitations and weaknesses:

- disproportionate amount of Christian and Muslim respondents – no doubt reflective of their pre-eminence in the field;<sup>231</sup>
- uncertainty as to whether network and infrastructure bodies distributed survey details to their contacts – there was no cost-effective and practical way of monitoring this;
- a significant proportion of Muslim workers began, but did not complete the whole survey;
- some Muslim workers did not leave their postcodes thereby not giving informed consent – the reasons were not evident;<sup>232</sup>
- when participants undertook the survey in hard copy they sometimes cross-referenced their answers with comments like: ‘see above’. This did not happen with internet submissions as only one (or at most two) questions were visible at a time online; and

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<sup>229</sup> Communicated by email, telephone conversations and discussions in network settings.

<sup>230</sup> For example, at: Goldsmiths, Staffordshire, Newman College and UCLAN Universities, Youth and Policy Conferences, Leeds and London.

<sup>231</sup> See Pimlott (2011b).

<sup>232</sup> Whilst subjective conjecture, it may be they were fearful – in view of media and political stereotyping and my Christian background – of what would be done with the data. See, DeHanas (2013) who encountered similar anxieties.

- the pilot version of the survey was hosted<sup>233</sup> free of charge, but it contained adverts which pilot respondents felt distracted. I therefore chose to pay for survey hosting which, whilst not a significant amount (£40), was not budgeted for.

On reflection, I do not consider these frustrations significantly negatively impacted my research objectives. Empirical data was objectively collected, albeit from an 'interested' (Gomm 2009:223) position; this served my scoping aim as a precursor to my subsequent studies and research.

Whilst it was clear from analysing the uncompleted surveys that some people stopped completing the survey at the 'open questions', qualitative juncture, the relative merits of acquiring both quantitative and qualitative data proved significant in researching 'what is going on?' (*descriptive research*) (De Vaus 1993:11) enabling *The Big Consultations* to consider 'why it is going on?' (*explanatory research*) (ibid).

Whilst I was endeavouring to capture the essence of both modern and postmodern participant perspectives (Denzin and Lincoln 2003b:15-16; Silverman and Marvasti 2008:18), my predominantly online data collection did not afford much personal interaction with research subjects and, may have limited this aspect of the research.

### 5.1.3 Survey: Reflection and Analysis

As the Big Society was a new subject, I wondered if respondents would 'admit lack of knowledge' (Oppenheim, 1992:139). However, it appears that any 'social desirability bias' (ibid) was not in evidence with several participants admitting they did not know much about the Big Society; this in itself was important data and learning, given my overall 'sequential explanatory strategy' (Creswell 2009:211) investigation approach.

The open questions produced a large amount of narrative data. A full narrative analysis (Bryman 2004:412-414) was considered but subsequently deferred as the survey was designed to provide a snapshot view and be a stepping-stone to further work, not a highly nuanced analysis of

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<sup>233</sup> By: [www.kwiksurveys.com](http://www.kwiksurveys.com). This was chosen because other potential hosts had limits on respondent numbers, duration and/or lacked design possibilities.

respondents' views. Using 'Wordle' (word cloud software) provided such a visual snapshot and analysis of the data.<sup>234</sup>

Whilst Wordle is not completely accurate in determining positive and negative sentiments – as words may be taken out of context (McNaught and Lam 2010:641) and, may possibly end up contradictory as it 'neglects the semantics of the words' (ibid) – it does provide a visual reflective tool. This learning was incorporated in *The Big Consultations* as a stimulating reference point; albeit recognising Wordle is a helpful didactic, best used as 'an adjunct tool' (ibid 630) to take account of the significance of the above sentiments and semantics.

From a personal perspective I enjoyed the process, found it stimulating, motivating and interesting. I was not particularly surprised by the results given my prior knowledge and understanding of faith-based youth work. However, the new and specific data about the Big Society was pivotal in shaping subsequent elements of my investigation.

Given the benefit of hindsight, I would only make minor adjustments to the process: I would have visited specific faith groups to facilitate their engagement whilst recognising the data confirmability (Lincoln and Guba 1985:299, 318-327) risks and sampling bias of doing so (Gomm 2008:138-140). Given unlimited time resources, I would also have coincided the timing of the survey to match the captive audience elements of conference and other gatherings of faith-based youth workers thus gathering significantly more responses.

Given the 'new' nature of the Big Society notion, the scoping survey was an essential prerequisite to my investigations; had alternative and reliable data been available then a different course of action may have ensued.<sup>235</sup> However it was not, and so this course of action provided a 'robustness and credibility' (Silverman and Marvasti 2008:146) consistent with the 'societal context' (ibid).

The data produced was scoping, informing and shaped the subsequent focus group consultations. It stimulated interest in both the topic and my wider studies highlighting the originality of my studies (Phillips and Pugh 2005:61-63; Marshall and Green 2010:50). I now turn to discuss my positioning consultations.

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<sup>234</sup> For an example see Pimlott (2011b:22).

<sup>235</sup> For example, I would have undertaken a secondary analysis (Bryman 2008:296-304)

## 5.2 Positioning Consultations

A series of focus group positioning consultations were undertaken in the spring of 2011 with thirty-two faith-based youth workers regarding the notion of the Big Society. These were framed by the initial results from the scoping survey work undertaken in the previously discussed, *The Big Survey*. In a similar vein to *The Big Survey*, I marketed the consultations as *The Big Consultations* to provide sonority with the wider policy aspiration.

In terms of the Russian doll metaphor, this focus group (Bryman 2008:475-491) component of my investigation was designed to examine 'ways in which people in conjunction with one another construe the general topic' (ibid:475) so that I could analyse worker views and refine the focus of my research: progressing towards identifying the tiny doll of my study.

### 5.2.1 Consultation: Design

I employed *The World Café* (Brown with Isaacs 2005) process: a tool I had used previously in professional facilitation roles.<sup>236</sup> I knew it was effective, accessible and appealed to youth workers.<sup>237</sup> It is an emerging research method (Fouché and Light 2010) considered particularly appropriate for 'collaborative learning and information exchange and the critical issue of managing time for research in practice' (ibid:8); all key determinants and factors in my investigation.

Details of the group consultations, including venues and timings, are set out in Appendix 6 with additional information available in *The Big View*.

I selected three venues to allow people from more than one geographical area to access the consultations. Open invitations to participate were widely advertised and distributed by electronic media across a broad cross-section of youth work networks, agencies and contacts. Given the contentions identified in Chapter 3a regarding terminology, eligibility to attend was done via self-selection with the only proviso being that participants determined they were working with young people from a faith-based motivation.

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<sup>236</sup> For example: in undertaking organisational reviews, evaluating youth work narratives and establishing strategy.

<sup>237</sup> See Pimlott (2009).

Fouché and Light (2010:2), whilst referring to social work generally, determine that research methodologies need to reflect the practice context they are undertaken in: ‘promoting a hospitable place where information can be shared, collaborative learning occurs and mutual respect be promoted’. I consider this notion equally applies to youth work and necessitates practice aspirations of ‘inclusiveness of stakeholders, promotion of human relatedness and mutual generation of understanding and knowledge’ (ibid 3). *The World Café*<sup>238</sup> process promotes such attributes as a competent research tool (Fouché and Light 2010); thus making it fit the purpose of achieving these objectives. It was therefore employed as the key process for facilitating the consultations and collecting data.

In order to add structure to the consultations, I augmented *The World Café* process and developed a series of questions<sup>239</sup> using the *Appreciative Inquiry* five-stage model<sup>240</sup> (Watkins and Mohr 2001), visually portrayed below:<sup>241</sup>

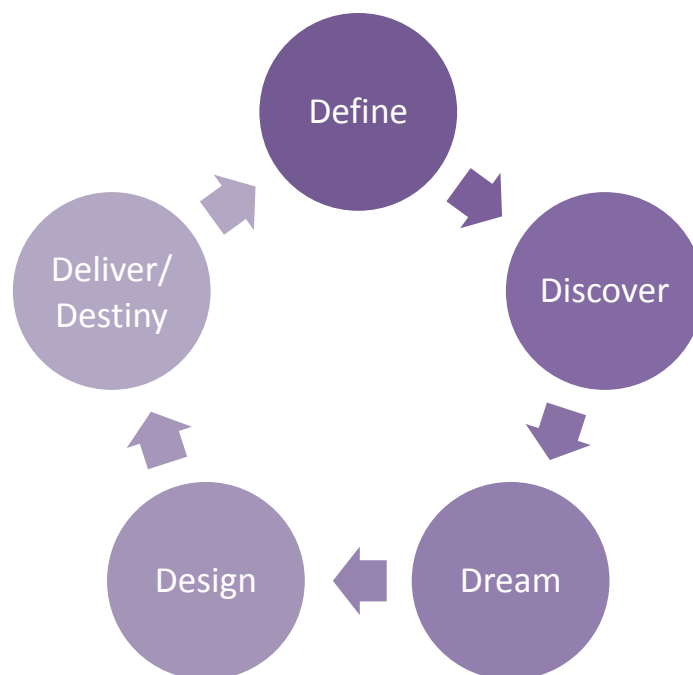


Figure 7. The Five ‘D’ Cycle of *Appreciative Inquiry* – adapted from Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008)

<sup>238</sup> See Appendix 7 for details.

<sup>239</sup> See Appendix 8.

<sup>240</sup> *Appreciative Inquiry*, after Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008).

<sup>241</sup> Adapted from Cheung-Judge and Powley in Bunker and Alban (2006:50).



This model considers five domains each underpinned by a theoretical question designed to promote understanding. The following table summarises the rationale used in the consultations.

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Understanding</b>	<b>Actual question posed – page number in Appendix 8</b>
<b>Definition</b>	Understanding?	Experience	1
<b>Discovering</b>	What is?	Context	3
<b>Dreaming</b>	What might be?	Possibilities	3
<b>Designing</b>	What should/could be?	Plans/Recommendations	4
<b>Destiny</b>	What will be?	Actions	4

Table 4. The Five ‘D’ Cycle – approach summary

This was done to offer ‘zero-order level of communication’ (Berg 2007:102-103), provide a logical structure for participants to follow and introduce elements of ‘provocative propositions’ (Reed 2007:10) to focus my investigation. It also had the added advantage of collecting data in a systematic and managed manner. Within this I sought not to use language and idioms that were exclusive to one particular faith perspective.<sup>242</sup>

In order to ensure the credibility (Lincoln and Guba 1985:300, 301-316) of the data collected, consistency of facilitation was required across all the consultations. This was achieved by asking the same questions, allocating the same amount of discussion time to them, and restricting the projection onto participants of my own views so that whilst acknowledging ‘there is no value-free or bias-free design’ (Janesick 2003:56) bias was minimised.

### 5.2.2 Consultations: Effectiveness of Approach

Notwithstanding the fact both the number and diversity of participants was not as great as hoped, the methodology worked exceptionally well as a process and data collection tool. Despite

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<sup>242</sup> For example, in questions 3 and 4 I sought to minimise offence and stereotyping, avoiding phrases such as: ‘pigs might fly’; ‘double Dutch’; ‘all Greek to me’ ‘black hole’; and ‘up a blind alley’.

a significant investment,<sup>243</sup> there was poor uptake from faith groups other than Christian and two of the planned evening sessions were cancelled due to low numbers. Conjecture could be made as to why this was the case, but it would be somewhat subjective and not add to the focus of the discussions here.

*The World Café* and *Appreciative Inquiry* combination methodology fulfilled my expectations and achieved my objectives. Methodologically, I consider it was engaging, empowering, liberating and generated a wealth of data. Participants were asked for their views about the process and the feedback was positive and endorsing.<sup>244</sup>

The process facilitated a series of small group conversations. These generated many hours of conversation recorded using digital recorders (Bryman 2008:476). Whilst this volume gave increased credibility to the data, it did prove a time-consuming transcribing challenge with the recordings revealing the usual difficulties of people talking over one another (ibid). I chose not to be directly involved in the conversations as I did not wish to bias them; so whilst the transcribing was onerous, it did provide the opportunity for me to listen, consider, reflect upon and begin to disseminate what was said. I concluded that I had 'taken adequate measures' (Gomm 2008:76) to maximise dependability aspirations (Lincoln and Guba 1985:299, 316-318).

One of my trustworthiness goals (Lincoln and Guba 1985:289-331) was to achieve a consistency of facilitation and data collection. There is an inevitability participative processes such as *The World Café* will have a degree of fluctuation and, whilst a subjective and personal view, I do not consider this 'contaminated' (ibid 34) the results. My appraisal of the transcriptions indicates trustworthiness was achieved.<sup>245</sup> Space does not allow a full critique, but I would subjectively conclude that the process was authentic (Guba and Lincoln 1989) capturing the type of 'everyday, natural social setting' (Bryman 2008:33) and 'informal education' (Jeffs and Smith 2005; Batsleer 2008; Davies et al 2011) ethos previously contended so essential in youth work.

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<sup>243</sup> Which included extensive marketing of the consultations to faith groups, networks and infrastructure bodies via email, websites, fliers, posters, personal contact, promotion at professional engagements and attendance at academic and sector events.

<sup>244</sup> See Pimlott (2011b:49).

<sup>245</sup> A full copy of the (50,000 word) transcription is available on request.

### 5.2.3 Consultations: Reflection and Analysis

My chosen methodology produced a wealth of data that perhaps exceeded the demands of the scoping nature of the project. Whilst analysis of the data absorbed more time than I anticipated, this was not to the detriment of the project as it enhanced my understanding. In hindsight, seeking to facilitate six consultations was excessive: I consider that the four that did take place were sufficient for the purpose.

My reflections resonate with those of Fouché and Light 2010 that whilst *The World Café* process is 'not ordinarily associated with research' (ibid:7) it 'contributes to cognitive reframing and individual sense making ... and moves participants beyond information transfer toward information exchange' (ibid:19). As such it embodies a 'powerful method of data collection' (ibid:19) suited to my purposes.

Underpinning my objectives was the rationale of a stakeholder analysis typology that analyses the 'legitimacy, power and urgency' (Mitchel, Agle and Wood 1997) of the subject matter. In summary, seeking to determine if the notion of the Big Society is the most valid approach to current civil societal challenges, what effect it is having, and if its immediacy demands a positive response and engagement from faith-based youth workers. This typology was chosen because it embraced a creative 'building bridges' (Silverman 2004:35-55) methodological analysis and had the potential to embrace 'different (even competing) discourses' (ibid 42) that 'emulated the essence' (Fouché and Light 2010:3) of youth work, thus achieving my intended objectives.

Research studies are rightly academic in nature and contained within clear learning outcomes, but motivation, interest and enjoyment factors also play their part. Research literature rarely considers such dynamics. I reflect that they can helpfully underpin the success of a project and be a catalyst for further impetus. For me (and judging by the feedback, the participants also) this was an enjoyable, interesting and insightful process that discovered a new body of knowledge and understanding.

The transcriptions were subjected to a simple content analysis (Bryman 2008:274-293) with interviews marked for themes and categorised in order to identify a set of patterns (Saldaña 2009); thereby establishing a set of emerging themes that subsequently enabled my case study research to be designed.

I now turn to critically analyse this case study design, detail how evidence and data was collected, determine the effectiveness of the approach used and analyse the methods employed.

### 5.3 Case Studies

The findings of the scoping survey and focus group consultations established a number of emerging themes. These were disseminated and evaluated to inform, shape and design four case studies (code named: Paradise; Valhalla; Nirvana; and Shangri-La) leading to development of an overarching explanatory hypothesis.

In terms of the Russian doll metaphor, this element of my research was designed to identify the tiny doll of my investigation; the aim being to 'go deep into a definable setting in which phenomena can be placed meaningfully within a specific social environment' (Holliday 2007:33). This involves: determining the essence of the relationship between faith-based youth work practice, its motivations, space and place in society, its philosophy and values, pedagogy and outcomes so that a new theoretical framework, emergent hypothesis and explanatory model of such work can be proposed. The methods used for the case studies were primarily informed by reference to Eisenhardt (1989; and, with Graebner 2007), Stake (1995), Simons (2009), Yin (2009) and Thomas (2011) and, reported using the portraiture principles of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997).

#### 5.3.1 Case Studies: Design

Darke, Shanks and Broadbent (1998:275) assert:

Case study research has often been associated with description and with theory development, where it is used to provide evidence for hypothesis generation and for exploration of areas where existing knowledge is limited.

As such, I consider it the most appropriate method for the culminating component of my investigation given the discourse set out previously: that faith-based youth work is an under-researched practice with ambiguous theoretical frameworks and limited knowledge about how it operates and why it does so.

Yin contends that in such circumstances – when ‘how and why’ questions need to be answered – ‘the use of case studies, histories and experiments as the preferred method’ (2009:9) is the approach most likely to be used. However as Blaikie (2010:188) notes, ‘literature abounds with various definitions of a case study’. For example, Cavaye (1996:227-228) observes:

Case research can be carried out taking a positivist or an interpretive stance, can take a deductive or an inductive approach, can use qualitative and quantitative methods, can investigate one or multiple cases. Case research can be highly structured, positivist, deductive investigation of multiple cases; it can also be an unstructured, interpretive, inductive investigation of one case; lastly, it can be anything in between these two extremes in almost any combination.

Whilst acknowledging this breadth, and an equally abounding critique of the method itself, I do not propose analysing this in detail here – other than noting and considering the principle limits and criticism of case studies: namely, the potential for lack of rigour, trustworthiness and generalisability. These being issues I have addressed previously in my methodology discussions.

Yin (ibid:18) offers a two-fold definition of a case study that aids my investigation and, aptly sums up its demands. Firstly, it is ‘an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomena within its real life context especially when, the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’. Secondly as an inquiry that: ‘copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis’.

Whilst this is a somewhat wordy definition, it has the benefit of acknowledging the ‘particularity and complexity’ (Thomas 2011:10) of my research context enabling a collective (Stake 1995:4) and algorithmic approach to be taken that facilitates my theory-seeking (Bassegy 1999) objectives; this collective approach being additionally supported by the feeding in of the ‘common topics’ (Stake 1995:25) identified in my survey and focus groups.

This systematic approach negates arguments that case study research lacks rigour (Yin 2009:14) and, establishes a ‘primary conceptual structure’ (Stake 1995:25). Far from falling into the trap of being methodologically ‘promiscuous’ (Thomas 2011:37), my design is one that is strategically composite, reliable and selective of the best methods and ‘design frames’ (ibid 38).

A consistent approach was used so in each case studied, the method used to identify the cases and actors researched was the same; this enabled a reliability and precision to be achieved (Bremner 1982:131-132 in Mishler 1991:14) that was underpinned by bringing 'equivalent stimuli' to the process; albeit accepting that variations are to some degree inevitable.

I have not sought to find 'typical' (Mitchell in Blaikie 2010:193) faith-based youth work cases and make no claims regarding sample representativeness; reflecting the work of Mitchell in endeavouring to 'theorise rather than generalise' (ibid). I also make no claims regarding the issue of generalisability (Thomas 2011:17-23) regarding each individual case. I do, however, agree with Yin (2009:61-62) that my multiple case study approach alleviates criticisms on this front and that 'cross-case generalisation' (Simons 2009:164) – where commonality can be determined via examination of 'what aspects hold true from case-to-case and what might be different' (ibid) – combines the best of investigating local practices with a 'degree of abstraction' (ibid); thus reflecting McGrath's (1981) aforementioned dilemmatic and methodological 'grappling of horns'.

Both to further underpin the theoretical basis for my investigation and to aid these considerations, I set out the kind of case study undertaken and the process used.

### 5.3.2 Case Studies: Process

In Chapter 2, I employed the principles of *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997) to describe my investigation 'perch and position' (ibid:50-52). I return to these portraiture principles as a framework within which my case studies have been undertaken, analysed and presented; principles that combine the dimensions and disciplines of rigorous social qualitative research methods and the more artistic, aesthetic, reflective and personal aspects of contemporary social science investigation and inquiry.

Portraiture is a research method focused on:

The convergence of narrative and analysis, in its goal of speaking to broader audiences beyond the academy (thus linking inquiry to public discourse and social transformation) ... authenticity rather than reliability and validity ... and in its explicit recognition of the use of self as the primary research instrument for documenting and interpreting the perspectives and experiences of the people and cultures being studied. (ibid:14)

As such, it goes beyond the 'storytelling' method of Bassey (1999) and fully takes account of the contextual circumstances, research objectives and my reflexive positioning; thus rendering it most appropriate for the purposes of my investigation as it:

Underscores the relational and phenomenological aspects of research that are usually ignored ... opening up opportunities for exploring the intricacies of becoming a researcher through first-hand experience. (Gaztambide-Fernández et al 2011:5)

English (2000:21) criticises the portraiture methodology considering it too subjective, not open to data/component scrutiny and reliant on the 'hues of descriptive prose' of the researcher to profess what is reality. My design is located in the theoretical frameworks of Simons (2009), Yin (2009) and Thomas (2011) and then augmented with the portraiture methodology; thus adding to the robustness and rigour of my approach diminishing these criticisms and minimising the consequences of them. I have sought the best of both worlds: seeking both the rigour of traditional qualitative and interrogative approaches to case study research and the portraiture approach that seeks to 'reveal the essence' (Lawrence-Lightfoot in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997:4) of each case; these two dynamics combining to develop my explanatory model.

I undertook four 'multiple-case design' (Yin 2009:59) studies, comparing cases in their totality. This was an amount large enough to allow a degree of replication logic (Yin 2009:54-58); thus positioning my investigation between the 'straightforward' (ibid:58) and the 'subtle' (ibid), and small enough to be managed within my available time and resources. These studies were designed and informed by *The Big View* findings, were multiple and comparative in nature, instrumental and explanatory in purpose, designed to build a theory in approach and retrospective as a process (Thomas 2011:95-158).

For example, *The Big View* (Pimlott 2011b:34) finding that there was a 'lack of understanding' about the Big Society, shaped part of the semi-structured interviews and participants were each asked about the notion. The finding that faith-based youth work needed to be more 'intentionally focused' and clear about its 'identity' informed the case study design by focusing in on clarifying what the current focus of the work undertaken was and, how *faith* shaped the project work. The finding that partnership working was important, focused enquiries about partnerships and the extent to which such relationships were important in the work of the cases.

I was aware multiple case studies 'require extensive resources and time' (Yin (2009:53) and such a design approach was not 'taken lightly' (ibid). Given my investigation aims, the new contextual environment of the Big Society and contested nature of faith-based youth work definitions, I considered more than one set of data was needed to provide 'significant opportunities for extensive analysis' (ibid:52) in order to identify and establish a 'more compelling' (ibid:53) explanatory theory.

I sought to engender a balance between an 'holistic' (ibid:50-53) approach and one that took account of the 'embedded' sub-units (ibid) of my investigation: namely, regarding the aims of the projects investigated, their mission and values and their relationships with civil society, the state and the market. I was not attempting to investigate their work 'holistically' (ibid) regarding the detail<sup>246</sup> of the work they did with young people, how they were governed, how human resources were regarded nor how the projects were organised and managed as these considerations were outside my investigation aims.

### 5.3.3 Case Studies: Identification of Candidates

My access and entry method to participants was designed not from a sampling logic that sought to engage a representative sample of faith-based youth work candidates, but with a view to determining an emerging theory via a replication approach (ibid:53-60) across my cases. The original intention was to undertake a series of case studies in the wider Birmingham area:<sup>247</sup> each study representing a different faith. Structuring my investigation in this manner had the advantages of meeting time and budgetary targets and, realising replication objectives against a fixed and narrowed-down geographical and demographic context that would have enabled clear comparisons to be made of cases vested within similar confines.

Based on my survey and consultation investigations and previous professional knowledge, I saw little difficulty in identifying and engaging suitable Christian-based projects – if for no other reason than their significant proliferation. I, therefore, initially set about seeking suitable cases rooted in faith traditions other than Christian, hereafter referred to as 'Strategy A'. Using an

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<sup>246</sup> For example, details about how youth work sessions were organised, activities planned, content decided upon and work evaluated were not considered.

<sup>247</sup> I had lived and worked in this area, and I knew it had a diverse faith demographic.



array of approaches, I endeavoured to recruit suitable cases.<sup>248</sup> With a long-standing and proven track record of networking, building connections across diverse cohorts, managing public relations promotions, launching projects, resources and research reports, I anticipated this was an appropriate strategy to deploy.

The selection criteria for my cases was designed to be simple and self-declaring: they had to be working with young people of secondary school age and, doing so as the aforementioned 'self-identifying faith communities' (Batsleer 2008:84) outside of a formal education setting. The aim was to engage as broad an informal education cohort as possible that would include: youth work done in or from a place of worship; social action work done in the community; specific project work; issue-based work; faith maintenance and transmission work; positive activity type work; in short, all possible forms of faith-based youth work.

Despite deploying many hundreds of hours of time, incurring significant financial expense and exhausting many avenues of enquiry, I failed to recruit any projects from faith traditions that were not Christian-based. I subsequently extended the geographical area to cities and larger towns in the Midlands: cities with multicultural and multi-faith demographics<sup>249</sup> where had I contacts or prior practice experiences. This also bore no fruit; so finally I made representations across the rest of England, but this was no more successful in engaging any cases. Helpful colleagues both in youth work and in academic settings<sup>250</sup> even encouraged people from other faith groups to help, but their efforts similarly failed.<sup>251</sup>

After several months of endeavour and consultation with colleagues and supervisors, I decided to reframe my criteria and instead seek projects working from a Christian motivation-base with a more defined pedagogy – hereafter referred to as 'Strategy B'. This was designed to be reflective of my literature and contextual analysis and thus, sought cases that:

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<sup>248</sup> These approaches included using: my professional networks, contacts made through the survey and consultation work, faith sector groups, umbrella organisations and infrastructure bodies, faith councils, interfaith forums and associations, academic institutions and colleagues, web-based and social media approaches, attendance at appropriate conferences, personal visits and organised press releases and email communications.

<sup>249</sup> Including: Leicester, Derby, Nottingham, Stoke, Wolverhampton and Burton-upon-Trent.

<sup>250</sup> Thanks are expressed to the Muslim academics, the Hindu Chaplain and Sikh's who gave of their time.

<sup>251</sup> I consider this is also important *data* within the context of my investigation, and I discuss it regarding possible future work in Chapter 9.

- I had previous knowledge of and, were known for quickly delivering on their promises – time considerations now being significant;
- had good professional and practice reputations – in line with portraiture principles, I sought to avoid a purely pathological investigation (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997:8), but instead asked first, ‘what is the good here?’ (ibid:9);
- might be considered to be doing Big Society type work – further determining what this might look like and mean;
- had a Christian ethos, but also working inclusively with people of other faiths and of none – perceived to be pursuing the common good;
- were organisations or projects rather than places of worship – because previous experience suggested that access to the relevant people and information alongside quicker speed of decision-making would facilitate the study more easily;
- worked collaboratively and in partnership with others – including secular bodies – so my research objectives could be investigated; and
- represented ‘an appropriate population’ (Eisenhardt 1989:537) that would help ‘define the limits for generalising’ (ibid) my findings and, were likely to ‘replicate or extend the emergent theory’ (ibid).

Having drawn up a list of sixteen projects I had pre-existing ‘local knowledge’ (Thomas 2011:76) of that met these criteria, I approached an initial four via email, and they all agreed, by return, to help. These four were asked first as they were contextually, geographically, racially demographically, culturally and operationally distinct; thus enabling cases from different perspectives to be compared.

For reasons of ensuring good access, having sufficient resources whilst in the field, clarity of data collection scheduling (Yin 2009:85) and expediency, I accessed study participants through ‘organisational gatekeepers’ (King and Horrocks 2010:31-33) rather than ‘insider assistants’ (ibid). These gatekeepers had the power to facilitate my involvement in a timely fashion; they knew me and because of the travel distances involved, I needed someone to recruit local interviewees, and I trusted them to do so. This approach had the added advantage of reducing any potential bias regarding who I engaged with as, apart from saying I would like a mix of staff,

volunteers and an external stakeholder for my semi-structured interviews, I didn't influence who was involved. I sought such a mix of people because I wanted a cross-section of perspectives that would offer a triangulated understanding across my research subject matters; enabling me to get to the 'heart of the matter' (Hoffman Davis in Lawrence Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997:168).

### 5.3.4 Case Studies: Sources of Evidence

I was aware that evaluating and carrying out formal reviews of individuals, projects and organisations<sup>252</sup> and, deciding how to collect case evidence was not an 'easy' (Yin 2009:67) option. It is time-consuming, requires sustained levels of concentration, demands high-level analytical skills, and a range of interpersonal qualities and reflective abilities. I, therefore, endeavoured as much as possible to use my prior practice experience to ensure I academically 'asked good questions ... listened ... was adaptive and flexible ... had a firm grasp of the issues ... and was unbiased by preconceived notions' (ibid:69-72).

Informed by Stake (1995), Simons (2009), Yin (2009) and Thomas (2011), data and evidence was collected from a number of sources, including:

- organisational and project documentation: annual reports, newsletters, publicity posters, project activities, promotional literature and letters;
- organisational websites, social media platforms and emails;
- external websites:
  - evaluating relevant blogs, critiques and perspectives of the work and area;
  - examining government, infrastructure organisation and policy reports, and documents relating to the cases and communities investigated;
  - reading and reflecting upon media reports and articles;
- a series of semi-structured interviews designed to produce rich and thick data enabling the identification of patterns via a 'jointly constructed discourse' (Mishler 1991:52); see Appendix 9 for details of the questions asked;
- spending time in informal conversation with the project Directors/Chief Executive Officers developing a social process;

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<sup>252</sup> I have undertaken a number of such reviews in my professional practice.

- examining the artwork and displays in the project buildings;
- a mix of short-term ethnographic (Bryman 2008:403-407) appraisal:
  - observing staff;
  - observing visitors to the projects;
  - walking around the community; and
  - driving around the area – photographing, pausing and reflecting.

Obtaining multiple sources of evidence, whilst time-consuming, enabled data to be corroborated, augmented (Yin 2009:103) and triangulated (ibid:114). A clear process was followed for both the overarching approach to the studies and for each individual case. This was refined as the studies progressed in-line with my conceptual methodology map.<sup>253</sup> The overarching process comprised the followed stages:

- identification of participation criteria – Strategy A;
- development of procedures and preparation of an Information Sheet and Consent to Participate form – see Appendix 10;
- obtaining ethical approval for the investigation;
- recruitment of cases to be studied and sending of invitations to participate;
- development of a contingency plan – Strategy B (given the difficulty of realising Strategy A);
- identification of participation criteria Strategy B;
- shortlisting possible projects to be studied; and
- confirming projects to be approached.

The table below summarises the stages employed for each case individual case study:

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<sup>253</sup> See Figure 6 on page 125.

1. Initial contact made by email providing an Information Sheet (Appendix 10) setting out an overview of my project, what it was aiming to achieve and what participating would mean. Additionally, I set out the anticipated time commitment, access requirements and expected human resource demands.
2. Agreed dates to undertake an initial field visit (or for the project three hours drive away, booked a phone conference call) to explain the process in more detail.
3. Undertook ‘back-grounding and acquaintance’ (Stake 1995:49) work that involved researching the project/organisation via online investigation of the projects and the areas they worked in.
4. Prepared questions for semi-structured interviews.
5. Completed field visit and obtained consent to participate, undertook semi-structured interviews, made observations, took photographs of the project and area, collected site documents and materials, and spent some silent time reflecting upon the context.
6. Transcribed, reflected upon and sought from the interviews to ‘construct coherent and reasonable worlds of meaning and to make sense of’ (Mishler 1986:118) what was communicated. A sample extract of this from the Nirvana study can be found in Appendix 11.
7. Similarly analysed project documentation.
8. Analysed, manually coded, themed and confirmed the themes from the narratives; see again, Appendix 11 illustrating this.
9. Made additional site visits to make further observations, take additional photographs and reflect.
10. Compiled individual case report.
Throughout the process a reflective field diary was kept; see Appendix 12 for a sample diary.
Data for the studies was collected at similar times with studies overlapping chronologically. Data analysis was then undertaken sequentially following the aforementioned process.

Table 5. Case study research method

I now consider the effectiveness of my approach before setting out my findings.

### 5.3.5 Case Studies: Effectiveness of Approach

A key dynamic of the portraiture methodology is, as Lawrence–Lightfoot (in Lawrence–Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997:243) notes, to ensure the ‘aesthetic whole’ of the community being studied is made clear so the ‘art and science, analysis and narrative, description and interpretation, structure and texture’ (ibid) of the data is blended together to ensure that it ‘is both authentic and evocative, coded and colourful’ (ibid). I consider my approach achieved these objectives.

I determine the *aesthetic whole* of the case study confirmatory evidence (Yin 2009:100) is made clear in a manner that allows conclusions to be constructed abductively. The method produced significant amounts of rich, developed data from a variety of sources that established many 'repetitive refrains' (Lawrence-Lightfoot in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997:193) that were subsequently ratified by 'respondent validation' (Silverman 2006:292-294) and, internally triangulated thereby achieving the aforementioned confirmability. I reflect that perhaps too much data was generated which led to a heavy evaluative and analytical workload. Whilst this did not detract from the findings of the investigation, it was time-consuming and somewhat repetitive given the clear emergence of consistent patterns both within and across the cases studied.

The *art and science, analysis and narrative, description and interpretation, structure and texture* of my investigation developed coherently and effectively: the art and description elements emerging as pictures were painted, stories told, observations witnessed and respondents listened to; the science and analysis elements developed as data was scrutinised and evaluated.

The art element (more narrative, descriptive and colourfully textural) data was gathered from the sources described above and was collected in ways that enabled a portrait of the actual cases studied to be established alongside the context within which they were operating. This enabled the subsequent analysis of the data to be undertaken by taking full account of the actual work done, the values by which it was done and the environment within which it took place; thus aiding my *aesthetic whole* objective.

To further aid this element of my portraiture, I opted to give the case studies pseudonyms to reflect the qualitative and human personhood aspect of my study. I chose names that have been used to describe places of utopia as a further reflection of the aspirations of the projects, their ultimate goals and the common good subject matter of my investigation.

The methods outlined above and used to gather my data also enabled a scientific and analytical (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2012) discourse to be established. This was primarily achieved by coding the qualitative data gathered in my semi-structured interviews and then, categorising and analysing it accordingly. In pursuit of academic and theoretical rigour, I employed the framework provided by the seminal work of Saldaña (2009) endeavouring to 'arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification to categorise' the data collected. The following summarises this framework:

1. Interviews recorded and notes simultaneously made about interviewees body language, facial expressions, emphasis and persona.
2. Interview recordings transcribed.
3. Recordings re-listened to against the first draft transcriptions.
4. Transcriptions checked for accuracy and corrected where required.
5. Manually made 'pre-coding notes' (Saldaña 2009:16) by underlining/highlighting the text.
6. Undertook provisional marker 'descriptive (topic)' (ibid:70-73) 'lumper' coding (ibid:19).
7. Refined codings to a higher level of analytical nuance.
8. Categorised codings (ibid:8-11) based upon emergent patterns and concepts (ibid:41-43) using Maxwell's (2005:97-98) prompts of 'anticipated organisational', 'substantive descriptive', 'theoretical etic' and more 'participant's emic' categories.
9. Refined codings again to embed consistency after 'astute questioning' (Morse in ibid:149), 'constantly comparing' (Glaser and Strauss 1967) emerging codes with original data.
10. Refined categories again to further attribute meaning.
11. Identified themes (ibid:12-13).
12. Cross-referenced and triangulated themes with other case study data (field notes, observations, publications, reflections).
13. Confirmed themes.
14. Case study written up.
15. Established emerging 'substantive theory' (Glaser and Strauss 1967) re: case study 'n' (ibid:12).
16. Process repeated with case studies 'n +1', 'n +2' and 'n +3'.
17. Cross-case analysis undertaken.
18. Cross-case conclusions determined and cross-case emergent theory developed.
19. Cross-case theory refined and triangulated with <i>The Big View</i> .

Table 6. Case study coding analysis framework

This process<sup>254</sup> worked effectively as I analysed my data reflexively using the aforementioned phenomenology and grounded approaches to both develop an explanatory theory and understand the lived experience that was data-driven; I 'read and reread the data, looking for keywords, trends, themes, or ideas in the data that helped outline the analysis' (Namey et al 2007:138).

Whilst considerable thought was given to using database software programs<sup>255</sup> to quantise and electronically analyse my data, I determined it would be more effective to do it manually because I:

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<sup>254</sup> Again, see Appendix 11 for a sample example of this.

<sup>255</sup> For example, NVivo, ATLAS and MAXQDA.

- considered it was most appropriate given the amount of data involved – it was manageable to do manually (Gu 2012);
- determined a manual approach would enhance my research creativity (Gu 2012) and give me ‘more control and ownership of the work’ (Saldaña 2009:22);
- wanted to understand the human face attitudes, subtlety, intensity, meaning, depth and context (Bryman 2008:567) of what was being communicated by participants and observations and, was not convinced that this could be achieved electronically;
- did not have access to suitable software (Bryman 2008:567) and, was aware of the limitations of such products;<sup>256</sup>
- established learning how to use such software, even if available, would be time-consuming (Bryman 2008:567) and distract from my actual investigation. I decided to invest time in actually analysing the data, rather than ‘focusing more on the software than the data’ (Saldaña 2009:22);
- reflected that I possessed strong analytical skills that enabled a clear process to be established and, consequently, didn’t feel ‘compelled to make use of auto coding’ (Lewins and Silver in Saldaña 2009:26);
- relished the paper and non-specialist computer-based approach; using standard ‘powerful word processing software’ (Stanley and Temple 1995 in Bryman 2008:567), that supported personal creativity and collective application;
- recognised I was seeking to develop a cross-case theory that was part of a wider whole, rather than it being a stand alone element. It was, thus, more about building an authentic portraiture rather than any descriptive statistical analysis based upon quantitised qualitative data.

The data collected also enabled me to effectively map my findings against the domains of the characteristics and typology of faith-based work model proposed by Sider and Unruh (2004). This mapping enabled an assessment to be made about the place from which faith-based youth work comes from, aids understanding of the faith-based dynamic of the organisations and establishes

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<sup>256</sup> For example, Gu (2012) considers they embody ‘weaknesses in conceptual frameworks’.



the space of such faith-based work in the public realm. Their original work had twelve genres: eight characteristics of organisations and four characteristics of projects. For layout and analysis purposes, I combined these and removed genre 3, 'affiliated' from the original, as none of my cases studied are affiliated denominationally. Furthermore, the general language and terminology has been adapted to more succinctly be applicable to my cases. Of significance wider than these changes is the fact that I have changed the typology 'Faith-Affiliated' to 'Faith-Affiliated/Motivated' to reflect the lack of affiliative characteristics in my cases, whilst recognising the motivational place of faith within them.

I considered and discounted the idea of 'shadowing' (Quinlan 2008) participants in my studies. Whilst this may have produced more data, I determined that my presence may have impacted what actually happened and, as it might have involved significant contact with young people, would have presented a number of ethical and informed consent challenges<sup>257</sup> that would have potentially paralysed my study. Given the fact that the amount and variety of data was already significant, I did not consider shadowing would have further aided the effectiveness of my investigation.

In conclusion I consider the process was highly effective, achieving what it was designed to deliver: it collected a large amount of rich and textured data enabling a comprehensive suite of case studies to be produced. These painted a series of *aesthetic whole portraits* that subsequently enabled the development of a rigorous and robust cross-case analysis. In my professional work with Frontier Youth Trust I always seek to work facilitatively and alongside youth workers. Therefore, I anticipated that my research approach would be perceived by those who knew me as something that was supportive, encouraging and open, rather than something akin to a youth work inspection. Reflexively, I consider that this approach aided the collection of data as it put workers at ease by upholding their youth work values and, supported what they were doing.

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<sup>257</sup> For example, young people might have been required to seek parental consent to participate in the investigation, could have been suspicious of my presence in a way that consequently skewed the data, and/or might have been from a cultural background that considered it inappropriate for a middle-aged man to be in contact with: say, a teenage girl.

Rather than reflect upon, evaluate and analyse each case study in detail,<sup>258</sup> I will shortly present my collective findings (Yin 2009:170-171). Before doing so, I consider the ethical dynamics of my investigation.

## 5.4 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations associated with my investigation focused upon the four cornerstone issues of: consent, safety, confidentiality and ensuring there was no deception involved (Bryman 2008:118-124). For each element of my investigation, these issues were addressed in my submission to the University's Academic Ethics Sub-Committee where approval for my research was given (see Appendix 16). Furthermore, my investigation was carried out in accordance with the Statement of Ethical Practice set out by the British Sociological Association (The British Sociological Association 2002).

### 5.4.1 Consent

At each and every stage of my investigation participation was voluntary. Participants were given the opportunity to consent or withdraw, and they were specifically asked to give their consent to participate by 'opting in' to the process rather than giving 'implied consent' (Thomas 2001:70). People were always informed in advance (either by email, website information and/or telephone) about what I was doing and why. This included information about my study, my role, the university and bursary partners and the overall purpose of the study. Information sheets set out in layperson's language were given to all participants in advance of participation and then again in person where face-to-face contact took place. Copies of these can be found in Appendix 2, 6 and 10.

In my survey work, I have already made reference to the disproportionate number of Muslim youth workers who completed the survey online, but who then did not leave their name and postcode details – minimum details I asked for to confirm their consent to participate. Whilst it was not clear why this happened (and was disappointing as the data collected could not be

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<sup>258</sup> Copies of each case study are in Appendix 13.

used), it did confirm that the process worked and that participants had the power to voluntarily withdraw without any coercion.

As aforementioned, I accessed case study participants through gatekeepers. I took additional care here to ensure consent was entirely voluntary as there could conceivably have been pressure exerted by the gatekeepers upon their subordinates and stakeholders to participate. In the semi-structured interviews undertaken, I sought to address this possibility and reiterated to each person what I was doing and why and, invited participants to ask any questions offering them a further right of withdrawal before asking them to give informed consent. There was no inducement to participate: everyone who agreed to participate gave consent via the survey website or signed a consent form.

#### 5.4.2 Safety

The principle of *primum non nocere* (first, do no harm) was paramount throughout my investigations. This was employed during the data collection process, the subsequent storing of the data and in the presentation and publication of any associated findings.

I had a degree of nervousness regarding this issue as my investigation focused upon the sensitive subjects of faith and religion. As aforementioned, my previous practice experience made me aware that Christian faith-based youth workers can have strong views and entrenched theological positions; I was initially concerned my research findings could potentially come into conflict with these and cause at least a degree of disagreement – if not actual harm.

In order to address these concerns, I sent a summary (example in Appendix 14) of the individual case study findings to each of the project gatekeepers to make sure that I was not doing them harm – the aforesaid *respondent validations*. I offered these gatekeepers the opportunity to comment upon the summary, specifically asking them to consider if they thought anything was incorrect or inconsistent with their view of reality (Thomas 2011:70). The responses were encouraging and supportive (see Appendix 15): three of the four cases stated that they were going to pass the summaries around their team and governing bodies so that they could

embrace the findings further; the fourth asked to use some of the content in developing their work.<sup>259</sup>

There were no children, young people<sup>260</sup> or vulnerable adults involved in my study, so I did not take additional measures to ensure their specific safety (Simons 2009:104, Yin 2009:73). It might be argued this investigation should involve research with young people as key stakeholders in the youth work process – professionally, it would be something I would seek to do as often as possible, recognising the ‘new orthodoxy that encourages [listening] to the voices of young people’ (France 2004:177) and the ‘distinctiveness of youth research’ (Heath et al 2009:3). However, after much reflecting I decided that on this occasion I would not directly involve them. This was for several decisive (Alderson and Morrow 2011:53) reasons:

Primarily, I wanted to investigate faith-based youth work and so focused upon faith-based youth *workers* – what they thought, what they did and how they did it, whilst embodying considerations about policy and practice issues. I wanted to ascertain how *organisations and workers* were motivated, shaped and behaved in the contemporary social policy context. My main research consideration is how faith-based youth work exists, rather than what young people think about it. As such, this investigation is considered ‘stage one’ with a possible second stage involving young people to follow in the future.

To fully determine young people’s views of faith-based youth work and investigate their understanding of how the Big Society notion has influenced them, a longitudinal study (Williamson 2004; Heath et al 2009:96-98, 135-136, 143-144) would ideally be required. Williamson (2004), for example, spent over thirty years tracking one group of young people to determine the success and impact of policy upon their lives. Furthermore, a study involving comparisons with a control group (Bryman 2008:36) would be the ideal, but these approaches demand large samples of young people to ensure representativeness (ibid:168), necessitating time and resources outside those available (ibid:68).

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<sup>259</sup> This process had the benefit of helping me give something back to the cases studied. Impressed by my sent summaries, one of the projects used the information in a newsletter (See Appendix 15) and another sought my professional consultancy services to help them clarify who they were and what they were about. After my data was collected and analysed, I facilitated (without charge) an ‘away-day’ with their staff team assisting them in this way.

<sup>260</sup> For a discussion on research with children and young people, see Farrell (ed. 2005); Alderson and Morrow (2011).

Furthermore, I considered if the young people who might be involved in my study would directly benefit from my research (Heath et al 2009:72). I concluded whilst the general population might benefit, individuals involved may not directly benefit – especially given the overarching Big Society context and proposed model which is mainly for faith-based youth workers' benefit. This might lead to accusations of tokenism regarding young people's involvement (Heath et al 2009:71-73); something I wished to avoid.

Ethically, if young people were to have participated, parental consent (Heath et al 2009:28-32) regarding their participation would be desired for those under 16 years of age. Whilst Heath et al suggest it is 'technically lawful' (2009:28) not to have such consent, I would not wish to cause any conflict with my research subjects, their parents or the institutional gatekeepers involved in my investigation and would thus opt to seek parental consent to avoid any possible 'negative reaction' (ibid) relating to my study. Obtaining such parental consent would have paralysed my study as I had no direct access to the parents of young people who might have been involved and contacting them would have been highly resource demanding if not logistically impossible. Furthermore, I contend that the 'Gillick-competence' (ibid; Morrow n.d.:5) precedent that might have negated the need for such consent somewhat disputatious given the ambiguous nature of my research subject matters. In short, and without patronising the young people, would they understand what I was researching regarding faith-based work and the Big Society?

Additionally, young people's involvement would have put an onerous work pressure on 'gatekeeper institutions' (France 2004:183) as I was not in a position to be able to access them, or their parents, directly myself. After much consideration, I did not think involvement practical or achievable, especially in potential work with other faith groups where, for cross-cultural/religious reasons (Jones 2004:120), I might also have needed to be chaperoned in work with young females. Whilst research challenges 'across difference' (Heath et al 2009:39-57) could have been addressed and I could have, for example, engaged others to do the research on my behalf who might not have needed chaperoning, this would have been potentially a financially costly and time-consuming task that was outside the scope of my resources.

Moreover, some of the young people the projects worked with might be considered very vulnerable (France 2004:188) and in one project particularly, parents may not be around to actually give consent – I did not wish to harm the young people nor add to their sense of

vulnerability, nor exclude any particular group of young people (Alderson and Morrow 2011:33) this being a further reason for their omission.

In my interviews, I sought to *do no harm* by empowering interviewees (Mishler 1991:117-135): this took the form of advising them I was not trying to catch them out, not looking for them to give me any specific answers and, that their honest opinion was very important to my research. I also advised them the interview might go 'off track' and this was nothing to worry about. If I sensed any discomfort or hesitancy about answering any of the questions, I sought to be reassuring and, whilst probing sensitively, endeavoured to avoid putting any undue pressure upon interviewees. Subsequent anecdotal feedback<sup>261</sup> from participants was very endorsing of my approach.

### 5.4.3 Confidentiality

Whilst recognising that my investigation findings would be made public (Simons 2009:106), I sought to ensure that the data I collected remained confidential (ibid) to the extent that I did not put anyone in an 'undesirable position' (Yin 2009:73).

All my data was securely stored and all the names used in my investigations were anonymised (Simons 2009:107-109; Thomas 2011:70): where people have been quoted, this was negotiated with participants advised pseudonyms would be used. Participants were informed data would be used in my thesis and other possible publications. Whilst recognising anonymisation is a contentious area of ethical debate (Simons 2009:106-108), I considered it helped build trust and security amongst participants and, liberated them to speak more freely and candidly.

Despite my efforts to ensure confidentiality, I recognise that someone could probably track down my case study projects if they were determined, had internet access and were armed with a search engine programme. Deciding how much detail to portray was a challenge; for example, I had a number of internal reflexive debates about identifying how exact to be about the geographical locations of the projects. Clearly the more specific I was the more likely it would be identification could be determined by an inquirer, whilst too much detail would give away the exact location, too little would not give enough credence to the practice context. I sought to

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<sup>261</sup> One joked that the process was 'painless – which must be good!' with an encouragement to 'keep up the great work'.

balance these dynamics by not specifically naming the exact locations, but by painting detailed contextual and cultural pictures. The very nature of a case study means that if the portrayal is accurate then it may well be identifiable to someone who has prior knowledge of it or, anyone who is intent upon discovering its identity. The projects recognised this, and it was made clear in my initial recruitment discussions with them.

In order to further preserve confidentiality, I sought to minimise individual associations with particular comments and, didn't report back to gatekeepers *who* specifically said *what*. Two specific pieces of interview data collected were not transcribed as they were deemed too sensitive and confidential: in one case, one person asked not to have what they said reported, and in the other case I made a judgement call to omit what they said considering it might be taken out of context by one particular faith group and misconstrued.

#### 5.4.4 Ensuring No Deception

Given my research objectives of informing and impacting future faith-based youth work, I have sought to operate with the highest standards of integrity and authenticity so my investigation data, findings and conclusions never 'represent [my] work as something other than what it is' (Bryman 2008:124). Inevitably the imperfections present in any study encounter the possibility something might have been wrongly interpreted and/or misunderstood. If this has happened it has been purely the result of accident or human error and not any deliberate attempt at deception; I have sought to be rigorous, equitable and consistent in all my engagements to accurately collect, analyse and portray my findings.

For example, I recognised the form and language of the questions asked in my consultations and interviews might influence the answers. Consequently, I aimed to be consistent in how I spoke and what I said. Whilst my 'perch and position' might have influenced the answers given, I aimed to be consistent regarding how I presented myself, how I greeted people, the information I gave to them, the research language used, the recording processes employed and even the dress code I voluntarily imposed upon myself. This at least ensured that any bias was consistently embraced helping ensure no deception was displayed.

Having set out the methods employed in my study and considered the main ethical issues associated with carrying out my research, I now set the findings of my investigation. Firstly, I set

out the summary findings from my survey and focus groups, and then detail my case study findings.



## Chapter Six

### 6. The Big View: Initial Findings from the Field

In this chapter I set out the summary findings from my survey and consultation investigations. In both this and the subsequent chapter, I set out my findings in succinct terms deferring greater discussion, analysis and exposition to Chapters 8 and 9.

I illustrate my findings with evidence and quotations from my investigation that are the most representative and portraying of the data collected so focus can be brought upon my overarching research aims. For reference purposes, I précis these again here. I am investigating the:

- relationship between faith-based youth work and notion of the Big Society;
- place, position and characteristics of *faith* in such work;
- shape of how faith-based youth work is undertaken; and
- intention of what faith-based youth work does.

Further evidence appears in Chapter 8 where my findings are more fully analysed and discussed. I endeavour to present these findings and discussions in the same reflexive, open and searching spirit of inquiry that has underpinned my thesis hitherto.

In presenting my findings and discussions in this way, the key stages of my investigation portray the story of my study by starting with the aforementioned large doll scoping data, working through the medium sized doll of my focus groups to the small doll nuanced case study analysis. I firstly present summary findings from the scoping survey and focus groups.

#### 6.1 Key Findings From: *The Big Survey*

##### 6.1.1 A Dominantly Christian Cohort

Perhaps not surprisingly given the factors identified in my literature and contextual review, a significant majority (88%) of those who participated in my survey identified themselves as being from the Christian faith tradition.

Also, and perhaps equally not surprisingly, it is clear from respondents that they are well connected to other youth groups from their own faith tradition with 95% in regular (at least every quarter) contact with such groups. It is equally clear that more respondents are in regular contact with Local Authority groups (69%) than they are with groups from another faith tradition (26%).

### 6.1.2 A Learning Practice

It is evident that a majority of faith-based youth work practitioners want to learn more about the subject matters associated with my investigation. Respondents were asked the extent to which they were interested in learning about particular subject matters. The choices they were given indicated that '1' meant they have no interest through to '5' meaning they had a great amount of interest. There is a:

- strong interest in learning about community cohesion (mean score 4) and justice and equality of opportunity (4.32) issues;
- good level of interest in learning about other faiths (3.74);
- more mixed level of interest in learning about the Big Society (3.6).<sup>262</sup>

### 6.1.3 Community and Cohesion

There is a range of perspectives associated with community and cohesion issues: with views reflecting the nature, context and understanding of such matters. For example, 50% of respondents consider young people in their area mix well together and 32% said they did not. Furthermore 68% did not think that young people are treated fairly, whilst 62% thought this generation of young people more tolerant of different faith perspectives than their generation.

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<sup>262</sup> Mean scores out of a possible maximum of '5'. Scores calculated from those who knew what the subject matters actually were.

#### 6.1.4 Big Society

There is a diverse set of views about the Big Society with youth workers often liking the vision of the notion but less enthusiastic about the reality of it; for example, one respondent said:

A good idea in theory, but it's only going to be able to work if communities are supported financially and with professional expertise so that they are equipped and empowered to succeed, not set up to fail.

The following are seen as the opportunities associated with the Big Society: possibilities of developing community, increased creativity, people taking responsibility and a greater sense of cohesion.

However the perceived challenges potentially overshadow any anticipated opportunities; the challenges being identified as: cuts in services, lack of funding, inequality and uncertainty about the future. The following quotations reflect faith-based youth worker's views about the Big Society:

'The latest Government initiative to empower local communities to work together to make their community a better place to be.'

'A society based on respect and toleration of our differences.'

'A vague idea to get people volunteering.'

'Unfortunately, a policy which is more about hiding the cuts and promoting the Government than about actually changing the lives of young people.'

'Currently undefined and consequently not a concept that is well understood. It probably refers to people looking out for and after each other regardless of Government planning and funding.'

Whilst it was perhaps unlikely faith-based youth workers would vote against themselves having a positive effect, there is an overwhelming rejection of the notion that faith-based youth work and youth workers will hinder the development of the Big Society. 81% of respondents foresaw a positive future role for faith-based youth work in the Big Society, whilst 4% did not know what the Big Society was:

I have no idea what this is – although I have a vague memory of someone mentioning plans of the Prime Minister that might be this? Would guess it's something to do with bringing society together?

Several participants reflected the paradoxical governmentality dynamics associated with the notion. For example, one embraced the discourse about empowerment with the parameters of

neoliberalism and described the challenges of the Big Society vision as 'community competitiveness, politics'. Whilst others, in describing the notion as being about 'hidden agendas', 'scapegoating', 'attitudes' and 'overcoming funding cuts,' painted a picture reflecting Osborne and Gaebler's 'reinventing government' (1993) analysis.

One participant, Jackie, drew together ideas discussed in Chapter 3 regarding new forms of committed action and church engagement in society and the challenges associated with mandating people to take responsibility for caring for each other away from the state, toward individuals:

there's a lot of Kingdom values in the vision. How it's implemented and stuff will be another matter. Which is why I guess it is going to be so hard to make policies for it and to make it practical. It's because it's a vision, an idea, a personal attitude, a way of doing things. You can't make policies for people to care for each other, to look out for each other.

There were arguments presented reflective of Baker's (2012b:570-571) 'mainstream modality' that embraced the type of postsecular opportunism and new praxes afforded by Cloke, Thomas and Williams (2012). For example, Kev said: 'it's an opportunity for the church, possibly even on a funding side, to gain money for what we have been doing and hopefully continue to build that and a great opportunity to bring in more partners'. Something confirmed and noted by Julian:

[because of] the absence of Government running things, funding things, getting involved in things at a local level, a vacuum will develop. What is going to fill that vacuum? If churches, you know, play this right, they could really, really fill that void and be the central focus of their community again, as historically they have been, but perhaps not so in recent times. There is a great opportunity for them to look at what has been taken away and see how they can fill that gap.

## 6.2 Emerging Themes From: *The Big Consultations*

The consultation findings corroborate the survey findings in that:

- There is uncertainty and a lack of understanding about the Big Society.
- For some, the Big Society embraces the idea of returning to past utopian ideas of community, whilst this is too idealistic and simplistic for others.

- The majority of participants are 'cautiously supportive' (nineteen out of thirty) or 'fully supportive' (four out of thirty) of the Big Society vision, but acknowledge it is a big challenge and will take a long time to become a reality.
- Despite the current political, economic and cultural challenges of the Big Society and the issues of funding cuts associated with the vision there is a great sense of resilience and resourcefulness exhibited by faith-based youth workers.
- The sense of resilience and resourcefulness is coupled with creative responses to ongoing work, partnership, doing things differently and investing in volunteers and training.
- Participants consider faith-based work is already doing the Big Society, but there is a call to more clearly define, focus and intentionally deliver youth work from a faith-based identity perspective.
- There is a call to renewed partnership working and exploration of what alliances and compromises might have to be forged and made in order to achieve this.
- The large number of volunteers who do faith-based youth work are a key strength, but they need to be recruited, trained and sustained on an ongoing basis if this strength is to be maintained.
- Issues relating to values and outcomes work with young people are important. The predominant target driven, deficit model of working and 'tick-box culture' of statutory youth work is generally perceived negatively.
- There is concern that the Big Society might bypass certain groups of young people: impacting negatively on equality of opportunity and community cohesion.

The final theme emerging might be termed a universal summary of all that emerged: promoting responsibility and citizenship. There is a hope that the Big Society will do what the vision intended – putting right all that is perceived to be wrong in the country.

### 6.3 The Big View: Summations

In conclusion, *The Big View* findings suggest most faith-based youth workers seem to have empathy with the Big Society vision. Equally, they are a little unsure about what it all means, and they are very concerned about the relationship between the Big Society, faith and all the government cuts taking place. At the same time, there is recognition faith-based youth work does some amazing work.

There is a renewed desire to work in partnership for the benefit of young people and communities, but also that only time will tell if the Big Society is the catalyst for this to become an increasing reality.

The workers want to be viewed, appreciated and evaluated on the basis of the work they do, the value they add and the contribution they make to the lives of young people and communities.

Having summarised the findings from the first two methods of my tripartite investigation, I now set out those from my third method – my case study investigations. These present a cross-case overview of my findings and establish the place of faith within my cases. I develop my argument that there is a relationship between faith-based youth work and the Big Society setting out how faith-based youth work operates in seeking to realise the common good.

## Chapter Seven

### 7. Cross-Case Findings

I demonstrated in my literature and contextual review, methodology and methods that there was a need for an investigation into faith-based youth work that established new theoretical understandings of such work in the Big Society. I then set out my findings from the first two stages of my investigation: findings which shaped and informed the design of the case study stage of my investigation. This third stage, *small doll* of my investigation, progresses my investigation toward a nuanced understanding of faith-based youth work by narrowing my field of study to enable a contextual explanatory model to be developed.

This Chapter presents the findings of my four (Paradise, Valhalla, Nirvana and Shangri-La) case studies. It considers the role of faith-based youth work in the Big Society, conceptualising what a new theoretical framework, emerging hypothesis and explanatory model of faith-based youth work might look like. It begins with a portrayal that sets out an overview and cross-case profile before setting out findings about the:

- relationship between faith-based youth work and factors associated with the Big Society;
- foundational place of *faith* in such work;
- reciprocal shape of how faith-based youth work is undertaken; and
- prospective intentions of what faith-based youth work actually does.

It does so by portraying cross-case patterns of synthesis and commonality (Yin 2009:137-139) and the contradictions and discrepancies identified in particular cases and, where considered relevant, possible rival interpretations of the data (ibid:160-161). Illustrative quotations<sup>263</sup> representative of the data and insights from the studies are included to support the findings stated. These are offered without analysis – this being reserved for the following chapter.

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<sup>263</sup> The numbers at the beginning of these quotations refer to the reference line in my semi-structured interview transcriptions. So, for example '(P67)' refers to the Paradise case study, paragraph 67 in the transcript. For a sample of these, see Appendix 11. Where a quotation is in italics this is my voice.

## 7.1 Summary Overview and Perspective

At the heart of each of the cases studied is an ideal that is very positive about young people. The work undertaken is evidently caring, compassionate, engaging and fun. It is relationally-rooted, aspirationally orientated and positioned to work over the long term to bring about change. The projects all work from a place that values integrity highly. The role faith plays in the projects is fluid and oscillating (with the exception of Valhalla which has a more explicit and evident faith dynamic).

The full studies can be found in Appendix 13, but for ease of reference the following table provides a brief overview of the cases contexts:

Case	Location	Area of Work	Sources Income	Work Undertaken
Paradise	Birmingham	Two housing estates	Grants, contracted work, donations	Youth and community work out of a drop-in centre
Valhalla	Birmingham	Multicultural communities	Grants, contracted work, donations	Youth and schools work exclusively with Christian and Muslim young people
Nirvana	S.E. England	Affluent communities	Grants, contracted work, donations	Youth, community and supported lodgings work across two counties
Shangri-La	Derbyshire	Market town in a former coal-mining area	Grants, contracted work, donations, charity shop income	Youth and community work out of a drop-in centre

Table 7. A contextual overview of my case studies

### 7.1.1 Challenging Community Profiles and Environments

The projects work within tightly defined geographical areas, albeit that Nirvana's area of operations is somewhat large compared to the other projects. These are places with high levels of social need and significant levels of deprivation (with again Nirvana being the exception – it being located in a very affluent area). The following portray these perspectives:

The physicality of the area is dominated by what were described by one participant as 'wretched tower blocks, crappy shops and housing'. *Paradise Study*



The physicality of the town centre area is that of a bustling, if somewhat run-down, collection of what might be termed lower class shops, with cafés, take-aways, charity shops, traditional independent shops, bookmakers, cheaper high street chain stores, empty shops, tattoo and nail parlours proliferating. *Shangri-La Study*

The young people whom the projects caringly seek to work with are at risk of marginalisation – including those Nirvana works with even though, in their view, there is no publically perceived need for such work in their geographical area.

Three of the actual communities concerned are places you probably would not visit unless you had a specific purpose in going there. All of the communities might be said to be culturally distinctive, represented by particular enclaves of social, racial and cultural identities: a sink estate, multicultural inner city area, a tourist attraction area and ex-mining town.

The local people involved in the work, wider community and project buildings are important social resources and sources of social capital. Local schools are key co-facilitators of relationship, partnership, interaction and service delivery.

### **7.1.2 Hope-Filled Project Visions and Values**

There is a desire that work undertaken will be a source of hope for young people, thus making a difference in their lives. This is done by helping the young people learn, develop and achieve and by increasing their well-being. The work is carried out in a way that is reflective of the projects' founding faith motivation and beliefs.

*'the work is very simple, but has a big effect upon people's lives.'* *Valhalla promotional video*

### **7.1.3 Inspiring Field Work Feelings**

Those involved in carrying out this work do so with great passion and commitment. They champion the work and, the communities within which they do it. They undertake high quality and creative work with limited resources and, make personal sacrifices in order to do this. There is a sense the young people, areas and/or circumstances within which the work takes place reflect societal injustices and inequality.

#### **7.1.4 Project Names and Strap-Lines: Common Sentiments**

The real names of the cases studied contain no reference to faith or religion. They also make no reference to young people, youth work, or the geographical location of the work. Any association with what the projects do and are about is not immediately apparent, with the possible exception of Paradise which has some convergent resonance. All the names are short and punchy in nature and each has a strapline to expound meaning and clarify the purpose of their work.

Each of these straplines has in common ideas about aspirations and hope, realising potential and making a difference. Valhalla also mentions faith exploration, but this is the only case making any reference to faith or religion.

#### **7.1.5 Projects Atmospheres: Warmth and Welcome**

The cases manage to combine a homely, family and communal feel with a high quality working environment, ethos, and corporate presentation and branding. The people involved in the work are warm and welcoming, and the general atmosphere of the project bases is life-promoting enthusing excitement and creativity. It might be argued this impression is created by the people involved in my investigation simply because they were out to impress me as a visitor. However, this positive perception is more widely supported by: what is said by those external stakeholders interviewed, what is evidenced by media portrayals of the work and general perceptions observed across social networking sites and additional evidence seen of positive project outcomes.

Valhalla and Nirvana have office bases, but do most of their work in the wider community. Paradise and Shangri-La have drop-in youth centres where their work and offices are located.

#### **7.1.6 Role Modelling and a Space and Place to Call 'Home'**

In addition to the findings outlined above, each of the cases provides spaces and places for a number of outcomes:

- They help meet the personal, spiritual, social and economic needs of marginalised young people.

- This is facilitated by nurturing and helping young people come together.
- A safe and peaceful environment is provided, sheltering (at least temporarily) young people from the storms, difficulties and challenges of life in the form of a community that young people belong to.

Eve (S-L212) described her project in the following way: 'I suppose I want to say home but homely and ... it's never dull.' The work Nirvana does is somewhat less typified by this environmental aspect because a lot of its work is undertaken in more formal and structured educational settings. Notwithstanding this, they still espouse a sense of homeliness in their value-base.

There is a modelling of life that, in view of the definitions previously afforded, supports the common good. Agitation and an advocacy for justice are key considerations with the development of virtue, values and volunteering helping promote a holistic view of citizenship and community involvement.

Alternative narratives, ways of living, and pedagogies the cases believe are different to secular, state and market discourses can be witnessed. Space is created for young people to explore the subjects of faith and spirituality without any pressure put on them to do so. For example, Amanda (N111) said:

... we have an ethos about fun and integrity and the idea that actually hope can be borne out practically ... that's about us together as a community and how ... we support and care for one another in that tension 'that this is a work place' but also we want to live out values in our lives that are may be different from secular work places.

The projects are key civil society organisations within their geographical areas and, unique providers of services for young people in their localities. They occupy a significant space and place in the hearts and minds of the young people and, other stakeholders they work with; also, they have solidarity with those they work with, often advocating on their behalf.

The work develops social capital supporting 'bonding, bridging' (Putnam 2001:22-24) and 'linking' (Woolcock 2001) aspects. Isomorphic pressures and external drivers threaten the spaces and places occupied by the projects, but these do not diminish their desire to expand their overall work and influence. There is an outworking of Big Society aspirations, but this is done *un* or *subconsciously* with no real specific intention to support the notion. I now portray my findings relating to the place of faith within my cases: the foundation of my proposed model.

## 7.2 The Place of Faith: Rethinking Understandings

The findings relating to the faith element of my investigation are not fully consistent across all the cases. Whilst there is a degree of symmetry between three of the cases, Valhalla's faith typology and characteristics are significantly discrepant to those of Paradise, Nirvana and Shangri-La.

Given my practice experience and perch and position, I did have a suspicion that some faith-based youth work engages in *deceitful practices*: possibly alluring or seducing young people into participating in attractive activities, whilst having a hidden agenda that is all about proselytisation. This suspicion proved completely unfounded in the cases studied and there was no evidence to suggest this took place.

### 7.2.1 Faith: Typology and Characteristics

In Chapter 3, I proposed that the 'conceptual categories' of Christian faith-based work proposed by Sider and Unruh (2004) provided a theoretical model from which an analysis can be undertaken that maps the place of faith within a given setting across a number of genres, characteristics and typologies. In Chapter 5, I discussed how I amended the language of their original work to more aptly reflect my context and cases studied. When the data and findings are mapped against my amended 'conceptual categories', the following emerges:

Genre	Typology and Characteristics					
	Faith-Permeated	Faith-Centred	Faith-Affiliated - Motivated	Faith-Background	Faith-Secular Partnership	Secular
<b>1. Mission</b> The place of faith in the organisation's identity and purpose	x x x	x				
<b>2. Founding</b> The connection with faith in the heritage, original and ongoing vision of the organisation	x	x x x				
<b>3. Governance</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment in the selection of board members		x x x x				
<b>4. Project Leaders</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment	x	x x x				
<b>5. Other Staff</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment		x			x x x	
<b>6. Support</b> The extent to which funding is from faith-based sources					x x x	
<b>7. Beneficiaries and Users</b> Whether activities are aimed exclusively, or not, at people of a particular faith	x				x x	x
<b>8. Practices</b> The integration of faith practices into the organisation		x			x x x	
<b>9. Environment</b> Whether the activities take place in a space/building associated with the faith					x	x x
<b>10. Programme Content</b> Whether the programme content is explicitly religious		x			x x	x x
<b>11. Content and Outcomes</b> The extent to which religious and spiritual experience is connected to the project's desired outcomes		x			x	x x

Key: x Valhalla x Paradise x Nirvana x Shangri-La

Table 8. Case study faith typologies – with reference to Sider and Unruh (2004)

The discrepant nature of Valhalla can clearly be seen: it being far more consistent across all the genres than any of the other cases. Whilst all the cases are 'faith-permeated' or 'centred' at missional, founding, governance and senior staff levels, the data from Valhalla points toward them being like this in all but two of the other genres. In contrast, the other cases take on a very different typology at practice level, becoming more secular in nature.

These findings would indicate that the type of postsecular *caritas* considered in Chapter 3 is a reality – at least in the Paradise, Nirvana and Shangri-La cases. People of faith and no faith are working together for the common good. Certainly from the perspective of those with a faith, the reflexive challenges set by Habermas (2006) appear to be met as they are more open to other faith positions, work with dominant secular structures – such as schools, housing providers and local authorities – and see secular knowledge and practice more favourably, adopting many of the practices of secular colleagues.

Whilst these findings would also indicate that faith-based work is more welcomed in a postsecular context, the challenge for the cases is finding what the place of faith is in this new postsecular praxis. Clearly there is rapprochement (Cloke and Beaumont 2012; Cloke, Thomas and Williams 2012) between, and increased dialogue across, faith and secular agencies, but this appears to threaten clear identification with any faith tradition the cases originally represented. As I discuss further in Chapter 8, Gavin's (S-L010) observation that faith 'takes a back seat' typifies and amplifies the reality of this challenge.

The findings in the table suggest, Valhalla excepted, that the cases are motivated by faith but not explicitly conveying of this faith in their work. No doubt this comes down to pragmatics and is perhaps the unforeseen consequences of what Habermas proposes as the place of faith inevitably diminishes in the postsecular public space whenever rapprochement occurs. If it is about *give and take* with those more secularly orientated, it appears it is the faith aspect of the work that might be *given*. I discuss further in Chapter 8 how the projects investigated occupy a postsecular public space and how my model gives full consideration to their 'why they do it' motivational positioning. I also analyse how spiritual capital discussions relate to this and how the cases I have investigated all engage in the types of 'postsecular' debates in their advocacy/political/campaigning type work that negotiate in postsecular spaces, approaches that support the common good.

## 7.2.2 Faith: Discourse and Summation

Whilst the data indicates all the cases have considered at length the space and place of faith within their work, it appears that these discourses have been contained within the organisations and, not presented as contested or confused in their day-to-day activities. There is a contentment and security, at least at leadership level, with how faith is understood and portrayed without any perceived need to defend or justify any adopted positions. Reference was often made to people 'getting it', and it appears that if others 'get it' then that seems to be sufficient.

In summation, it is evident that faith plays a vital part in the original vision and current motivation of the cases. Faith is the reason the projects exist and, the reason they continue. However, how this is expressed and the extent to which it is evident in the practice of the projects varies across the cases from being very explicit in nature, to being more about *faith-in-action*, through to being somewhat intangible. Whilst there is evidence that faith is sometimes discussed and communicated when enquired about and its values transmitted at a practical level, there is no evidence of proselytisation. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, these findings are reflective of the mosaic of practices previously reviewed in Chapter 3a and very resonant with the move in Christian-based work toward committed actions, the *missio Dei* and politicised forms of community engagement previously discussed. For example, Eve (S-L 220) describes the faith dynamic of her work in the following way: 'I always describe it as kind of 'faith in action'. You know we're all Christians, but we really show the love of Jesus through our work that we do with the young people.'

I now set out my findings regarding the relationship between faith-based youth work and the Big Society.

## 7.3 The Relationship Between Faith-Based Youth Work and the Big Society

### 7.3.1 Big Society Perspectives

There is no explicit evidence of the Big Society idea in the cases studied. Nothing is found regarding the concept in project publicity, literature, websites or in the buildings which house the projects. Equally, there is no unprompted reference or mention of the notion in evidence.

When the notion is raised in the interviews there is a high level of awareness about it amongst senior staff, but virtually no awareness amongst junior staff and volunteers. Where there is awareness, it is a mix of positive and negative opinions and a cross section of views relating to the actual and perceived challenges and opportunities associated with the idea. When I (P299) asked Sarah (P300) if she was familiar with the Big Society idea, she simply said: 'Err, no.'

Irrespective of what views are held, it appears the projects are all undertaking Big Society type work and employing processes of working locally, being empowering and seeking social transformation via mutual mechanisms that endeavour to build a better society. This apparent overlapping consensus is because of their visions and missions, rather than any wholesale endorsement of the Big Society notion. They particularly embody the micro-elements of the ideology, but need their work funding and supporting rather than seeing resources cut.

There is a general suspicious and cynical view about the motives behind the notion: it being seen as cover for funding cuts with government simply abdicating responsibility. There is no understood clarity about how the Big Society will impact future work.

Reflexively, I wondered if those who participated in my interviews may have had awareness of my political views (even though I did not share them) and responded in sympathy with these, potentially biasing the data. However, less than a quarter of those participating had met me or knew me before I carried out my investigation, and their responses were consistent with those who had no prior awareness.

### **7.3.2 Common Good Social Impact and the Big Society**

My findings regarding the common good social impact in my cases are portrayed using the aforementioned civil society 'a priori specification of constructs' (Eisenhardt 1989:536) as used by Edwards (2009). The cases are all very clearly civil society organisations 'located between the family, the state and the markets [where] people associate voluntarily to advance common interests' (Anheier 2004:22).



## 1. Associational Life – aiming for social, economic and political progress

All the cases seek to be developers of social progress. With the exception of Valhalla, they are enablers of economic progress and all engage with political discourses.

They make social progress in how they work with young people and the wider community helping young people have a sense of aspiration, make better life choices and reach their potential within a cultural value-base that promotes hope, possibility and worth. Najeed (V084) described this as:

I think it is about living together isn't it? It's about I mean we live in a multicultural society and for us to recognise where we live and everything and that we gonna be here together so let's build this place up together and everything.

Economically, the cases are helping young people develop their character, skills, achievements and levels of employability and, are supporting young people in their learning; albeit Valhalla does this more indirectly than the others. There is a belief that making such an investment now prevents higher economic (and social for that matter) costs associated with young people not achieving their full potential in the future.

There is clear solidarity with the local community and those young people worked with who are at risk of marginalisation. The projects work as advocates for young people, their organisations and the wider sector. There does not appear to be any specific strategic approach to this and it might just be a natural consequence of their general work, but the projects campaign about issues that are significant to them. Specifically, the projects seek better deals for the young people and the areas they work within: raising issues of injustice, addressing local concerns, advocating on behalf of those served and engaging with wider political discourses.

Notwithstanding these explanations, a rival interpretation of the data might deduce that any progress regarding *Associational Life* in the Big Society is somewhat limited to the precise contexts within which the cases operate and, consequently, does not lead to any substantive progress.

## 2. Good Society – providing opportunities for people to act together, developing values and skills

The data strongly indicates that the cases all help increase bonding, bridging and linking social capital. They are investors in partnership and community, with their approaches typifying mutual and reciprocal dynamics associated with the Big Society vision. There is evidence of inclusive practices and, enabling people to come together across generations.

P096. Paradise does a training programme you know of getting people on the estate engaged in youth work, engaged in projects and seeing new projects come up by getting people on the estate involved in that and training, and giving them the training to do that not just expecting them to go out and go off and do stuff, but giving them the resources and the support that they need in order to see that happen. *Dave*

The projects have an enduring and extensive network of relationships across churches, partners, organisations and individuals. This has an instrumental value regarding social capital with projects having horizontal and vertical reach, and the projects are organised accordingly.

The data could be interpreted as simply being about helping develop better individuals, rather than a better or good society. Whilst emphasis is put on realising personal potential and development, it might be argued that any wider societal outcome is consequential rather than intended. However, at least at organisational and senior management level there is sufficient evidence to conclude that impacts are being desired at both an individual and societal level.

## 3. Public Sphere – a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good

The projects act as catalysts, enabling reflection and discourse. They are providers of spaces for deliberation and, creators of platforms that make the common good a possibility. It would appear that the cases direct work with young people, community connections and partnerships provide a space that helps negotiate a sense of the common good.

Whilst it would be easy for all of the projects to get consumed, influenced and overwhelmed by their challenging contexts, they maintain a sense of hope that things can be different and a clear perspective (with the possible exception of their faith positionings – see below) about who they are and what they are seeking to do. This underpins everything they do enabling them to create a participatory space where young people's voices can be heard and amplified. It might be

interpreted differently: in the sense that any impact upon the public sphere is hegemonically limited as the young people concerned are marginalised and mainly without a voice in society. This raises the question as to whether or not anyone is listening irrespective of any successes achieved.

There is little doubt the cases provide a space for young people to deliberate issues that affect them, their community and their future. Whilst this space might initially be devoted to addressing individual issues and concerns, it ultimately endeavours to work toward a negotiation of a community-wide and beneficial common good. However, it might be considered any social impact is not because of this being a specific goal, but more the consequence of pursuing a Christian worldview; the impact of which overlaps with such pursuits.

Within the context of my proposed explanatory model, how faith-based youth work is undertaken, in the Big Society is a key consideration. I now extrapolate in more detail the philosophical shape of this work.

#### **7.4 Reciprocal Shape: The Philosophy and Values of How Faith-Based Youth Work is Undertaken**

My cross-case findings relating to the shape of faith-based youth work portray how such work is undertaken, specifically considering the philosophical value-base of the mission and values, organisational behaviour and relationships and influences of faith-based youth work. This shape identifies a mutuality found in each of the identified values set out below. The word ‘reciprocal’ summarises what is at the core of these philosophical values, and it is for this reason that I have termed this floor in my model a ‘reciprocal shape’.

This section concludes with an emerging cross-case hypothesis for a new theoretical framework for faith-based youth work that is further discussed and conceptualised in Chapter 8.

##### **7.4.1 Mission, Values and Attributes**

My data indicates that a number of formative factors shape how the projects work.

Key to how project work is undertaken is raising the aspirations and engendering hope in the lives of the young people worked with – helping them thrive and flourish so that they realise

their full potential. There is a clear valuing of young people that sees them in a positive light. This is achieved by developing relationships with young people, supported by aiding their personal, social and educational development and reinforced by involving them in the telling of their stories to a wider world.

P264. I think they're (Paradise) a team of good people who see good in young people. A lot of people tend to just brush young people off and think they're not worth the time of day and I think Paradise actually takes these young people and does see good in them and they want them to have a positive future ... *Sarah*

Seeing change and transformation are also at the heart of how the projects work. These might be small and incremental changes in the lives of young people and their communities as well as large and significant ones. Helping meet the needs of young people is paramount to aiding these changes and including those young people who are marginalised or disadvantaged underpins approaches.

Working in mutual beneficial partnership and relationship with other stakeholders is also a key finding in determining how the cases operate. These partnerships are with local schools, community groups, churches, individuals and Local Authorities. This partnership work enables an approach that not only serves young people but goes further: facilitating community development, building social capital and delivering social action.

P024. So it's nice to see things happen that we couldn't do as one organisation but as a collection. *Pete*

Supporting young people over the long term is also a clear imperative. Working with, and journeying with them over a sustained period is a trademark characteristic of the approach taken by the cases. This is described by Sarah (N008) as, 'journeying in relationship with young people helping them realise that there is hope for them'.

Similarly, modelling alternative ways of being and living and doing so in a fun way underpinned by an environment that is safe is also clearly demonstrated.

V023. I want Muslim kids to come because they feel safe and because they're not threatened and I want a Christian kid to know that they're gonna be safe and not threatened. *Terry*

As previously alluded to, Valhalla's missional emphasis of working across faith groupings and talking explicitly about *faith* makes it philosophically unique amongst the cases. This shape

positions interfaith community and societal cohesion at the forefront of its work in ways not found in the other cases.

Collectively, with the possible exception of their faith dynamics, these findings are endorsing of the declared objectives of the cases and the type of work they seek to deliver – they represent a ‘unified whole’ (Hoffman David in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997:261). This enables me to confidently develop my proposed explanatory model by building on the data present because the ‘parts fit together into an intelligible articulation’ (ibid).

I now set out my cross-case findings regarding the organisational behaviour of the cases.

#### 7.4.2 Organisational Behaviour and Strategic Approaches

The organisational behaviour of the cases further portrays who they are and how they operate. I set out here my findings relating to the public profiles of the cases, identified threats to their missions, the role played by staff and volunteers and approaches regarding the funding and expansion of future work.

The cases exhibit very strong profiles, branding and identities. Their corporate messages are very clear and *prima facie* resonate with the culture they are engaged with. They are enterprising, philanthropic, creative and opportunistic in the way they strategically approach their work. The project leaders are very able people with good communication and interpersonal skills, resourceful and resilient attitudes and excellent personal and project networks that support organisational objectives.

S-L051. Always looking for newspaper opportunities, we’ve used local radio stations, we’ve had the opportunity to feature in one of the sort of bigger journals, I think it was ‘*Children and Young People Now*’ I think. But yeah, it really is about taking every promotional opportunity that we can. *Gavin*

Underpinning the strong branding and corporate identities is an illuminating storytelling dynamic that portrays powerful and impacting narratives about the young people worked with. This illustrates both the challenges and successes of resourcing, sustaining and developing working with them.

P012. So young people are having their voice heard, expressing themselves, seeing that things are possible, being part of something bigger ... Just giving these young people just an opportunity to become heard which doesn’t happen often ... at all. *Pete*

Whilst the telling of good news stories about young people is clearly significant, there also appears to be an organisational dynamic that invests into public relations work and media portrayals. Whilst this might not be a clear strategic intention, it does nonetheless take place and does so effectively and to a favourable and high standard.

A rival interpretation of this data is that the partnership working, public relations work, branding and storytelling forms are just part of a strategy (possibly an unconscious one) to simply get funding into the organisations. Equally, it might be argued that these shapes and forms, along with community development (possibly even Big Society) aspirations, social inclusion work and young people's involvement are just responses to the dominant cultural ideologies and policy narratives discussed in Chapter 3. Neither of these possibilities can be dismissed and further consideration is given to them in Chapter 8.

All the cases encounter isomorphic threats driven by contemporary policy and culturally impacting factors. Examples from my findings include cases being coerced into: becoming subconsciously secular (Dinham in Furness 2012); stepping in to pick up gaps left by the demise of state-sponsored providers; working in certain ways with young people in schools in order to achieve institutional legitimacy; and coerced into helping combat extremist threats. Mimicking examples centre around the move toward market-driven solutions as a means of providing youth work services and solving young people's 'problems'. These 'solutions' include the rush to develop social enterprises, embracing the new commissioning landscape and demands to get young people into education, employment or training at all costs. Normative pressures and threats exist over policy ideas relating to scaling-up and the expansion of successful projects, expectations around performance indicators and targeted models of delivery.

These threats are ever present in the contexts that the cases operate in. Paradise has succumbed to them in the past and, claims to have learnt valuable lessons from the experience. Whilst all the cases appear very aware of the threats and largely manage to negotiate the policy and ideology terrain associated with them, my findings do not claim that they manage to fully avoid being influenced by them. The necessity to survive, raise funding for their work and the demands of partnership working represent real pressures to organisational mission and value-bases.

A143. I think the problem with charity work is funding is so very key and I think the reality is that lots of charities have suffered with the recent cuts so Big Society offers opportunities but it also, it also can and push in terms of where your mission is. So

actually, 'yes there's lots of opportunities for X,Y and Z, but does that still fit with your mission? ... who becomes your master then?' *Amanda*

Organisationally, the projects operate across all the modalities (Baker 2012b:570-571) referred to in Chapter 3: at times they are simply *being there* whilst at other times they are *mainstream* delivering schemes and contracts. Equally, the advocacy and campaigning work identified above suggests they are also being *alternative*, challenging prevalent hegemonies and injustices. The projects appear to oscillate between these modalities balancing their missional objectives, available resources and organisational aspirations.

Whether it is in their work with others, positioning relating to matters of faith or the treatment of staff, volunteers and stakeholders, all the cases appear to act with high levels of integrity. They have a welcoming and open organisational culture that makes space for people with minority views as well as appealing to those who ascribe to a more general Christian worldview and orthodoxy.

All those who work in the projects have a firm belief in and commitment to what the projects are seeking to do. There is a sense the work they do is their 'ontological vocation' (Freire, 1972:48). The extent to which this ontology is oscillating around the faith motivation and dynamic of the project's work, serving the young people, the youth work vocation, or the actual geographical community is open to debate and conjecture. It appears it might be different for different people depending upon their faith beliefs, career perspectives and views about their locality.

The staff and volunteers are skilled, passionate and creative people that have developed a good reputation and credibility for the work they do. They are a mix of Christians and those who are not; Valhalla also specifically employs Muslims in order to serve those it works with. The main Chief Executive role in each of the cases is undertaken by a male, white, Christian leader who is very much a visionary. Their work is very much a vocation, and this is integrated into, and across, their lifestyle as what they do appears to be much more than a job. It is a mission, quest and, in theological language, a calling. Each project has a mix of full-time and part-time employed staff and volunteers.

All the people involved in the projects believe they are doing an excellent job – one that is better than others doing similar work with young people.

P308. If there was one thing I could change? ... To be honest I'd like to see more ... projects. *Sarah*

Whilst all the cases are experiencing funding challenges and shortfalls and need more stable sources of funding, this does not diminish their quest to expand. There was no evidence these expansion desires were simply to increase the influence of faith in the public realm.

The projects need external funding, grants, contracts and/or paid work in order to be sustainable. Shangri-La attempts to be self-sustaining and is part funded by the charity shops its parent governing charity operates. However, on its own, this income is insufficient to maintain the project. When asked what she would change about the Shangri-La project, Sue, a partnership worker, said:

S-L202. I'd change their funding. It ... They have to ... it's about having the funding ... as in, if I could wave a wand and make sure they could get regular funding. *Sue*

Each of the cases does not like the current social and youth policy positioning of the coalition government but will take their money if offered.

### 7.4.3 Relationships and Influences

I have previously alluded to the significance of partnerships in my investigation findings. However, such is their bearing I consider they warrant further exposition.

Collaborative work is fundamental to how the cases operate. All the cases have partnership arrangements with state-sponsored bodies, civil society organisations, churches and Christian groups and schools. This enables them to have a greater reach and profile in their areas, communicate news of their work and messages to a large group of stakeholders, mutually benefit from the support of others and keep focused on the big picture needs of their localities. So, for example, when Nirvana was asked by a third party Christian agency to help place a student the local school responded very positively:

N182. And such is the relationship that Nirvana have with the school and I have with the churches that the school were like, 'yeah, the more help the better'. *Dermot*

Many of these relationships and partnerships are built and are dependent upon individuals, rather than any sense of a corporate or collective paradigm; thus they have a degree of fragility about them and, are vulnerable to changes of personnel. When this happens their work would



appear to suffer. Added to this is the fact that the nature of many partnerships has become very fluid due to funding cuts, commissioning agendas and other external policy factors. This has negatively impacted some work.

Community links are important across the cases and relationships with churches and individual Christians are highly important. Whilst these might be seen as a convenient tool to increase support, funding, volunteers and profile the work of the cases, they do appear to be more mutually orientated than this: bringing reciprocal benefits to all parties. The Paradise, Nirvana and Shangri-La cases have little if any contact with other faith groups, whilst Valhalla's remit means it has extensive links with Muslim groups and growing relationships with Sikh communities. Whilst such links may well reflect the nature of the work undertaken, they are no doubt also determined by geographical demographics, rather than any particular views or perspectives about linking with other faith groups.

Of particular note are the high profile media relationships enjoyed by the cases. These appear (relative to my general practice experience and awareness) disproportionate to the size of the projects concerned and, relatively unusual for these type of projects. These relationships have resulted in coverage of project work by national television, regional television, local radio and local newspapers, further confirming the findings referred to above about branding and public relations work.

In summary, my data suggests that in terms of building and sustaining work, *relationships and partnerships* are on par with, if not more important than, actual youth work *functions*. I now synthesise these findings to develop an emerging framework and hypothesis about the philosophical shape of faith-based youth work.

#### **7.4.4 An Emerging Hypothesis: The Shape of Faith-Based Youth Work**

My proposition that four key benchmark ideas of Catholic Social Teaching (Human Dignity, Solidarity, Subsidiarity and the telos of the Common Good) are particularly relevant to understanding how this type of faith-based work is undertaken is significantly borne out, albeit with a number of additional considerations emerging.

My findings and data strongly indicate a high degree of respect for **Human Dignity** across the cases. There is a fundamental belief that every young person is important and valuable and that they can be supported to reach their potential and fully flourish.

There is clear evidence the cases have **Solidarity** with the marginalised young people they work with and that this is an important factor in their work. The projects are focused on helping young people develop – making a difference in their lives. This is done not only for the sake of the young people, but also to promote solidarity with the wider community, enabling young people to contribute to that and be seen in a more positive light by it. There is clear evidence the cases welcome people from all backgrounds, promote inclusion and desire better outcomes for all.

The cases are very focused on working locally and operate within clearly defined areas having made long term commitments to these. As such, the principle of **Subsidiarity** is embedded into how they work. In the spirit of subsidiarity the cases seek to empower and enable others at a grassroots level to fulfil their aspirations, accomplish whatever they can by their own enterprise and industry and resolve problems relative to them. The projects *model* this approach creating space and opportunity for others to bring about change at a local level. Whilst there is a desire for organisational expansion, this is always considered within the context of wishing to preserve the local and facilitate a very specific service based around a geographically defined area and group of young people: somewhat reflective of Big Society localism ideals.

The elements of human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity combine to help all the cases work towards achieving the **Common Good**. By supporting, empowering, giving confidence to, training and enabling young people to more effectively participate in the community, they are helping achieve a greater sum total of social conditions that enable individuals and the collective to achieve greater well-being, fulfilment and better outcomes more fully and more easily. Each case appears to achieve the goals of their strapline thereby making a difference in the lives of individual young people, the wider community and society as a whole.

However, this representation does not fully portray my findings. In each individual case study a number of additional shapes and forms are identifiable. For ease of reference, I summarise these again here:

Case	Emerging Shape
Paradise	Helping young people flourish and thrive
	Seeking change and transformation
	Telling their stories
	Building mutual and creative relationships
	Encountering money and funding challenges
Valhalla	Developing life-bringing relationships
	Having fun
	Telling their stories
	Building effective partnerships
	Having funding and resourcing issues
Nirvana	Providing life support
	Bringing hope and long term change
	Effectively communicating
	Having symbiotic partnerships
	Funding challenges
Shangri-La	Having positive regard for young people
	Making a difference
	Having strong communications branding and portrayal
	Working in partnership
	Seeking funding and to expand

Table 9. Case-by-case emerging philosophical shape of faith-based youth work

Therefore, my findings point toward an emerging hypothesis explaining the philosophical shape of how faith-based youth work is undertaken that:

**Exemplifies the Catholic Social Teaching ideas of human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity and seeking the common good whilst helping young people flourish and have life, realise change and transformation, tell their stories and do so by working in mutually beneficial partnerships and endeavouring to be sustainable.**

I conclude this section here and discuss, analyse and refine this emerging framework and hypothesis further in Chapter 8 considering it particularly pertinent to Big Society agendas.

### 7.5 Prospective Intentions: The Pedagogy of What Faith-Based Youth Work Does

Having set out my findings relating to *why* and *how* faith-based youth work is undertaken, I now turn to portray *what* it does.

In terms of specific activities, the cases undertake personal and social development activities, mentoring of young people, physical activities, one-to-one support programmes, well-being work, holiday programmes and/or camps and residentials, creative activities using art, music and video and work in and alongside schools. With the exception of Valhalla, they also offer accreditation opportunities.

I previously referred to the framework proposed by Doyle and Smith (2002):

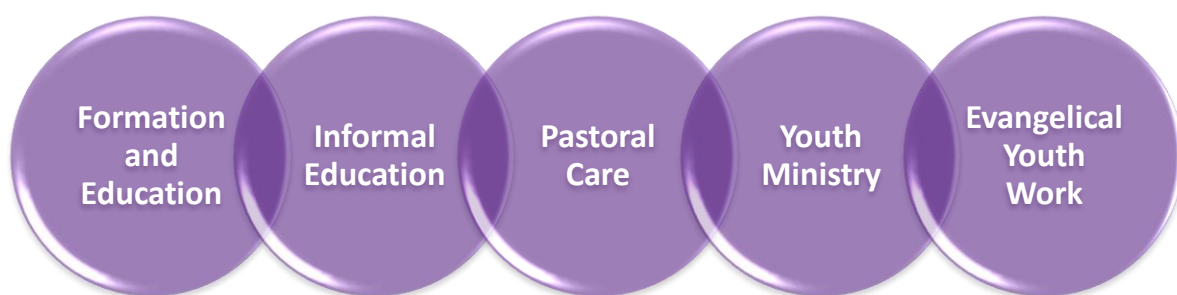


Figure 8. Doyle and Smith's Christian youth work categories

The data confirms the presence of the first three categories of the work in the cases. For example, work is present regarding:

- Formation and Education – through instruction, accredited courses and formal intervention programmes; through schools work and formal intervention courses and programmes. Sometimes these being rooted or located within an explicit Christian faith paradigm or pedagogy and sometimes more secularly positioned.
- Informal Education – via consultation work, creative projects, mentoring, drop-in sessions, personal and social development and one-to-one inputs and relationship building work.
- Pastoral Care – of individuals over a sustained and long time period, confidence and esteem building work.

However, the Youth Ministry and Evangelical Youth Work elements are almost entirely absent from the work undertaken by the cases studied. The only discrepant finding being that Valhalla engages in aspects of Youth Ministry.

Furthermore, a number of other cross-case common elements are found. These are about helping young people develop socially and nurturing their aspirations, increasing their sense of citizenship and belonging, involving them in community development and social action work, advocating and campaigning on their behalf and transmitting the founding faith beliefs of their projects when asked to do so.

This latter aspect is only done by those workers who are practising Christians (and Muslims in the case of Valhalla). Additionally in the Valhalla and Nirvana cases, this dynamic is more intentional than in the other cases; for Valhalla this is evidenced in their general work whilst for Nirvana this is apparent in some of the work they do in formal school settings, such as: undertaking Acts of Collective Worship and Religious Education lessons.

These findings, when combined with those set out above, can be succinctly categorised to develop my cross-case tabular description of the intentions of faith-based youth work as found in my investigation. In the following table, I have streamlined the descriptions into seven<sup>264</sup> overarching 'prospective' (Bryderup and Frørup 2011:91-92) intentions and functions.<sup>265</sup> Beneath each overarching descriptor is a series of boxes setting out more nuanced descriptions, examples and illustrations of the type of work actually undertaken by the projects.

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<sup>264</sup> The order of these is not considered significant.

<sup>265</sup> I have used this term as it reflects the data in my investigation, whereby faith-based youth work focuses upon young people's future possibilities rather than past failings of problems. For a further discussion regarding this see Bryderup and Frørup (2011).

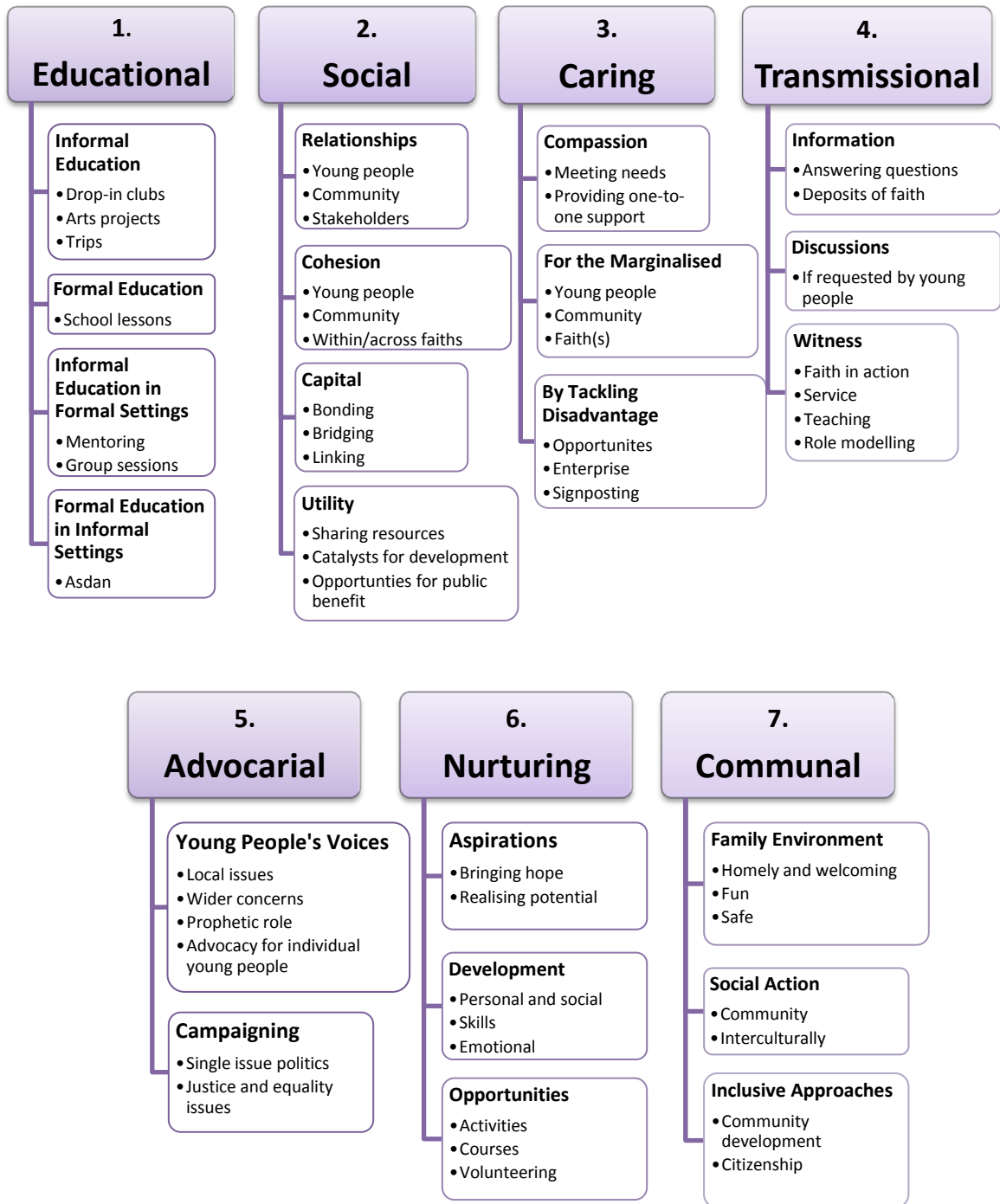


Figure 9. The prospective intentions of faith-based youth work

Underpinning these intentions is an overwhelming sense of everyone in the cases being positive about the work being done. This is described by the Valhalla Project Director as an 'upward optimism'. In all of the case studies and interviews undertaken, there is only one small negative comment about one organisation's level of planning. Other than this one example, there are no other negative perceptions. This positivity is transmitted to the young people as work is undertaken. This causes me to conclude that any pedagogical intentions are prospective in that they look to the future in a positive, progressive and anticipatory way.

In conclusion, my findings relating to what faith-based youth work *does* reflect the fluid and multifaceted nature of the discourse identified in Chapter 3a. Furthermore, the framework proposed by Doyle and Smith appears woefully insufficient as an explanation regarding the pedagogical intentions of such work; a wider and more encompassing conceptualisation is required that embraces all the findings of my investigation. Due consideration of this is now discussed.

## Chapter Eight

### 8. A New Explanatory Model for Faith-Based Youth Work

This chapter discusses and analyses the findings set out in the previous two chapters. It does so in a manner that focuses upon my findings regarding the Big Society, then matters of faith, before establishing an emerging hypothesis and a proposed theoretical framework for faith-based youth work. Throughout, I consider the higher level conceptual findings from Chapters 6 and 7 and integrate the unresolved issues resulting from the fluid, multifaceted and contested discourses of my subject matters as identified in Chapter 3. I conclude by bringing together all my conceptualisations to establish my proposed new explanatory model for faith-based youth work.<sup>266</sup>

#### 8.1 Big Society: Another Government Spiel?

In this section, I analyse the relationship between faith-based youth work and the Big Society noting the high degree of synthesis between the vision and the type of work investigated. However, I conclude this is in spite of and coincidental to the Big Society vision, rather than because of it.

Whilst I found no specific references in my cases relating to the Big Society *idea*, there was evidence the cases were doing Big Society type *work*. It could be argued that, in governmentality terms, faith-based youth work has thus been ‘shaped, guided and moulded’ (Dean 2010:193) into the notion. The Big Society notion and faith-based youth work experience a coincidental and unintentional relationship. The cases could, hypothetically, be used as an advertisement for the notion reflecting the underpinning *micro-embedded* components of localism, empowerment and voluntarism. They operate in the spirit of reciprocity, mutuality and common good aspirations that look to support associational life, develop cohesion, and build social capital, thereby evidencing broad symmetry with Big Society aspirations. Furthermore, their work embodies

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<sup>266</sup> Throughout this chapter, many of the quotations used to analyse a consideration could equally be applied to highlight others. Whilst this interconnectivity should be noted, I have opted not to duplicate the quotations for reasons of prudence and efficacy.



some elements of the previously described *macro-marketisation* aspects of the Big Society vision: namely contracted work, social enterprise and delivering some public services.

This analysis, however, should not be interpreted as indicating wholesale support for the idea or that the work done by the projects has been instigated because of the Big Society notion. As Charlesworth (2012:50) states, 'what worked still works' reflecting the fact that what the cases are doing was being done before the Big Society idea was conceived. I, therefore, consider any similarities between what the cases do, how they do it and the Big Society vision are purely coincidental and arise because of the commonality of ultimate goals, not endorsement of the ideology.

Notwithstanding this analysis and in a pattern consistent with the findings of *The Big View*, there is some support for the philosophical idea of the Big Society – if not the actuality of what is happening on the ground. For example, Terry (V064) doesn't think that Valhalla are doing anything particularly different in their work because of the Big Society, but does see the 'philosophy and ethos that's behind [it] ... has some really beautiful elements and ideals to it'. However, he goes on to say that the funding cuts that have accompanied the idea have 'left a really bad taste in my mouth' (V065).

Both Dermot (N188) and Ivor (S-L316) identified some specific challenges and saw the Big Society as a potential threat to the values and practice of youth work. They raised questions about the impact it would have on quality, training, safety and resourcing volunteers. Paul (P046) went further and simply saw it as 'top-down' and discriminatory. This again highlights the paradoxes discussed in Chapter 3b: the ideological presentation of the Big Society is at odds with how it is supported because government cannot *build* the Big Society (Porter 2010).

This juxtaposition was also referred to by Amanda (N141) as she couldn't decide if 'it is a great opportunity' or 'a lot of risk for charities'; these sentiments also resonated with the findings of *The Big View* where opinions were similarly divided. She opted not to offer a final concluding opinion instead she picked up on some of the tensions associated with governmentality: 'I think it's a difficult question in how you motivate communities to work together' and posed the question, 'how do we actually work together for positive and good?'. This reflection clearly positions her work within a common good aspiration that exists irrespective of any particular Big Society narrative.

The cross-case finding set out in Section 7.3.1 that there were mixed levels of knowledge about the notion similarly correlates with *The Big View* findings. About half the people interviewed knew nothing about the notion. Those who knew little (with one exception) were either part-time staff or volunteers; the following exchange typifying responses:

S-L368. Have you heard of Big Society?

S-L369. Big Society? No.

S-L370. The Government's idea.

S-L371. No. Esther

This knowledge differentiation between full and non-full time staff requires further investigation to fully understand what causes it, but the apparent failure of policymakers to communicate such a cornerstone idea to some of those best positioned to make the idea a reality supports those critics who see the Big Society as a failed and toxic brand.<sup>267</sup>

Of particular note is the level of support that some of those ignorant of the notion afford to it when presented with a brief outline of it.<sup>268</sup> So whilst Sarah (P302) had concerns about how well people would respond, she liked the principles: 'I think the general idea of it is good ... I can see it being good'.

This suggests that when any influencing rhetoric is stripped away there is a level of support for the idea indicating the problem is not with the Big Society idea *per se* but perhaps with the way it has been portrayed and established. Uppermost of these considerations is the fact that it is a government idea, a perceived lack of clarity associated with the concept and the issue of funding cuts. Pete and Dave from Paradise summarise these arguments:

P048. I think there's always a fear ... when something becomes driven by a *government* or a *party* because it gets drawn into the political machine of party politics and driven by outside of the neighbourhood. People are ... probably thinking, 'you know what, it's just another government spiel and we'll just get on with what we're doing and maybe we can tap into some stuff and get some funding and some money and hopefully some people will listen but actually the machine will change and keep doing what it's doing'. It's hard ... it's hard to not have that level of scepticism. And a lot of that can be locally driven you know people's mistrust of politics, politicians. *Pete*

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<sup>267</sup> See, for example, Blond (2011) and Bubb (2013) as discussed in Chapter 3b.

<sup>268</sup> This I did as clearly, succinctly and non-judgementally as I could.

P094. I'm not a big political person but, for me, it almost seems like something that was kind of already happening and going on in this area and also probably a lot of other places ... I imagine there's a lot of organisations and communities that might say that they were already doing the Big Society or seeing the Big Society kind of happen to a degree. I think what I struggle with is the fact that maybe they're asking people or organisations or communities to do stuff that, I think, should be coming from the Government. But then if you are asking for community groups organisations or the third sector to take on the responsibility to see this army of volunteers come out of nowhere, but not giving them the resource or finances to do that, then that's the bit that I kind of struggle with. *Dave*

As previously discussed, the contextual backdrop to this investigation has been the austere economic environment that has negatively impacted the youth work sector disproportionately to other sectors. If the Big Society had been launched at a different time, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that, at least initially, it would have been resourced more generously and effectively thereby supporting youth work rather than eroding it. This possibility has clouded the debate about the actuality of the Big Society because it is very difficult to separate the notion from the funding cuts and, in governmentality theory terms, the empowering of people to do things that were once the job of government. Dermot (S-L188), for example, highlights this discourse:

I think the Big Society is a pile of crap! It's ... For me it's, ultimately it boils down to the government wanting people to do things for free. Without giving them the options of support that previously were in place.

Whilst remarks like this one from Dermot and the one above from Dave (P094) generally reflect negatively upon state-backed initiatives, it could be that such negative views are specifically rooted in a political bias against this current government rather than any wider objective assessment. For example Adam (P347) says:

Big Society is so interlinked with, not just cuts, but a sense that this current Government is anti-Local Government and anti-community professionals that are paid through the state in one form or another. And also that this Government is anti-poor people ... that actually wanting, the idea of being co-opted into any of that agenda, which I find personally quite nasty, is ... is far too much to stomach. And I think because ... the rhetoric of Big Society doesn't seem to engage with the reality of neighbourhoods like this then actually, you know there are all kinds of bits of the picture here that might sound good and look good at a Conservative Party Conference, but I would just want to be standing up and shouting 'You just don't get it!'

The possibility thus exists that irrespective of its success or otherwise the Big Society will never be credited for anything simply because of its political affiliations; thus, even if in the future the

Big Society is the vehicle that helps young people flourish and achieve the common good, critics may credit other factors for such achievements.

This is what Muslim Najeed (V107) suggests when discussing the significance of faith-based youth work in the future. He credits faith groups for responding positively in a time of economic need,<sup>269</sup> not the Big Society for prompting any response:

One of the things that I always used to say is 'youth work started from the church' so it's actually got a history you know what I mean. ... I think that it will go back to sort of religious institutions providing services for young people and if we can all work together, all the religious institutions and other bodies, I think that ... when the Government sort of has got holes in it ... we can actually do that.

Consequently, it would appear faith-based youth work operates within the Big Society public realm not because it unconditionally endorses the notion, but because it does the work the Big Society envisions, often via the processes and mechanisms the notion affords.<sup>270</sup>

In a manner consistent with Big Society aspirations, the projects work by transgressing civil society, state and market demarcations and boundaries, and this helps them create and enlarge the space and place of their work and of others with whom they work. My findings suggest the projects seek to develop social action alongside a sense of citizenship and community development, whilst being both motivated and informed by a locally focused political dynamic. These characteristics have much in common with the previously considered *National Citizen Service (NCS)* – raising further questions about the need for the *NCS*.

Collectively, my findings resonate with the a priori construct I employed to determine if the cases achieved Edwards' civil society aspirations of associational life and the good society in the public sphere. Whilst it might be argued I am making the data fit this theory, the reality is that the evidence simply points toward these conclusions. This is perhaps not unsurprising as there is

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<sup>269</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has talked of the church stepping into the gap to meet community needs left by service cuts (Trent Vineyard 2013). Contrastingly, Barrow (2013) contends unquestionably accepting that faith-based organisations have a 'useful' role to play in serving 'the new high priests of the Big Society' is a position full of danger that risks organisations getting 'sucked into the role of patching up and rendering workable a system that is based on accepting fundamentally unacceptable inequalities and imbalances'.

<sup>270</sup> Some parallel observations can be found in other sectors of society such as, The Masons, The Rotary Club, Mothers' Union and Trade Unionism. For example, Turner (in Milmo 2012) says, 'it (Big Society) is not the terminology we would have used, but trade unionism has always been about the big society'.

nothing in the theory that is inconsistent with the outworking of the Christian faith worldview identified in my cases.

Szreter (2012:41) talks of the Big Society as nothing 'more than ephemeral rhetoric' and whilst he may well be proved right in terms of the Big Society as a political initiative, this investigation suggests the components of the ideology have been, are, and look likely to be in the future, active elements in faith-based youth work. In the cases I have investigated, it is this fact that solidifies the relationship between faith-based youth work and the Big Society ideology, thereby enabling an explanatory conceptualization and theoretical model of how faith-based youth work exists within the policy narrative to emerge.

However, the relationship is one whereby faith-based youth work might be said to be the *contents* and the Big Society the *container*. It is potentially here where the Big Society has been confusing. Perhaps, as alluded in Chapter 3, critics, commentators and practitioners were expecting the Big Society to have more content, but in fact it is just an umbrella vision that encapsulates and contains all common good work and aspirations. In contrast, faith-based youth work is made up of definable contents – symbolised by the different floors in my proposed explanatory model. To complicate matters further, it is clear from my investigation that some people in my cases do not want their *contents* to be associated with the Big Society *container* even if that content is an apparent good conceptual fit! Given the reality of how the Big Society has developed and what it has come to represent, this is a position I have great empathy with.

I consider the detail of my emerging model shortly. Before doing so, I analyse the cross-case themes relating to the place of faith within my investigation. Whilst there is a high degree of cross-case synthesis regarding the Big Society subject matter, there is only a partial synthesis regarding the faith typologies found in my cases.

## **8.2 The Place, Position and Characteristics of Faith**

In Section 7.2, I set out my findings relating to the faith typologies and characteristics evident in my cases. In this section I analyse the themes and variations that are significant regarding the foundational place, position and characteristics of faith. I consider the question, 'where's the faith in [these] faith-based organisations?' (Ebaugh et al 2006) and, begin by discussing common cross-case themes, prior to analysing particular discrepancies.

### 8.2.1 Understanding Faith Typologies and Roles: Dualistic tendencies?

Using the typology of Sider and Unruh (2004), my findings set out in Section 7.2.1 indicate that at organisational level there is a high degree of common typology across the cases. The mission, founding heritage, governance and project leadership of the cases are very much faith-permeated and/or centred.

There is also a high degree of commonality across the Paradise, Nirvana and Shangri-La cases regarding the faith characteristics of junior staff, sources of resourcing, users, practices, programme content and project outcomes; these typologically are far more secular in nature. In these cases, there is an apparent mismatch and disconnect between the organisational faith typology of the projects and the operational reality of their work. This disconnect is illustrated by, for example, Adam (P335) who says:

I think if you ask most people who came into contact with Paradise on the estate here they probably wouldn't think of it as an explicitly faith-based organisation.

Sarah (N034) further illustrates this in her project saying, 'I think we are very explicit on who we are as an organisation and who we believe in and what we believe in.' However, she goes onto to say:

In terms of the young people I work with I'm not sure that [the faith side] ... is as explicitly known to them as it is to our funders and supporters and other organisations that we work with.

Critics might conclude these are thus dualistic organisations: embodying one faith typology in some settings and another in different contexts. Dave (P802), for example, says of Paradise that what he read on their website and what he witnessed 'didn't match up'.

Equally, it might be questioned as to exactly what the point of being *faith-based* is if the *faith* aspect of the work is not explicit centre-stage. Dave's (P086) view is this faith aspect is about underpinning values rather than explicit declarations:

... the Christian side of, the faith side to it is in the background maybe. I don't think 'hidden' would be the right word, but I think it's just the way it kind of comes across and the values of the way we work.

Rather than accepting the dualistic discourse, a more nuanced understanding might conclude these projects are just being pragmatic: speaking of their faith when asked and preferring their actions speak for them in other situations.

In Chapter 7, I highlighted how cases resonated with moves in Christian-based work to an actioned-based 'practice of deeds' (Smith 1998) approach that sought to respond to a *missio Dei* understanding, where people of faith engage more actively in the world (Bosch 1991; Smith 1998; Frost and Hirsch 2003; Murray 2004, 2006). This analysis might also explain how the projects are positioned regarding their faith characteristics. For example, Amanda (N151) says she:

would rather help somebody practically and them know that I'm a Christian and that stay with them [than] be very upfront and say, 'Hi I'm a Christian and do you need to know Jesus?' and then walk away and still not have ... helped in any way.

Ted (N241) similarly reflects this understanding when he says, 'I think it [faith] is there and I've certainly seen the strength of that faith carried out in actions.'

So it could be these cases are simply reflecting these shifts and getting on with what they think God is doing in their contexts; they are focused on engagement with the world they live in and the broad political challenges they face. Rather than concentrating on theological 'truth' and proclaiming this, they are responding to the needs of the world and the young people they work with by being 'mobile, authentic and practical' (Vincett et al 2012).

Contentions about the place of faith within the projects are further illustrated by the actual names of the projects and the straplines that go alongside them. As highlighted in Section 7.1.4 there are no references to faith, religion or belief in any of the project's real names, and there is only one mention of the word *faith* in any of the project straplines, that being Valhalla's. Whilst this might be clever marketing that seeks resonance with contemporary culture, an attempt not to put off potential users, policymakers and funders by making explicit reference to religious associations, and/or something that is purely coincidental, it does potentially cloud what the projects do and are about. To establish if this is a further example of the previously discussed 'subconscious secularism' (Dinham in Furness 2012) would demand further investigation, but it raises the question about how the cases portray the faith aspect of their identities in their work.

Additionally, questions about what might be called *converse deceitful practices* are raised; if the projects portray themselves to supporters and Christian stakeholders as 'Christian' but in reality the work undertaken is little different to similar more secularly-humanist orientated work, it might be construed people are at risk of being duped into giving support. Whilst the motivation, underpinning values and pedagogy of the work might be Christian in ethos, the content and

curricula elements are not so specifically faith-rooted appearing to progressively diminish from vision and mission to work at ground level. Consequently, supporters may think they are supporting a work of, for example, evangelistic proclamation whilst in effect they are not. There is no suggestion in my investigation of any deliberate attempt to deceive, nor do I suggest one expression of faith (for example proclamation work) is more important than another, but the propensity for the project's faith positioning to be misunderstood needs to be recognised.

Interviewees asserted repeatedly they didn't want to push the faith aspect of their work onto people; perhaps they have gone too far in the opposite direction where their Christian faith-based worldview and background motivation doesn't translate to work on the ground that is particularly distinctive.

Given the isomorphic threats identified in the cases, it might be that coercion, mimetic and normative pressures have somewhat dis-embedded the projects from their founding faith positions. The risk for the projects is that when compared to their original missional intentions their daily work becomes dualistic in nature; this potentially results in their work becoming little different to other youth work. However, these threats alone do not explain any apparent disconnect. For example, Valhalla has experienced isomorphic threats, but its public portrayal (i.e. actual work) is very different to the other three cases. Whilst it might be argued Valhalla has negotiated these threats more successfully than the other cases, I do not believe the data supports such a conclusion. Whilst the projects might not use the technical isomorphism terminology, they are all aware and manage potential conflicts associated with funding regimes, policy demands, ideological, political and/or legitimacy pressures. Isomorphism alone cannot explain these typological discrepancies.

As illustrated by Figure 10 below, I perceive that in faith-based work there is a spectrum of perspectives regarding how faith communities respond to the predominant ideology and support systems present in society<sup>271</sup> and, that isomorphic threats have the potential to pull such work away from understood values of faith toward contemporary dominant ideological positions.

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<sup>271</sup> Ranging from those who fully emulate the dominant contemporary ideology (where the *cuius regio, eius religio* – meaning the religion of the ruler dictates the religion of the ruled or, perhaps more contemporarily in western democracy, the religion or philosophy of the rulers dictates the religion or philosophy of the people) to those that fundamentally undermine or seek to challenge it (for example, the Quakers or militant Islamists).



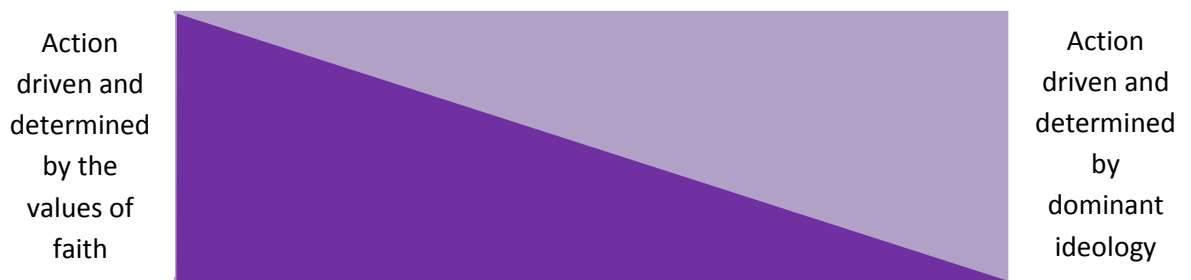


Figure 10. A faith/ideology spectrum of perspectives

In my investigation there is an additional pull and discourse that further complicates how faith is expressed in the contexts of my cases: the pull is the extent to which the projects work towards helping the young people they work with flourish. Consequently, the projects on the ground have to hold in tension their organisational and mission objectives, the influence of policy narratives and dominant ideologies and the needs of their users.<sup>272</sup> How projects respond to these considerations determines the faith typology evident in their practice. Conjecture might suggest that from the project's point of view the ideal scenario would be when the organisational objectives seamlessly overlap with the needs of the young people, with the policy narrative fully supporting those objectives.

When considering the relationships between faith-based youth work typologies, the Big Society, other policy narratives and, analysing how and what faith-based youth work is and does it is evident there is a relationship between the mission of the organisation, policy narratives and the needs of young people. The three dynamics can be illustrated by a Venn (1880) diagram:

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<sup>272</sup> This conceptualisation having something in common with that proposed by Williamson (2006) previously discussed on page 43.



Figure 11. Competing organisational discourses

Failure to successfully negotiate these competing discourses may result in the mission creep discussed in Chapter 3. This might mean that the faith-based youth work *practice* typology is different to that of the *founding faith* typology.

If a project over-responds to the needs of young people it reduces the extent to which it can maintain its founding faith typology: for example, a project might run activities inconsistent with its faith values. Its practice typology might *creep* and look something like the following:

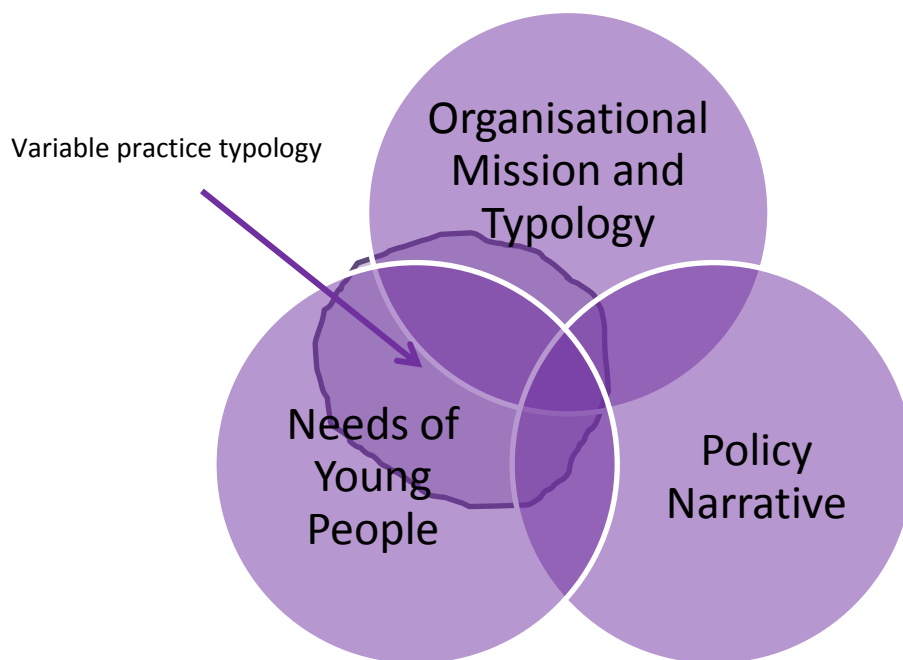


Figure 12. A project over-responds to the needs of young people at the expense of its founding mission

Mandy (not a Christian) illustrates how the mission can creep. When asked where the ‘faith bit comes in’, she said, (S-L095) ‘well it doesn’t ... it’s not anything that is ever talked about. And I don’t actually know if some of the young people know our origins ...’. Gavin (S-L010) goes further contending that the faith dynamic is something that ‘takes a back seat without being less important. It kind of, it sits behind, whereas we’re there to support all the young people and that faith-based element is there to support us.’ In saying this he draws a clear distinction between the needs of the young people, the organisational faith typology and the respective roles these dynamics play in his work.

Similarly, if a project allows a policy narrative or ideology to pull it away from its core mission and values (for example, a funding stream may forbid the practice of certain religious activities),<sup>273</sup> then its practice typology might *creep* and look something like this:

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<sup>273</sup> My professional work with funders witnessed the forbidding of, for example, facilitation of a Christian Alpha Course (see [www.alpha.org](http://www.alpha.org)) using tables and chairs paid for by a grant scheme and the prevention of a Muslim Awareness day as part of a multicultural weekend community celebration.

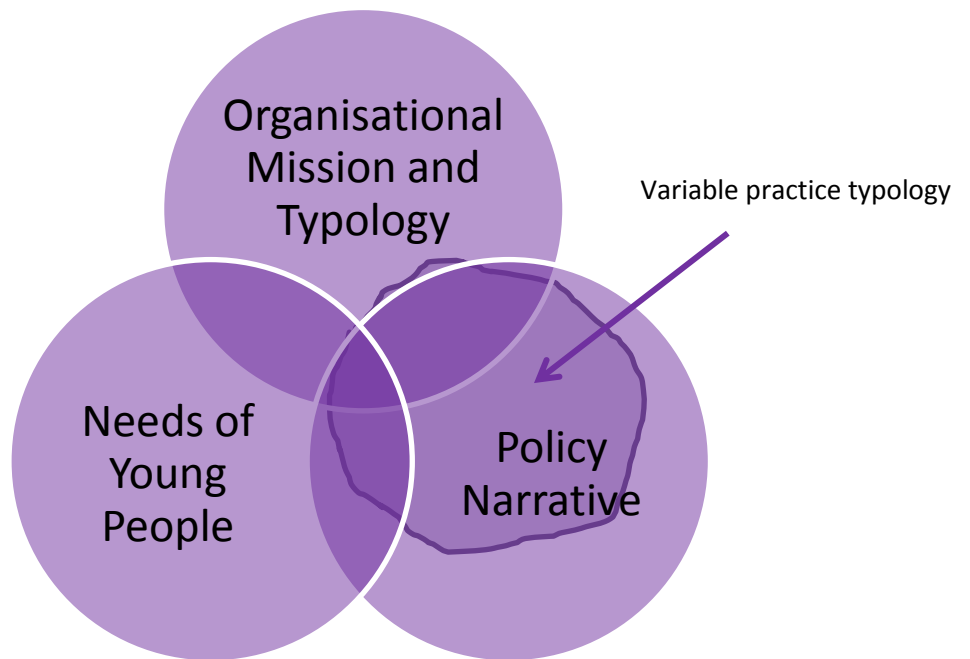


Figure 13. A project over-responds to external policy narratives

Whilst further investigation is required to determine the full reality of this conceptualisation, I tentatively conclude my cases, particularly Valhalla, manage to hold onto their organisational mission even if this is not always fully explicitly vocalised in their daily practice. Such a position might look like this:

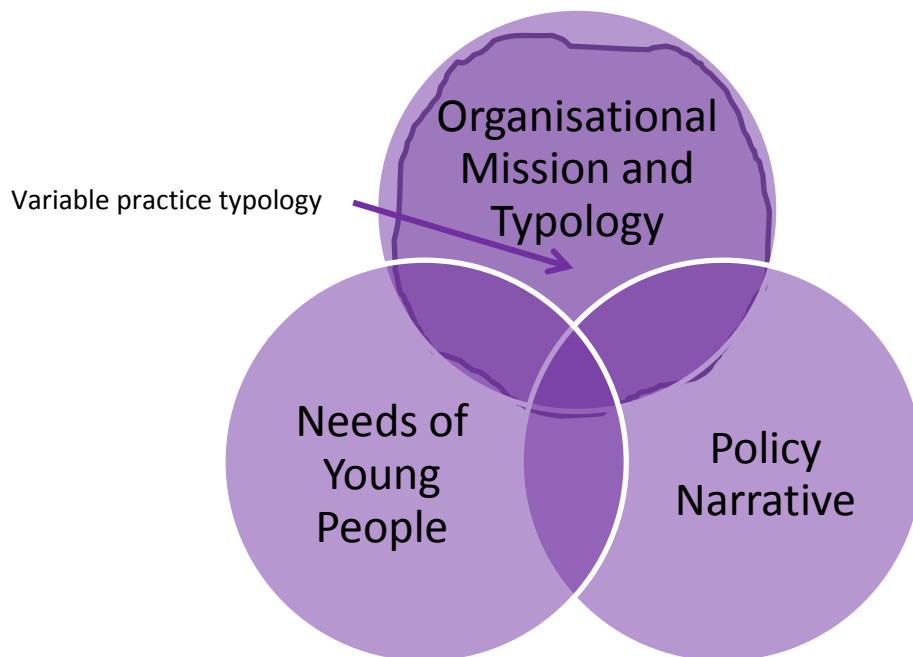


Figure 14. A project holds firm to its founding mission and typology

Having considered the extent to which the organisational mission and typology across my cases is distinctive, I now consider how distinctive their practice is.

### 8.2.2 Different, Yet the Same: Comparisons with Other Work

Christian project workers have a belief the faith element of their work means they do better work and, this makes them different to work originating from a secular or humanist worldview.<sup>274</sup> Ivor (S-L291) summarises such sentiments:

We value quality youth work and that's, and I suppose for us that's youth work that makes a difference. That makes best use of the resources we've got, that seeks to be excellent in its delivery, and seeks to you know measure and capture the outcomes. Do things better than others. ... we're more interested in quality as defined by 'does this work matter?', 'is it making a difference to young people's lives?'

It is beyond the scope of my investigation to assess the accuracy of any statements associated with quality standards, and interviewees were not asked to define who these 'others' might be. Irrespective of these considerations, Christian project workers consistently made such claims and elevated themselves above others working in different sectors. Quite why faith-based workers make such generalising assumptions about more secularly orientated work warrants further investigation; for Nina (V237), it is, '... the faith thing is the main thing' that is distinct.

Contrastingly, this view about being better than and different to others is not shared by those who are not Christians. For example, Sean (P157) says, 'to me, I wouldn't see it as different because it's still fundamentally the same. It's all about, you know, trying to do good'. However, he does appreciate the value-base afforded by the Christian faith saying, (P125) 'for me it's a weird one cos I'm not necessarily very religious but yet I still believe in what everything stands for and stuff.'

Sarah (P272) advocates for what might be termed a form of 'Christian Atheism' (Altizer 1966; Mountford 2011):

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<sup>274</sup> This view is in contrast to, for example, research undertaken by National Council for Voluntary Organisations (Jochum et al eds. 2007:56) that concluded 'the perceived distinctiveness of faith-based organisations across a range of domains (particularly values, resources and building social capital) is seen as important by policymakers, yet there is no compelling evidence that faith-based organisations are different from other organisations.'

I'm not a Christian myself, but I think a lot of Paradise's values is a lot to do with Christianity which I completely believe in the values and morals of Christianity, I just don't actually believe in God.

Mandy (S-L099), also not a Christian, contrasts the work she does for the Local Authority<sup>275</sup> and sees many differences in the faith-based work of, in her case, Shangri-La, but 'the faith [element] one wasn't one' of them.

Disagreeing, Eve (S-L220), also from Shangri-La, says that the faith element is why they are different: 'they do come and ask us a lot of questions because they know that we are a Christian charity and they do actually see a difference in us and the way we work'.

Perhaps these contrasting perceptions can be explained away as reflecting the difference between those who have a firm religious commitment (and a consequential critical consciousness about what that means for them) and those who don't. A further explanation might be the more nebulous conceptualisation described in Section 7.2.2 as 'getting it'.

Ivor (S-L299) comments, '[In] presenting our work to a Churches Together meeting or whatever some people will get it and really warm to it' and again (S-L301), 'so I love it when I'll meet another 'person of faith' who gets it, and who gets what drives us and who gets what we're about'. Adam (P033) makes reference to the leader of the Paradise project and says, 'He's been one of the few people around that gets it, gets community, gets community development'.

My own experience resonates with the significance of this dynamic; it revolves around appreciating the heart and soul of what a project is and having resonance with what makes it tick; it is what drives a piece of work forward, inspires others to join with the work, helps overcome disappointments, discouragement and obstacles and keeps everybody motivated. People at the heart of my investigations seem to 'get it' and this is what makes their projects work. Christians in these projects, appear to put this down to the faith-based nature of their work, whilst others do not.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Mandy works part-time for both Shangri-La and the Local Authority, therefore is ideally positioned to make a comparison.

<sup>276</sup> This notion has resonance with Polanyi's (1996) understanding of indwelling subsidiary awareness and tacit knowledge: defined by Gill (2000:52) as 'the process of immersing oneself in the particulars of a subsidiary awareness by means of embodied activity until these particulars come together as a meaningful whole as an interactive act. ... When a knowing agent ... interiorises the holistic meaning ... and can thus be said to be indwelt by it.'

I now consider the subject of proselytisation before a number of cross-case variables.

### 8.2.3 Proselytisation: Absent by Design

The absence of any proselytisation in their work is perhaps no surprise given the selection criteria<sup>277</sup> of my cases. The focus is unequivocally about doing good work motivated by faith, whilst being inclusive and letting actions speak for themselves. As Terry notes (V059), 'we're actually just good youth work but we use faith, we acknowledge that faith is a part of identity'. Ivor (S-L296) describes this rationale, saying:

I'd prefer to talk about being a 'faith-motivated' project as opposed to being a 'faith-based' project. Simply because faith-based has probably become, it's come to mean something that we're not. So we do subscribe more to the sort of community development model of youth work we are seeking to combine a professional youth work framework with a faith-motivation and ethos. So for us it's the stuff of ethos and drive and values and you know commitment as opposed to the stuff of content.

This distinction between *faith-motivated* and *faith-based* is one previously discussed in Chapter 3a when the issue of conceptual language and terminology was considered. Reference is also made to it by Sarah (N077):

... the motivation is faith-based but were not purely doing, we're not doing just faith-based activities. We're not running a church youth group here, that's not what Nirvana is doing.

Sarah and Ivor's reference to the same discourses succinctly answers the question about the place of proselytisation in their respective projects. This clarity suggests a nuanced understanding that simultaneously recognises who they are, what they do and how they do it and, perhaps more significantly, recognises what they don't do.

Rather than proselytisation, Amanda (N133), for example, builds upon this notion of community and development and, puts the faith dynamic more in the domain of seeking the common good declaring:

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<sup>277</sup> Discussed in Chapter 4.

I do the job that I have been given to do for this period of time with the love of Jesus and God will do the rest of it. And actually if life is better, if by working with them [young people] things have improved then I kind of see that as my job done.

Whereas for Ted (N241) the faith aspect is not about trying to convert young people but more the sense of supporting and believing in them: 'I make the link with the sort of endearing vision idea that, "you're not going to give up on people"'.

I conclude that whilst each of the cases is motivated by their faith positioning, this seems to be expressed in their attitudes and actions rather than any vocal attempts to convert people. This reflects the post-*Albemarle* consideration discussed in Chapter 3, that faith-based work should be delivered via 'example rather than through assertion' (Pugh 1999) and the previously discussed shift 'from consensus to committed action' (Chapter 3). This positioning enables the faith values of the projects to be outworked, but not in ways that alienate those who are not practising Christians. Thus, potentially embracing multiple possible positions and accounts (Woodhead 2012a:3) of faith and spirituality in the work undertaken. As Sean (P127), who is not a Christian, says about the faith side of things, 'I like the fact that it's there, but it's not in your face.'

I now consider the more unique faith dynamics of each of the cases.

#### **8.2.4 Project Descriptors and Distinctives**

The cases of Paradise, Nirvana and Shangri-La have the above factors as consistent cross-case themes. However, each case also has its own distinctives and variables and these are now analysed at a more nuanced level.

##### *Paradise: Tacitly Soft and Gentle*

Paradise's faith-based nature is not particularly explicit and, for anyone not fully aware of the faith positioning of the project, somewhat open to conjecture. Adam (P325) supportively described it as 'pretty soft and gentle', whilst Pete (P032), for example, cast doubt on any public perceptions identifying the project as one rooted in faith: 'I think some people, a lot of people probably wouldn't know [that we were faith-based]'.



I consider their faith dynamic as *tacit* being something not always openly expressed, but implied or internally understood. As Dave (P082) puts it, 'Honestly, I think a lot of people maybe aren't even aware of necessarily a faith element with a lot of our work and a lot of our projects'.

However, there are some team members who would like the faith and spirituality aspect of their work to 'be more explicit' (Mark P228). Dave (P086) talked of 'playing around' in his mind the faith positioning of the project as he attempted to reconcile different perspectives and possibilities. Pete (P050) thinks that the absence of an emphasis on the spiritual side of their work 'a slight missing link' hoping that they might do, '... something that involves spiritual exploration ... I'd love to see something like that to grow and develop'. These findings reflect the type of 'experience and ... performance narrative (Vincett et al 2012) referred to in Chapter 3, potentially confirming a shift away from a 'rituals and ... doctrine' (ibid) approach more synonymously associated with traditional expressions of faith and religion.

This renders the faith dynamic of Paradise as a mix of practical work with aspirations for it to be more spiritual; quite why these aspirations are not realised is unclear. What is clear is this approach is a long way from the 'youth ministry' (Ashton 1986; ed. Nash 2011) type work referred to in Chapter 3a.

#### *Nirvana: As Overt As It Needs To Be*

Nirvana's faith dynamic comprises a complex mix of elements demonstrated differently in different contexts. As Ted (N215) puts it, 'I don't believe that the faith side of it is ... necessarily that overt. ... But it's, it's and I don't know if this makes sense, but it's as overt as it needs to be.'

Nirvana CEO, Alan, said he 'wanted the faith of the staff to be real in the sense that it *is what it is* rather than portraying a particular line'. This adds to the sense that their faith typology is not something easily determined – making a simple categorisation challenging. Their *Core Document* states they want their Christian motivation to result in a 'distinctive' that can be seen in their work; this suggests it is an overarching theme rather than a precise typology.

Their typology at organisational level is well defined and coherently understood with a number of positioning papers and documents clearly setting out their position. At operational level, the typology manifests itself differently in different contexts; highlighting how this type of faith-

based work exhibits variability that contextually adapts to the environment within which it operates. Headteacher, Ted (N241) summarises this in his analysis:

... I've seen it [evidence of Nirvana's faith] in assemblies. ... But if you're seeing 'N' talking to a young person then she may be living by that... it's there but it's not too overt is it? It's guiding her possibly ...

In summary, the faith dynamic of Nirvana might be described as covering a spectrum of expressions that are *diaphanous* in nature. The faith element is always there, but sometimes somewhat veiled and not so easy to see. This is not perceived as a negative descriptor, but one that is reflective of a project that is well considered and responsive to contextual circumstances where the faith element can clearly be seen if people look through or past the various veils covering it.

#### *Shangri-La: Latent Underpinning and Conjecture*

Shangri-La's faith dynamic is less organisationally agreed and more open to conjecture with a number of contrasting and diverse views evident. Of note is the absence of any references to *faith* in any of their project literature, website pages or building.

Some interviewees considered the faith element very important; others that it is important but not to be promoted; and others that it is irrelevant. For example, Gavin (S-L013) is 'very careful not to see the centre as a centre that promotes ... in a sense, Christianity' and believes the young people 'recognise that we don't hide our faith, but we also don't push it on them' and that this is 'something that almost allows them to, to take it seriously' (S-L055). Somewhat in contrast, Eve (S-L250) reflects faith is 'not something that's really evident unless they actually know the charity and the organisation' thus highlighting the competing discourses identified through the Venn diagrams previously and reflecting postsecular debates and the type of 'mismatches' alluded to by Davie (2007:1).

Esther (S-L343) seemingly reflects a fluid narrative associated with wider discourses about 'belonging and believing' (Davie 1994) saying about faith:

I think it's there but it's certainly not pushed down anybody's throats that ... I feel because I mean, I'm a Christian but I don't go to church and I'm not, I don't, you know what I mean, I'm not, I wouldn't say I'm a practising Christian in that it plays a big part of my life, but I just think it's more of a family kind of environment than anything and yeah I think faith does come into it and it plays a part. I don't think anything is forced upon anybody.

Gavin (S-L041) differentiates between full and part-time staff perspectives saying:

I think we have a relatively unified understanding at the full-time worker level. I think that understanding is ... not there, or is not the same once we get to the part-time workers. But certainly as a whole charity ... there is definitely not a corporate understanding.

Whilst Sue (S-L170) remarks, 'it's interesting because I think the reason it [the faith element] works is that it's not worn on the sleeve'.

This causes me to describe the faith dynamic of Shangri-La as being *a latent underpinning* to their work: latent, in that it is present and capable of emerging, but more often dormant in form having the potential to achieve expression; underpinning in that it is clearly a foundational element of their work, but not always evident on the surface. In a respondent validation (see Appendix 15), Ivor acknowledged the difficulty in finding the language to describe the faith positioning of Shangri-La, but said he liked my description adding that my analysis 'gets close!'. Whilst he talked of this 'difficulty', I contend he was, in fact, endeavouring to ensure the language of the project and the nature of the work did not jar with secular considerations. I believe he was endeavouring to be faithful to the motivations of the project whilst seeking harmonious relationship across boundaries, thereby resonating with the rapprochement study observations of Cloke and Beaumont (2012).

In summary, it appears the diverse theological beliefs, personal positioning and functional role of the individual influences how the faith-based nature of Shangri-La's work is portrayed, rather than any agreed organisational stance creating a unified and universal presentation.

Even given these variables, the Paradise, Nirvana and Shangri-La cases have a high level of synthesis regarding their faith typologies. They are all motivated by faith and manage to bring their faith and the secular together in the way Habermas (2006) reflexively suggests appropriate. Perhaps inevitably, given the differing and plural contexts of my cases, complete homogeneity is absent as agreed understandings about faith and spirituality and what place these have in practice is contested. However, Valhalla is somewhat discrepant to this synthesis being distinct in its faith typology, being both 'fully modern and fully religious' (Davie 2007:ix). I now analyse their unique position amongst my cases.

### 8.2.5 Valhalla: Explicit and Typologically Discrepant

Valhalla's faith typology is markedly different to the other three cases. Their work is focused upon young people who already have a declared (predominantly Christian or Muslim) faith, and consequently the place of faith is prominent in all their work, project literature, information and publicity. They do not work with young people who might be said embrace a secular-humanist worldview.

Whilst working from a founding Christian faith-base, they are also committed to respecting the religious practices of others. The unique faith positioning of Valhalla needs underlining.

Valhalla's work is clearly very different to work undertaken by secular facilitators as they only work with young people from identifiable faith groups, but do not bias their work toward any one particular group. Alice (V149), who is a Muslim volunteer, portrays this sentiment saying: 'I think they welcome people very well and I didn't feel like I was left out or I felt like "oh they're Christian and I'm Muslim," I just felt the same and they just share everything equally'.

This approach has not been without cost and risks criticism from more dogmatic voices present in faith groupings who might perceive such a position as too compromising and accommodating. In the project's promotional video, Terry talks about it being a 'scary journey' with many external obstacles being apparent to developing bridging and linking social capital.

In order to increase understanding and trust, listening to other people's perspectives and being able to ask questions of them is paramount in their work. Their website summarises their position:

I want to live in a world where people of all colours, languages, cultures and faiths get on and enrich life for those around them. I want to live in a world where I am free and able to love my God and share him with all I meet, and to do this knowing that those I meet have the same opportunities. I want to live in a world free of prejudice and fear and hate. And I want to live in a world defined by grace and compassion and love. And maybe, just maybe, Valhalla is playing a part in building this sort of world.

I, therefore, propose describing the faith element of Valhalla as being *explicit*. As Nina (V212) proclaims, 'whatever the activity is that we are actually doing, we will have some kind of faith-based discussion'. Furthermore, not only is the faith typology very explicit, but it is apparent the overarching interfaith dynamic of the organisation has precedence over any potentially conflicting, individually held and personal faith views:

V013. If we can't get one faith, then we cancel the event even if we've got hoards of one faith ... *Terry*

It would perhaps be expected that a Christian organisation positioned thus would employ only Christian staff, but Valhalla employs workers from other faith backgrounds. They were aware how this might be perceived in some Christian and Muslim circles, but appear to have successfully navigated the complexities of such an approach. It is difficult to imagine how the work could progress in the long-term without the involvement of staff from different faith backgrounds engaging and working with young people of similar backgrounds.

As already referred to, the Muslim workers I interviewed appeared at ease with the Christian background and ethos of Valhalla and, were effectively working within it. Discovering whether this is simply down to their skills and aptitudes is beyond the capacity of this study. It could be that less able staff would yield a more negative analysis, but this would also be the case should a less than able/effective Christian employee be involved.

The work of Valhalla stands or falls by maintaining the prominent place of faith within everything it does. It operates by having high levels of integrity in all that it does, honouring and respecting those who work for it and with whom it works: this is no mean feat.

I conclude that organisationally all the projects are motivated by their faith beliefs. Whilst these manifest themselves differently, at different times and differently in each of the projects they provide a bedrock upon which their work is built.

The projects have typologies that are firmly embedded at an organisational level, but in the cases of Paradise, Nirvana and Shangri-La fluctuate more at practice level. This results in the projects having to manage their operations to avoid undue mission creep and erosion of their core objectives.

Collectively this analysis indicates the place, position and characteristics of faith within the cases is very much at a foundational underpinning level that supports the other floors of my model. Faith provides the base upon which work develops. The extent to which faith appears in all the floors of my model fluctuates across the cases, but it is never in the form of proselytisation. It is more in the reality of doing good where actions speak for themselves.

I now discuss and analyse the significance of the floors in my proposed model.

### **8.3 How Faith-Based Youth Work is Undertaken: An Emerging Hypothesis**

In this section I analyse the prevalence of my original Catholic Social Teaching (CST) a priori construct components before considering a portrayal that embraces the new reciprocal shapes and forms found in my investigation, thereby enabling an emerging hypothesis to be considered.

Section 7.4.4 compared and contrasted my findings with CST a priori constructs. My findings indicated a significant resonance with these, but also identified new conceptualisations. The section ended with a summation that pointed toward an emerging theoretical framework and hypothesis that faith-based youth work:

Exemplifies CST ideas of human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity and seeking the common good whilst helping young people flourish and have life, realise change and transformation, tell their stories and do so by working in mutually beneficial partnerships and endeavouring to be sustainable.

Metaphorically, this summation encapsulates the ground, first floors and roof of my house model and establishes a clear territorial claim for faith-based youth work within the context of the Big Society. I now discuss the significance of each of these conceptualisations.

#### **8.3.1 Human Dignity: The Unconditional Positive Regard for Young People**

I have framed this thesis within an overarching telos of the common good. Underpinning this notions is the belief in human dignity: ‘that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that we are to make every effort to respect that dignity and help each person to flourish’ (Mich 2011:68).

There is a high degree of synthesis in my investigation that this understanding of human dignity is a key value across my cases. Gavin (S-L030) portrays it as:

A belief in all young people ... The unconditional positive regard for young people, the idea that they might mess up on one session, but if they come in next time it’s done, it’s dusted, it’s afresh ... it’s treating them like young adults, not children, not teenagers, not second-class citizens ...

This ‘unconditional positive regard’ is evidenced in how the cases support and ‘serve the human person’ (Charles 1999:15). This human dignity dynamic is so significant in my investigation that I have assigned it a complete metaphorical floor in my model. This is the ground floor in my explanatory model. Metaphorically, it is as if this is the entrance lobby or reception area of my

building through which everything and everybody has to pass – the gathering place which offers access to the other floors of the building. In architectural terms, it is the floor upon which the rest of the building is grounded and constructed: giving structure to how the rest of the building functions. Pictorially this floor is represented as a welcoming space full of opportunity:

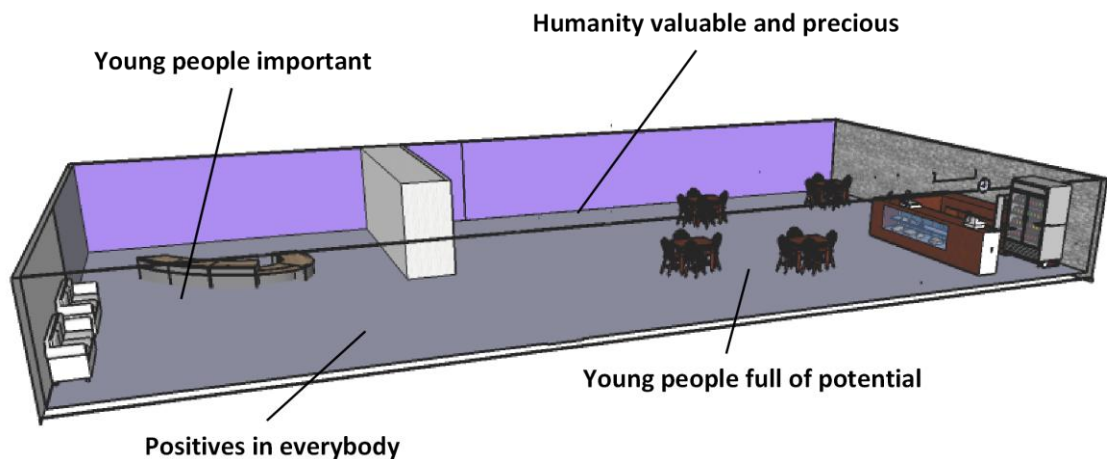


Figure 15. A visual representation of the ground floor of my metaphorical model – human dignity

For Pete (P006) this human dignity consideration is the belief that:

... everyone's born with potential and everyone's born with skills, you know and everyone's born with the opportunity and can achieve something, whereas a vast part of society wants to write a lot of young people off.

For Sean (P135) this sense of preciousness is portrayed as, 'seeing something in everything and everyone. There's always something to be had there, something good, some potential everywhere'. It would appear these sentiments create a grounding from which the work emerges; whereby young people are not seen as entities to be contained or problems to be solved, but as human beings who are in the process of potentially flourishing.

Building on human dignity as the ground floor in my model, my metaphorical first floor consists of a number of philosophical and value-based considerations. Collectively my cross-case synthesis portrays a picture of a floor in my explanatory model that establishes how faith-based youth work operates. These values point toward a series of seven rooms that make up the reciprocal shape floor of my proposed model. Metaphorically, I envisage these as rooms

consisting of the previously described CST elements of solidarity and subsidiarity and five new emerging conceptualised rooms. This is visually represented thus:

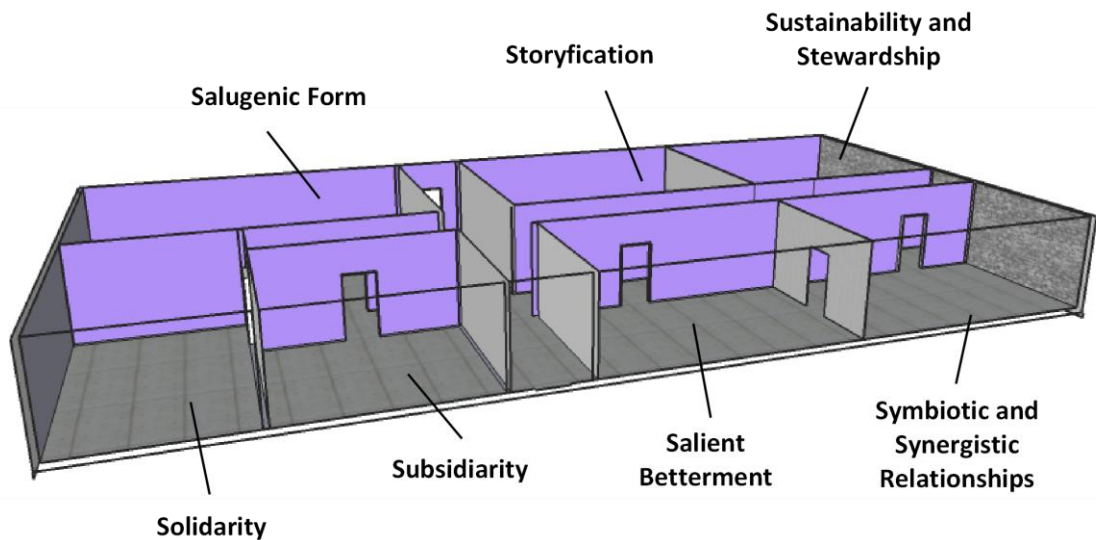


Figure 16. A visual representation of the first floor of my metaphorical model – reciprocal shape

I now analyse and discuss the philosophical shape of these *rooms*.

### 8.3.2 Solidarity: Going the Extra Mile

My investigation indicates that faith-based youth work is committed to the idea of solidarity<sup>278</sup> – what CST author Caldecott (2001:21) calls a ‘sharing of lives’ in ‘horizontal relationships’ to build ‘social unity’. For Eve (S-L232), this is about standing with young people believing things can be better:

I think really serving the young people as best we can so whether it’s ... you know, supporting them, finding a job or with things that are happening at home. I always go back to our tagline as well you know like raising aspirations and releasing potential. Encouraging them to get ... out of their comfort zones and maybe out of the cycle that they think they have to go through because that’s what everybody else does.

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<sup>278</sup> A nineteenth century term that later became widely used following the uprising that led to the overthrow of communism in Poland during the 1980’s. The trade union movement leading the uprising was called *Solidarność* – meaning solidarity. For more details see Mich (2011:200-204).



Drawing on the biblical narrative,<sup>279</sup> Dermot (N113) highlights a sense of reciprocity and places this solidarity across both the individual and collective domains:<sup>280</sup> ‘we will go the extra mile for a young person and for the community’.

This fused individual/communal trait was found in all the cases indicating a holistic approach where faith-based youth work is seen as having benefits for all society; this further supports my a priori construct that solidarity is ‘a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good ... because we are all really responsible for each other’ (Pope John Paul II 1987).

In Chapter 3b, I made reference to Vanier’s understanding of the common good. His thinking is located within the overarching belief this can only be achieved by being ‘inclusive of the needs and gifts of all its members’, so that we don’t ‘systematically exclude segments of our population’ (199:45). Given the previously described propensity to demonise and exclude young people – especially the type of young people served by the cases in my study – such an approach is not without challenge. All the cases respond to this by placing strong emphasis on inclusive approaches, seeking to build horizontal relationships. For example, Nirvana’s Core Document states:

Through putting ... young people’s needs first and not our own personal gain, we will be able to more accurately meet their needs, answer their questions and support them in their choices ...

This type of policy statement reinforces the key values of inclusion, equality and justice found in my investigation embedding ideals of solidarity into their work.

For example, in Valhalla it is very important that young people from all faith backgrounds are valued. This places an importance on community, relationships and bringing people together to meet in safety. It is, however, noteworthy the extent to which these objectives underpin the work of the project and how this work develops community cohesion:

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<sup>279</sup> Under Roman Law soldiers could demand natives to carry their equipment or act as a guide for the distance of one Roman mile. Jesus made a higher call and said people should go two miles if required. See Gospel of Matthew 5:41.

<sup>280</sup> For a discussion regarding mechanical and organic solidarity associated with these types of domain see Durkheim (1893) and Bradford (2012:13).

(V023) I want Muslim kids to come because they feel safe and because they're not threatened and I want a Christian kid to know that they're gonna be safe and not threatened. *Terry*

During one field visit to Shangri-La, I saw a piece of artwork (below) about a Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender awareness week they were running. This was something I have never seen before in a Christian project.<sup>281</sup> I consider it encouraging that they highlighted this and addressed this subject with the young people.<sup>282</sup>



Photograph 1. Shangri-La's lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender display

Clearly there was an acceptance and inclusive philosophy at work in Shangri-La. Sue (S-L172), an external stakeholder declared that this approach had 'blown her away' saying she had:

.. witnessed gay young people ... being affectionate with a partner and that being acceptable in there [the drop-in centre] and that is gobsmacking! That is just fantastic! ... Really deep respect for that.

This was not an isolated example of inclusive practice. Ivor referred to how a local school had suggested to a group of parents that Shangri-La could help a young autistic person make the transition to secondary school. Furthermore, Sean's (P141) assessment typifies the inclusive approaches found and illustrates how these develop social capital:

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<sup>281</sup> My practice experience suggests people often shy away from the subject given its polemic nature in the church.

<sup>282</sup> It should be noted, I did not investigate if such approaches were universal in each of the cases, and I make no claims every case would be inclusive in the ways described here.

Well I think a lot of it is not just giving them something to do but like making young people feel part of something. Certain young people might feel separated from others or, you know, feel like they're on their own and it's about bringing them together.

Ensuring equality of opportunity also appears a high priority in how all the cases operate. This, along with the type of traditional youth work values discussed in Chapter 3a (such as empowerment, informal education and participation) features significantly in how the projects go about their work. For example, Esther (S-L341) believes:

... there's no judgement, they can talk very freely and ... there's a lot of guidance but it's not forced upon them. It's just like throwing ideas to them, it's open for discussion. If they agree they agree, but if they don't, it's a very free place for people to talk which I think it's great.

The prominence of approaches that work toward justice for young people can also be clearly seen across the cases. Sarah is a volunteer at Paradise; in the past she might have been described as a *marginalised young person*, but through the work of Paradise she has fulfilled all the project aspires to achieve in its work. She has literally shared her life with Paradise: attending the project, working for them, gaining a youth work qualification and now serving the type of young people she once was. This gives her first hand experience of what such work can accomplish:

(P264) I think they're a team of good people who see good in young people. A lot of people tend to just brush young people off and think they're not worth the time of day and I think Paradise actually takes these young people and does see good in them and they want them to have a positive future for them.

Having determined the projects are motivated by their organisational founding faiths, rooted in the principles of human dignity and working in ways that reflect the solidarity principles of sharing lives and building social unity, I now consider the place of subsidiarity in the projects.

### **8.3.3 Subsidiarity: A Vested Interest in Working Locally**

I previously adopted Bosnich's definition of subsidiarity (1996:9) as a further a priori construct for my investigation, namely:

... nothing should be done by a larger and more complex organisation which can be done as well by a smaller and simpler organisation. In other words, any activity which can be performed by a more decentralised entity should be.

All my cases reflect this construct: being simply organised, operating locally, empowering others and functioning independently of any centralised control. Even though Paradise and Shangri-La

are part of larger organisations, the management of their work is done at a local and delegated level.

Nearly all the people involved in the projects live in the communities they work in. As Mark (P204) comments, 'this is where I live ... I wanted to work to make this place a better place, the best place it could be.' This gives people like Mark a further reciprocal interest in their work as any successes benefit the community they are a part of. Whilst my investigation did not research the impact of this on those staff and volunteers involved, it might suggest there is a high level of interlinking and relationship between their work, those they work with and their communities that goes beyond professional practice.<sup>283</sup> This scenario is contradictory to that purported by Sercombe<sup>284</sup> where 'clients' and 'workers' are clearly distinct.

This localism has significant resonance with Big Society policy rhetoric, but it does highlight a potential paradox regarding wider Big Society discourses. As aforementioned, the neo-liberal Big Society narrative associated with bidding for contracts and tendering for public service contracts is an example of a challenge to the type of small organisations my cases are. Adam (P321) notes about Paradise that being a local organisation brings both significance and pressure:

I guess one of the things to start with is that on this estate they are effectively the only voluntary organisation here. And that means that their presence is very significant, but also really quite demanding on the people involved in that work and there are all kinds of pushes and pulls that come with that in terms of expectations to doing everything and wanting to try and do everything and a kind of practical need to stay focused within that.

Whilst this local approach is clearly how my cases do their work, such analysis questions the ability of the voluntary sector (and specifically the faith-based sector) to respond to Big Society demands to deliver more services. Ivor used the phrase 'pregnant with potential' (S-L 315) to describe how the Local Authority sees the voluntary sector, but was unsure if the sector had the type of capacity needed to rise to the challenges being proposed to it (S-L318). If Ivor is correct, then the projects investigated might expand but not to the extent that Big Society idealism would like them to.

This capacity dynamic is a further challenge as all the cases endeavour to go about their work in an empowering manner over a potentially long time period. As Amanda (N097) comments:

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<sup>283</sup> My practice experience indicates this approach is not uncommon in faith-based youth work as workers often feel *called* to be, work and live in a tightly defined community.

<sup>284</sup> Discussed in Chapter 3a.

... it's about journeying with young people ... The idea is about coming alongside of the young person and journeying with them for a period of time. And you know supporting them and empowering them, so it's not doing it all for them but actually, 'what can we do to support you and help you .... you know, make good choices?' ...

This approach embraces a purest understanding of subsidiarity. Charles (1999:42) argues it is 'the principle of necessary help, but only necessary help aimed at making [young] persons ... independent again'. This is how the cases go about their work: intervening, supporting and responding to need for as long as required in order to enable a young person to progress to the next stage of their life journey. This impacts the volume of work that can be undertaken as it is time consuming, intense, at times slow and, consequently, expensive in resource terms.

This holistic agenda renders a segmented *payment by results* approach redundant as within this agenda there is no incentive for service providers to address underlying root issues – just specific and surface problems. As Alan reflected in informal conversation: 'You can't put right sixteen years of crap with a thirty minute chat and cup of coffee'.

#### **8.3.4 Common Good: The Culmination of Effort**

Reflecting my *prima facie* definition of the common good, all the cases seek to embrace a telos that develops total conditions that aid human fulfilment – the roof of my metaphorical house model. For example, Alan from Nirvana said in informal conversations that they are 'not looking for approaches that do "check – fix, check – fix". We want to see young people have a quality of life'.

My conclusions in *The Big View* highlighted the need for faith-based work to 'cherish common objectives' (Pimlott 2011b:46) rooted in shared desires for justice, a more equal society, healing and wholeness, the common good and a counter-cultural holistic view of the world. Analysis of my case study findings reflects similar sentiments indicating further congruence and triangulation across my investigation.

Supporting total conditions that are *just* is very important. In Paradise for example, this is expressed in seeking and promoting a better understanding of the young people who live on the estate where they work; thus counteracting some of the negativity associated with that estate so they can 'see young people once "written-off" by society become transformers for change in their community' (Paradise promotional leaflet).

During one field visit I discovered some of their young people had appeared on television following participation in a local art project facilitated by Paradise. Adam reflected for the young people:

... actually seeing themselves and hearing themselves on BBC local TV was actually really quite a positive boost for them and it was a really positive story in terms of the local neighbourhood. So actually that was a positive bit to counter the Daily Mail proclaiming us as the 'seventh most work shy neighbourhood in the country last year' and that kind of stuff.

These sentiments underline a reality that if the total conditions necessary for human fulfilment are to be achieved in work with marginalised young people then not only do their needs require meeting, but also the negative and demonising societal context within which they live also needs addressing.

For Valhalla, this context takes on an additional challenge as they seek to support conditions that embrace the dynamic of standing up for young people from minority faith groups:

(V016) When you get minorities in a school, either a Muslim school with minority other faiths, or you get a large white school with minority Muslims it's not right for those kids to have their faith as one of the things they're teased for and oppressed for and in fact trying to be converted out of. *Terry*

This aspiration of creating environments that promote equality underpins work across the cases as already discussed in Sections 8.3.1 – 8.3.3. This endeavours to enable human fulfilment, healing and wholeness which, in the words of Nirvana, brings 'hope of restoration, reconciliation and transformation' (Nirvana Annual Report 2011).

The already alluded to counter-cultural and holistic narrative (that is time consuming, long-term, and local)<sup>285</sup> achieves the above telos giving young people, in Dermot's (N157) words, 'a light at the end of the tunnel' reflecting the proposition that 'people who do God, do good' (Warsi 2013). This is probably not a *good* determined by policymakers or market mechanisms but more likely by 'social justice and social charity' (Quadragesimo Anno 88 in Charles 1999:76) as portrayed by the findings of my investigation and the foundational faith values of the cases. Bringing together thoughts about CST, the Big society and the failures of statism and capitalism, Glasman (2012:8) argues that 'having pursued bad for three hundred years as a means of

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<sup>285</sup> Further characteristics of this narrative (such as being a pseudo-family, life-enhancing and having symbiotic relationships) are discussed shortly.

achieving good, it might not be such a bad idea to pursue the good more directly'; this is what my cases are seeking to do.

Whilst a high level of synthesis across my cases resonates with my initial a priori construct relating to the principles of CST outlined above, further conceptualisation is required in order to develop a succinct theoretical explanation for the philosophical shape of the type of faith-based youth work I have investigated before the common good can be realised. Section 7.4.4 grouped together the emerging shapes and forms for each of my cases. I have analysed and rationalised these to create a common conceptual language that points toward the adding of five additional elements to those CST aspects previously described. I portray these as *rooms* on this floor of my building model representing:

1. Salugenic Form – embracing positivity, flourishing and thriving life forms found in my investigation;
2. Salient Betterment – describing striking transformation and hope narratives;
3. Storyfication – reflecting the communication, advocacy and branding values;
4. Symbiotic and Synergistic Relationships – noting the significance of partnership working; and
5. Sustainability and Stewardship – acknowledging the importance of funding, money and future expansion plans.

I now establish the significance of these *rooms* discussing the rationale for their inclusion in my emergent hypothesis.

### **8.3.5 Salugenic Form: Fertile Ground in Which to Flourish**

Salutogenesis is a theory developed by Antonovsky (1979) that determines the factors 'that create and support human health and well-being, rather than those that cause disease' (Foot 2010:8).<sup>286</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, this idea has been extrapolated and developed regarding faith-based approaches (Clinebell 1995:83-84; Williams and Holmes 2010)<sup>287</sup> enabling a premise that seeks to see human beings as having what Antonovsky calls a 'sense of coherence' (1979) where:

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<sup>286</sup> For a further discussion of this, see Lindstrom and Eriksson (2005) and Viravong (2007).

<sup>287</sup> For a framework to develop the salugenic, see Clinebell (1995:83-84).

... they have the ability to understand the situation they are in, have reasons to improve their health and have the power and resources – material, social or psychological to – cope with stress and challenges. (Foot 2010:8)

In the faith-based work I investigated, I consider this is how the projects philosophically go about their work. They focus ‘on the resources and capacities that people have’ (ibid) to help them flourish, demanding work and policy are life-affirming and health-bringing. As Ivor (S-L293) notes:

We’re saying that young people given the right support and context ... are aspirational, they are packed full of potential. It’s not trying to put that stuff in, it’s simply trying to create that fertile ground to allow it to come out.

As noted, young people are not seen as problems to be fixed and work is not predominantly undertaken from a deficit position, but rather to quote Sarah (P274) as ‘seeing good in the young people and like, you know, seeing young people thrive’. For Pete (P014) this support for life is evidenced in the belief:

... nobody is lost ... that no young person is beyond support and help ... but believing that every single person has got that opportunity to achieve if they were given the right opportunities.

Nirvana’s declared charitable objectives include the intention to ‘advance life’. This is a phrase that appears to encapsulate the cross-case enlivened approach evident in their youth work. It is also one that reflects the previously referred to socio-cultural animation approach that reciprocally gives breath and life to community education processes (Smith 1999, 2009) further illustrating the strength of the human dignity driver discussed above.

This philosophy of education approach is not part of a ‘banking’ (Freire 1972:48) paradigm but more about helping young people to find their ‘ontological vocation’ and become ‘fully human’ (ibid). This is achieved by creating spaces for them to reflect upon who they are, consider possible alternatives and avoid becoming ‘automatons’ (ibid). This is aptly portrayed when Dave (P064) comments:

... [it’s] about reflection, ... Getting them to think about even if it’s just their local area, their upbringing, their futures ... Just letting them grow in that sense. For me it’s about giving young people, that maybe don’t have those opportunities and those spaces, to do that ...

Collectively this cross-case shape is one that gives the projects a salogenic life-creating dynamic that supports the aspiration to help young people find purpose and meaning by working with



what is already present in their lives.<sup>288</sup> This enables betterment to take place: this is a further element explaining how faith-based youth work is undertaken in my cases. I now analyse the significance of this.

### 8.3.6 Salient Betterment: Making a Difference

(S-L004) As soon as you come across that young person that you think 'I can't make a difference' with them, it's time to stop. I think with that ... in mind it can't help but ... make a difference in people's lives. You have to see it as important otherwise it kind of trivialises someone else's life.

This comment from Gavin illustrates the cross-case finding that all the projects want to make a difference in young people's lives. In the *Perspectives and Lenses* sections of my case studies, interviewees made reference to the concepts of betterment and hope frequently and passionately. Particularly striking was that the language used by interviewees to describe these ideals was about transformation and change not commodification and transactions.<sup>289</sup> Whilst the projects might be engaged in work that was transactionally paid for by state bodies, this was simply a means to deliver the transformational work they were missionally committed to.

Nina (V277 and V278) went further in identifying how her project worked. She differentiated between 'working with the young people helping to bring about change and then for them to take that change to others so to speak' and a managerial paradigm specifically stating, 'we're not about targets and ... things like that, but it's about real changes'. This seemingly puts very clear distance between an approach bringing about clear change and betterment and one more about 'amelioration'<sup>290</sup> (Beck and Purcell 2010:50) or satisfying the type of managerial tick-box agendas discussed previously. Underpinning this form is the belief in *hope* as a philosophical imperative. Sarah (N018) concentrated on describing this in terms of the aims of Nirvana as helping 'people realise hope, help people realise there is ... there can be more for their lives. And just a journey with them as well. Be with them where they are at'.

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<sup>288</sup> Further discussions about this can be found in a paper I delivered to the *British Educational Research Association Youth Studies and Informal Education Special Interest Group Conference*, Ambleside, 2012 (Pimlott 2012a).

<sup>289</sup> For a discussion about the nature of 'transformation and transactions' in the charity sector see, Allcock-Tyler (2012).

<sup>290</sup> Amelioration is about accommodating, making people feel better or making conditions more tolerable in contrast to bringing long-lasting and real transformation.

Pete (P014) also brings together the sense of longevity of approach, transformation and possibility:

... and just kind of being here and sticking it out, being here for the long-term, seeing that change and development is a long-term process. So you kind of ride out the storm and believe that something is, that things are possible, things can happen.

Sean's story helpfully illustrates and analyses how these shapes and forms come together to bring a new sense of life to young people. Sean was a young man who, in his own words, was a bit of a 'bum' (P137). He said (ibid):

I just kind of sank into this "I'm not doing anything". I sat on benefits and didn't really apply myself to anything. So in a way, without making them [Paradise] sound like my big saviours, it kind of gave me something, a direction to move in ...

Paradise engaged, helped, encouraged and supported him; in effect, it appears they almost acted as a *loco-parentis* helping him find a sense of identity, belonging and purpose.<sup>291</sup> Sean said, 'I think the best thing about being involved with Paradise is the real feeling of family and community you get' (P187). He now runs the social enterprise project (selling refurbished bicycles to people on the estate) next door to the drop-in centre where Paradise is based.

It can thus be seen how this betterment approach draws upon a positive view of life and achieves results in the lives of young people. This is in contrast to the pathological, deficit and 'seeing young people as problems to be fixed' approaches previously identified. Whilst I have already made reference to this, its saliency needs underlining.

In my field work visits to Paradise, Sean's story was self-expressed and told by several other people from the project. The significance of such storytelling was apparent in all the cases. I now analyse how this is part of the philosophical shape of the projects.

### 8.3.7 Storyfication: An Opportunity to Be Heard

The projects work hard to ensure the voices and stories of marginalised young people are heard. The intention is not only to get the voices of young people heard but to tell the subsequent stories and outcomes that result from their work to a wider audience. This premise is based on

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<sup>291</sup> This is discussed further in Section 8.4.7 and also in a paper I delivered to the *Social Relations and Human Security Conference*, Coventry University, 2013 (Pimlott2013a).

the belief that young people have important and meaningful things to say that are reciprocally beneficial. Pete (P012) talks of ‘young people ... having their voice heard, expressing themselves, seeing that things are possible, being part of something bigger’ as important and that this gives ‘young people ... an opportunity to become heard which doesn’t happen often’.

This storytelling seeks to convey the aspirational possibilities analysed above highlighting that the journey young people are on can be a positive one. Ivor (S-L293) explains the importance of communicating this in Shangri-La’s work:

Advocating for, and probably the stronger word, ‘celebrating’ the lives of young people. I think we want to be celebratory about ... about young people and countering a lot of the, you know the negativity and stereotypes that we all know exist and do in these communities as well. So we try to ... push the good news stories ‘cos there are good news stories and push the contributions that young people do and are making to their communities.

Whilst achieving this is a real challenge, there is a clear sense the projects are positively journeying with young people, sharing life with them and portraying the resulting stories. From all the observations, interviews and project information gathered, there appears to be a convergence taking place bringing together information about small and incremental realisations of the common good: good news stories that resonate with both Christian faith goals and wider communication objectives and the portrayal of journeys about the transformative outcomes witnessed by the projects. Whilst no one specifically vocalised these ideas using this language, the following quotation from Sean (P156) exemplifies such sentiments:

I really like it [the art project] because it shows that young people ... are doing something. Instead of getting this bad press of just causing trouble, they’re working together to put something together that’s displaying a message and I really like that, its bringing young people together trying to break that bad publicity they get, and the message it portrays, I really like that.

The strong branding and identities of the cases identified in my investigation enables the stories to be told with added clarity and increased exposure. Whilst the motivation for this is no doubt partly driven by the need to attract support, resources and a passionate desire to develop and further expand their work, it also has the benefit of communicating positive stories about young people.

Wider discourses associated with this storyfication philosophy can also be identified in work that stratifies the shape and form of the cases. Eve (S-L248) conceives this is about enabling the community to publically ‘see young people in a positive light. You know, we’ve done art work for

the Council which is up by the library'. For Valhalla an opportunity to appear on the television programme *Songs of Praise* helped convey some of their core inclusion and equality values that seek to combat negative stereotypical views of Muslims and Christians. Whilst for Mark (P236) there was a personal political discourse that connected, in a manner similar to that previously discussed, his work where he lived and positive community development actions as he sees 'that this place is like a forgotten place and I feel like that any sort of positive attention, media attention is going to be a good thing'.

To sum up, telling the stories about the young people and the work done with them is an important aspect of how the projects go about their work. Across the cases this appears to be a way of illustrating their values, portraying their successes, raising resources and promoting the virtue of their approaches. This does not imply that such storyfication is designed to manipulate the media or potential supporters, but rather that any such outcomes are a somewhat natural consequences of the philosophy.

### **8.3.8 Symbiotic and Synergistic Relationships: In This Together**

Symbiosis is the long-term mutually beneficial interaction between two or more individuals or organisations. In talking about Nirvana's relationship with his school, Ted (N203) said, 'there's a nice symbiotic link between the school and the organisation. Yeah, it's [the partnership] very important in that regard'.

This sentiment seems to sum up the importance of partnerships and relationships across all the cases. These relationships seem to go beyond contractual obligations being more than a means to an end. Partnerships appear to have moved into the realms of genuine reciprocal symbiosis and mutuality which at times has resulted in the development of close personal friendships and furtherance of all parties' work.<sup>292</sup> This work takes place against a mutual synergy of visions and concern for young people.

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<sup>292</sup> Further discussions about this can be found in a paper I delivered to the *British Educational Research Association Youth Studies and Informal Education Special Interest Group Conference*, Ambleside, 2012 (Pimlott 2012a).

Critics<sup>293</sup> would suggest that religious groups do not always work well with others and have a history of conflict. No evidence of this was found in my cases. This might be explained by the fact that the place of faith found in most of the cases was not particularly explicit thus rendering it less of a problematic issue. However, there is a firm belief more can be done with others than can be done alone. Indeed in describing Shangri-La's Business Plan Ivor (S-L294) explained that:

We deliberately geared it in such a way that the projects can't maximise their potential and their full capacity without partnership working. That's in the design brief and the DNA of what we're about.

Such a philosophy demands, as Ivor (S-L308) further explains, 'a really proactive' approach where 'rather than just sitting waiting for people to come' to them they go out and engage others. Najeed (V095) also does this using his 'very good relationship(s) with bodies and councillors and the City Council' and by having a value-set that says, 'let's share some of the resources that we have especially in this climate now resources are very scarce'. As a consequence of these approaches and their partnerships, the projects appear to occupy a bigger space and place than they might otherwise do were they to operate purely on their own.

This outcome and analysis resonates with the conclusions of *The Big View* (Pimlott 2011b:45) that suggested: 'It is clear that there is a vast amount of resource in the faith-based youth work world. This should be shared to avoid duplication, competition and territorial positioning and attitudes'. Therein, it would appear my case studies model the propositions of my scoping studies.

There is a cross-case trait present suggesting these partnerships are based upon strong individual personalities and relationships rather than organisational symbiosis. Consequently, the risk is that if these personalities move on from their current roles or the relationships breakdown, the effectiveness of the partnerships might diminish. Even if this is the case, I consider it better to have the benefits that accrue from such relationships however temporary they may be, rather than not have them at all. From the evidence available it appears where these relationships do exist they are synergistic and long-standing because the personalities involved are committed to their work, their communities and young people. As previously referenced, Rudge (2011:11) argues, 'what happens on the ground is often as much about the quality of relationships: the care provided, the concern expressed, the long-term familiar face'.

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<sup>293</sup> See, for example, Harris (2006).

This sentiment would certainly seem to be true in my cases where for Ted (N213), for example, partnerships are ‘fundamentally ... an absolute priority’.

Such symbiotic partnerships are not stand-alone entities. In common with the other metaphorical rooms that make up the shape of my cases they combine to present a synergised portrayal about how faith-based youth work undertakes its work. One final element emerging from my analysis is now considered: sustainability and stewardship values.

### **8.3.9 Sustainability and Stewardship: Uncertainty and Possibility?**

In terms of a philosophy and value-base, this sustainability and stewardship metaphorical room is perhaps the most conceptually ambiguous, practically uncertain and fluid yet, the single most important philosophical element regarding how the projects exist. In short, unless this room is in place the building collapses.

Whilst my general practice experience indicates that funding faith-based youth work has always been a challenge, the current austere economic climate has made it particularly difficult. As Sue (S-L162) comments, ‘I think that the future for youth provision in this area is dire’. The issue of how the projects were funded was ever-present in conversations. For example, when asked what she would change about Nirvana, Amanda (N145) said:

I think I would give it a good four or five years of no funding worries to free up people’s time and energy to do more ... more kind of exciting things, more innovative things, more ‘where do we want to be going?’ As opposed to having to spend time worrying about the funding and how it’s going to work and redundancies and those kind of things.

Shangri-La staff had all taken a pay cut in order to avoid anyone being made redundant. Paradise and Nirvana had ended some work, and Valhalla had made over sixty funding applications in recent months. Despite these factors all the cases wanted to significantly expand their work. For Gavin (S-L071), ‘more money would allow us to do more things heavily subsidised or for free, which would allow us to serve more young people’.

Whilst these aspirations for certainty and sustainability resonate with my own ideals, they appear highly optimistic unless there is a paradigm shift in how the cases are funded and resourced. The reality is they need external funding in order to do what they do in the way they do it and at the level they do it at. My practice experience suggests that models of *youth ministry*

previously described might be more sustainable as they tend to be internally resourced by churches rather than externally funded.

This raises the question as to whether these types of projects can ever survive and be sustainable without external resources supporting them. For some, the new resourcing culture emerging from *Third Way* and Big Society funding agendas provides a fresh opportunity to resource their work. As Mandy (S-L141) explains:

I think the work we do and the opportunities we offer young people are brilliant ... I think there is a chance for us to move on and to move out ... and to expand more ... There is loads of opportunities ... for us and I think once this [commissioning] pot of money becomes available we're gonna have to dip into that and rethink our future. 'Cos there is scope for us to move on and to take over other places, you know and provide more youth work ...

This analysis could be interpreted cynically and a conclusion reached that the cases want others to pay for what they do, but not control how it is done. Equally, funding and expansion agendas might be viewed as being about greed, increasing power and dominance in the marketplace and supporting inflated egos. I found no evidence in my investigation to support such a view. The other elements set out in this analysis point to a different conclusion: namely one that is about helping young people flourish and mutually realising the common good – not personal gain at the expense of others. In this sense, the cases studied exemplify the type of virtuous Big Society characteristics advocated by Blond (2010) and Millbank (2011b).

This summation is given added credence because it is clear from my investigation that being sustainable and a good steward does not involve just economic considerations. It also involves embracing the objectives of ensuring the pursuit of the common good is spiritually, environmentally and socially sustainable, embracing the maxim of *primum non nocere* (first, do no harm) in a way that makes best use of all resources and makes explicitly prominent an 'option for the poor' (Pope John Paul II 1991) and the marginalised. For example, one of the metaphors used by a staff member to describe Paradise was of 'building blocks – of character, leadership, personal and social development, spiritual awareness, change-making and journeying with young people' which come together to support marginalised young people and realise the project's strapline.

For flourishing to effectively take place in a manner that builds the common good, perhaps the type of multiple bottom line proposed by Chalke (2011) needs consideration. In speaking about

children, young people and the Big Society, he asserts that approaches need to embrace the 'social, moral, spiritual, physical, emotional, academic, vocational, economical and environmental' if they are to be considered worthy. This sentiment has symmetry with my findings and cross-case analysis making it a helpful triangulating conceptualisation. However rather than these dynamics being the bottom-line assessment of how work is assessed, I would argue they need to be the pillars upon which work is built thus helping avoid any bifurcations and conflicts.

The significance of how work is sustained and stewarded needs underlining. It is an unceasing challenge that ebbs and flows almost on a daily basis. Whilst across the projects there are creative, enterprising and self-sacrificing responses to resourcing challenges, it is also clear inadequate resourcing and the consequences of this sap energy, lower moral and reduce capacity.

### **8.3.10 The Shape of Faith-Based Work is Values-Driven and Reciprocal**

*The Big View* (Pimlott 2011b:44) recommended that:

Faith-based youth work needs to be facilitated from a values-driven perspective. Such work should be envisaged, planned, undertaken and evaluated against these values irrespective of Government and other external policy agendas and outcome expectations.

Whilst it might be argued policy agendas always bring an influencing threat and pressure, I conclude the cases studied here mainly manage to achieve a values-driven approach that is reciprocal. There is always something mutually given and received as work is undertaken.

This first, *philosophical shape*, floor is metaphorically built upon the principle of seeing each young person as a unique and valued human being (ground floor), which in turn is built upon an organisational faith-motivated foundation. I now discuss the second floor of my model – the prospective intentions of what faith-based youth work pedagogically does – before drawing together my analysis to present my explanatory model for faith-based youth work in the Big Society.



## 8.4 What Faith-Based Youth Work Does: A Theoretical Framework

In this section, I analyse the intentions of faith-based youth work in order to offer a theoretical framework describing what faith-based youth work does: the second metaphorical floor in my explanatory model for faith-based youth work. This will establish a clear rationale for such work addressing criticisms that pedagogically such work is ambiguous. In terms of my house metaphor, I propose that this floor might be described as a series of *open-plan* rooms where one element/room flows into another. Pictorially, the second floor of my model would thus look like:

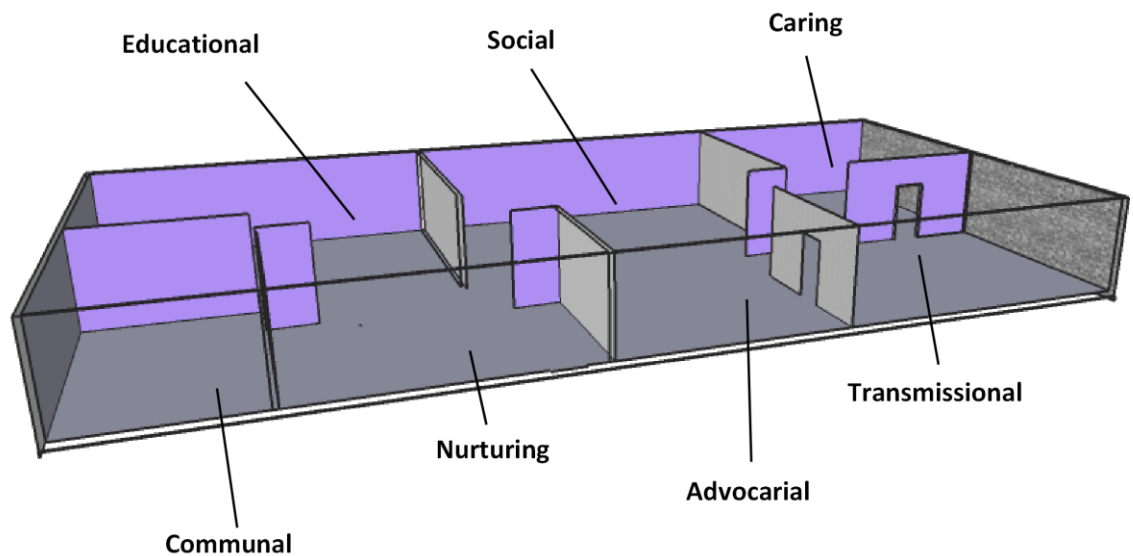


Figure 17. A visual representation of the second floor of my metaphorical model – prospective intentions

I firstly analyse the pedagogical approach taken by my cases, before exploring the significance of social pedagogic models and my third metaphorical floor: transformation.

### 8.4.1 An Inter-Woven Matrix and Wider Conceptualisation

The findings of my investigation relating to the prospective intentions of what faith-based youth work does (set out in Chapter 7) concluded with the belief that a broad conceptualisation was required to establish what my cases do. I considered a theory developed by Doyle and Smith (2002) might portray what faith-based youth work is and does. Given my review of potential definitions of youth work and faith-based approaches, my contextual analysis and research

findings, this spectrum orientated model does not offer a rationale that both defines contemporary faith-based youth work and provides a theoretical premise and pedagogical schema. Whilst the literary conceptualisation of Doyle and Smith was a helpful a priori construct, it fails as a conceptualisation capable of embracing all the intentions factors present.

Faith-based work encompasses too many interacting and overlapping variables that cannot be contained within such tightly defined groupings. Doyle and Smith's<sup>294</sup> literary categorisations are not an adequate descriptor, and the suggested progressive deterioration from education type work to evangelism is not supported by my findings; no reference is made to the important drivers and perhaps more recent and emergent practice developments associated with social action, advocacy, community development and citizenship type work. For example, Mandy (S-L087) illustrates the diversity and interconnecting nature of the work undertaken:

We cover lots of bases, we do issue-based stuff you know: the drugs, sexual health, alcohol and as well as you know such as the Star Wars day on Friday, we do cooking, we celebrated Roald Dahl throw a bit of literature in there. It's fun. It's informal education in't it? That's what it is. It's fun and they're learning you know. We also do things on careers, and if they come in and they've got an interest in something we can try and expand on that, go on the computer, find out information for 'em and just try and help and support them in their choices.

The lack of depth and insight in my original a priori construct falls short of providing a suitable vehicle to fully explore the difficulties outlined previously regarding the nature and definition of faith-based youth work. My data transforms these a priori elementary categories and their relationships, whilst endorsing some of the timeless values of youth work identified in Chapter 3a.

I portray my emerging hypothesis regarding the philosophical shape of how faith-based youth work operates as a series of rooms on the first floor of my proposed model. Similarly, my theoretical framework defines what contemporary faith-based youth work does as a series of elements. I contend these are more interconnected and consist of the following elements:

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<sup>294</sup> i.e. formation and education, informal education, pastoral care, youth ministry and evangelical youth work.

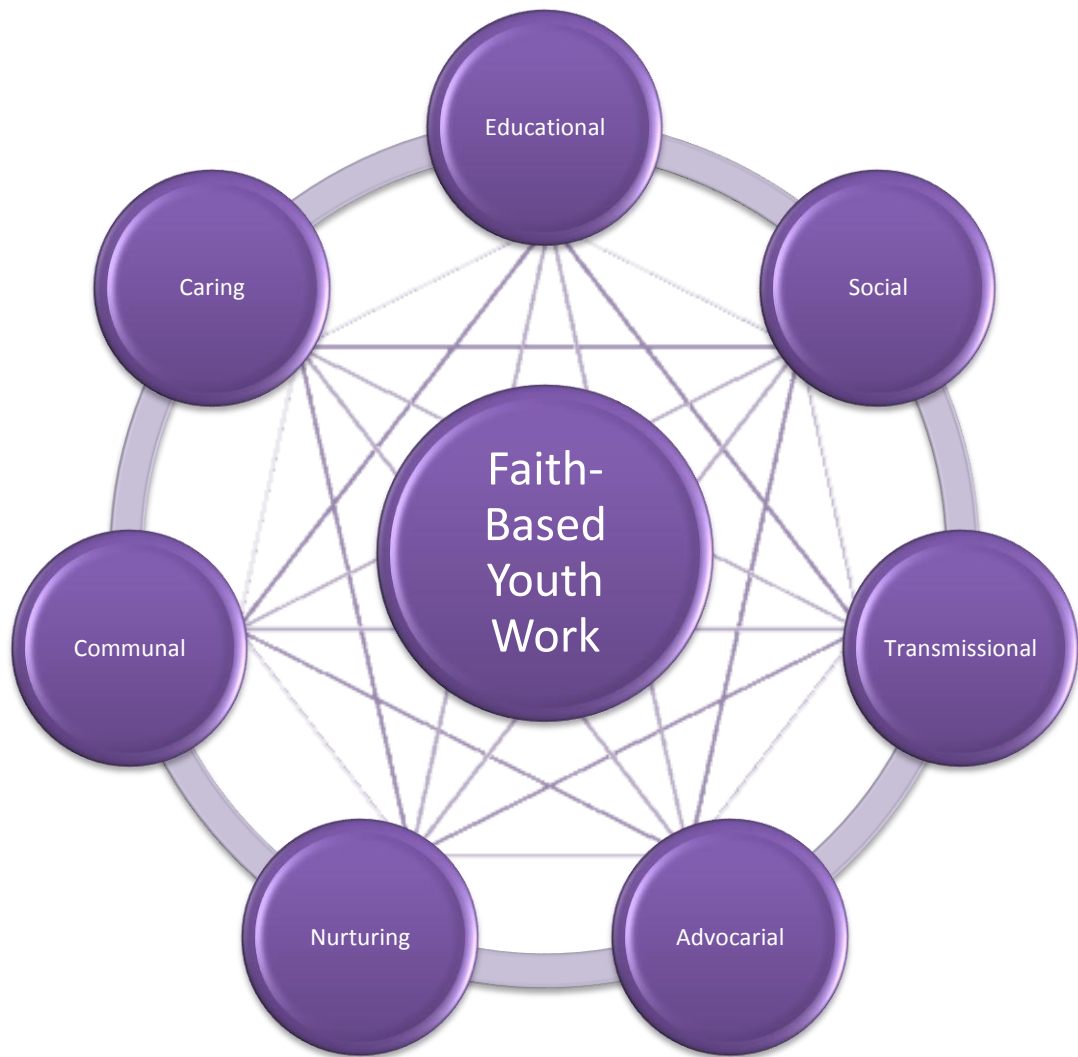


Figure 18. My matrix of prospective intentions of faith-based youth work

This interconnected matrix establishing what my cases do is reflective of the complex mix of activities undertaken by them. A complete discussion of all these parameters is not possible within the space allowed in this thesis. Whilst a full cognitive analysis of all these considerations has been undertaken, my discussions here are confined to the points I consider the most significant with focus being afforded to those which illuminate my findings and inform my

explanatory model for faith-based youth work. For ease of reference, I take each element in turn.<sup>295</sup>

#### 8.4.2 Educational

In Chapter 3a I referred to a ‘pedagogical identity crisis’ in faith-based youth work. Whilst in one sense my data supports this assertion, in another it is an irrelevance to my cases. Whilst helping educate young people is at the forefront of what the projects do, it would appear my cases do not fit into any tidy compartmentalised educational frameworks.

They undertake formal education, informal education, formal education in informal settings and informal education in more formal settings. However, these are rarely the labels they use to describe what work they do. They are much more about an aspirationally nurturing pedagogy that uses whatever methods are necessary to help develop young people’s education and support their development in order to bring about change. There is no formulaic or pre-determined curricula response to achieve these objectives – more a highly responsive and dynamic rationale. For example, one of Nirvana’s team members described the project as being like a ‘squid’ that was ‘moving forward with tentacles going off in all directions but all helping move forward in the same direction’.

It would appear traditional pedagogical boundaries of work have been broken down and, whilst the aforementioned informal education values are still held, these do not prevent cross-disciplinary working. Consequently, I conclude the type of educational work done by my cases is flexible, adaptable and contextually responsive to the environment and young people concerned.

#### 8.4.3 Social

In Chapter 7 my findings portrayed the work done by my cases was relationally rooted, represented a space and place that was safe and homely, and supported the development of community and social cohesion, social capital and presented opportunities for social action and public benefit. Collectively these ‘*being there* modality’ (Baker 2012b) actions help young people

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<sup>295</sup> In so doing I do not imply any particular element is more important or prominent than any other.

flourish and work toward Volf's (2011:78) idea that helps '*mend the world* and serve the common good'.

In his work, Najeed (V071) portrays this as being:

... about your faith, exploring faith and then there's creating friendships, which is a key element to anything and everything and then there's just changing lives which comes naturally as things progress.

Any claim this happens 'naturally' is probably overstated as it is very apparent everyone involved in my cases works very hard to support the social dynamic of their pedagogies. Mark (P200) suggests this is not a passive process saying, 'I would say that it is long-term relationship based, trying to raise young people's aspirations and maybe challenge their lifestyle as well'.

All the projects fulfil the *Associational Life* a priori construct (Edwards 2009). The following quotation<sup>296</sup> from a Muslim visitor to a Valhalla fundraising event illustrates this in a manner that points toward developing citizenship, community cohesion and social capital:

I found my time spent with Valhalla a rewarding one as the feeling of being welcomed was there from the start. It was refreshing to see that colour, creed or accent was not a showstopper .... It was very evident that the younger participants who helped organise the event were clearly on the right path for social inclusion and becoming better citizens.

For Amanda (N129), citizenship is not an 'aim as such', but rather 'one of the benefits'. This contrasts with the governmentality approach of the NCS, where citizenship is very much the aim. This fact distinguishes the work of the cases I have investigated with that of the NCS. Whilst the outcome might be the same (i.e. citizenship), how this is achieved is very different in the social empowerment approach employed by my cases compared with the shaping and 'managing of conduct' (Bulley and Sokhi-Bulley 2012:4) approach employed by government.

I would summarise this genre by making further reference to Vygotsky's ideas of 'Zone of Proximal Development' (1978:86) and scaffolding.<sup>297</sup> I consider the youth focused relationships found in the projects' work pedagogically seek to enhance young people's development and independent problem-solving by furthering their understanding and by providing appropriate guidance and constructing safe, accessible and life-supporting structures.

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<sup>296</sup> Quotation taken from their website.

<sup>297</sup> See, Footnote 222 re: 'scaffolding'.

#### 8.4.4 Transmissional

As already noted, *faith* is present in my cases in a variety of ways. There is no evidence of proselytisation in my cases and limited degrees of programme content specifically about faith or religion.<sup>298</sup> However, a desire from the Christian or Muslim staff to represent and transmit the values and teachings of their faith appears to be pedagogically present, albeit in varying degrees of clarity and obviousness. The extent to which young people equate these values and teachings with the faiths concerned (the Valhalla case excepted) is uncertain because of the previously discussed lack of explicit religious associations.<sup>299</sup>

This pedagogical narrative has two elements to it: firstly, a spiritual development intention that appears to be more reactive than proactive whereby if the young people ask questions or want a discussion about spiritual or faith matters then one takes place. Sarah (N038) describes this highlighting what she calls the ‘tension and struggle’ of this approach:

... we don't try and push our faith on people but we are very open about who we are. We don't hide who we are from the start so I think most of us get that balance right. It is a tension and it is a struggle but I think we say who we are so, therefore if people come to us for help and they know who we are then they're choosing to engage with us in that way and they're allowing us to engage with them, but we don't ... shove it down their throats.

Secondly, an ‘*alternate* modality’ (Baker 2012b) dynamic that models faith teachings via acts of service, promotion of social justice and an approach to life that might be considered counter-cultural and agitating whereby the status quo is challenged. This is part of the functional mechanism that works toward the prospective outcome of helping young people flourish and develop.

With the exception of Valhalla, however, there remains an unresolved issue regarding the detailed pedagogical intention of *faith* in my cases; it is clearly a factor, but further investigation with the young people actually involved in the projects is required to disseminate how this is fully understood and implemented.

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<sup>298</sup> This being confined to the general work of Valhalla and requested input into local schools by Nirvana.

<sup>299</sup> For a discussion about this dynamic under the title *Love is Not Enough*, see Collins-Mayo et al (2010).

#### 8.4.5 Advocarial

The advocarial nature of what the projects do in their work is orientated around the themes of speaking up for young people, campaigning about specific political issues and seeking justice for those they work with and on behalf of.

As can be seen from my discussions above regarding storyfication and speaking up for the marginalised, this element is both a philosophical shape and a pedagogical function.

Furthermore, the political campaigning is not party politically oriented *per se* but appears more motivated by the type of thinking associated with the previously discussed CST narrative,<sup>300</sup> prompted by a quest for justice and rooted in a human dignity ideal.

All the cases were involved in politicking and campaigning type work, but, as mentioned in Chapter 7, this seems to be a natural consequence of their work rather than any specific strategic intention. Whilst some faith-based youth work emphasises the political pedagogical element of their work,<sup>301</sup> my cases do not although they are clearly undertaking it. Perhaps prejudices affecting young people, for example Islamophobia (Khan 2013:132-134) and anti-Semitism (Kadish 1995:123-126), have necessitated such an emphasis for others, but not so for Christian-based work.

*The Big View* (Pimlott 2011b:45) recommended:

... that faith-based groups don't just sit back and do nothing about the Big Society. There is an opportunity for campaigning, community organising and continually presenting positive views about young people and the work that is undertaken.

The cases studied undertake this type of positive response. Whilst this might not be because of the Big Society, it is further evidence of triangulation across my investigations.

#### 8.4.6 Nurturing

The significance of raising and realising young people's aspirations and engendering a sense of hope in their lives has already been noted; however it needs further underlining as a key

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<sup>300</sup> This is not to suggest any of the cases are connected to the Catholic Church or would necessarily identify with this analysis without further explanation and clarification.

<sup>301</sup> For example, the Muslim Youth Work Foundation has as its strapline: 'creating safe spaces for Muslim young people to explore personal, social, spiritual and *political* choices'. See [www.mywf.org.uk](http://www.mywf.org.uk)

pedagogical strand in the case's work. This endeavours to help young people develop and realise their potential so they can flourish and thrive. As Dave (P064) confirms:

For me it's giving young people who are maybe written off by other people that chance and opportunity to experience something different, to give them different choices and hopefully guide them into making the right choice.

It is important to also note any definition of what is meant by flourishing is not restricted to what Volf (2011:56) calls a 'prevalent contemporary western understanding' located in material gain and individualism (Longley 2012). It is rather, to use Amanda's (N107) words, orientated around a sense that 'people have value in and of themselves'; whereby the projects nurture and 'want to see that transformation, we want to see that hope, we want to see that life brought into other people's worlds in a very practical way'.

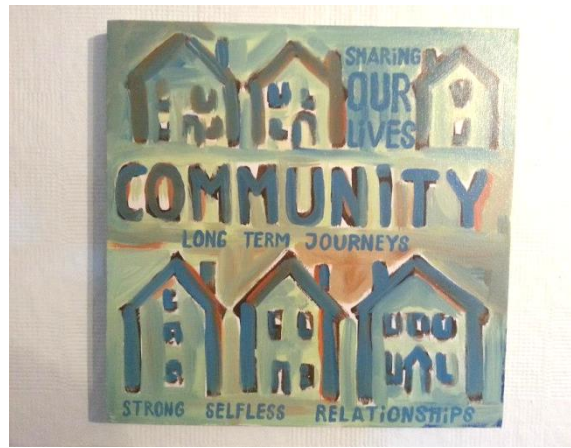
By nurturing aspirations and creating opportunities for action the cases develop the previously discussed *Associational Life* portrayed by Edwards and make possible development of the common good.

#### **8.4.7 Communal**

This pedagogical strand brings together a number of previously considered elements, namely: the family environment present in the cases, the community social action undertaken and the inclusive approaches evident.

The much quoted 'we are all in this together' (Cameron 2010b) political soundbite has been deployed to encourage a Big Society shared response to addressing current economic challenges. Irrespective of how this is interpreted, my cases appear to be very much 'in this together' as they embody a communal and collective pedagogy. Described as 'journeying in relationship with young people' by Sarah (N008) and reflected in the picture from Nirvana below, it appears a family, community and belonging environment is conceived to meet the needs of young people. This environment enables interventions to take place by workers in ways that focus on future possible prospects rather than past deficiencies. As Sarah (N008) concludes, it helps young people 'realise that there is hope for them'.





Photograph 2. Nirvana – piece of reflective art in their offices

This communal approach is fun, safe, inclusive and intercultural; thus pointing towards a sense of citizenship and community development that is about thriving in the broadest sense. It is not in any narrow manner associated with the previously considered deficit and compensatory approaches, but in a way that Mark (P212) says is about getting ‘this place going’ and building ‘community here’ so that it is a place ‘where people want to come’.

#### 8.4.8 Caring

Meeting the needs of marginalised young people is centre stage in all that the cases do. It appears this approach is rooted in the aforementioned organisational faith-motivations and belief in human dignity and the compassion of those carrying out the work.

Pedagogically, it might be perceived such a meeting of needs is little more than a deficit or compensatory approach to the circumstances of the young people. However, I consider that there is a clear distinction between a deficit/compensatory approach that, to re-quote Alan (see Section 8.3.4), is about ‘check-fix, check-fix’ and then moves on and an approach that is endearingly about, to quote Ted (N205), ‘the care for the individual, you know, compassion, time, focus on the needs of the young person’.

The deficit approach focuses on the past and tries to correct the problem. The caring approach focuses on the present and looks for a solution that empowers the young person for the future.<sup>302</sup> Dermot (N163) encapsulates this saying:

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<sup>302</sup> For a further discussion about these distinctions, see Bryderup and Frørup (2011:91-95).

... there is always going to be someone or some group of young people where help and support is needed. I guess ultimately what you're trying to do is do yourself out of a job. ... So ultimately that's your goal. But it's also to do with being there as and when the need arises isn't it?

I had a strong impression the people involved in delivering this type of work are people who care. It was heard in their voices as they spoke with great emotion about what they do and why they do it. In the previously discussed 'paid by results' and commodification culture it is not about caring: it is about being driven by market forces and getting paid to fix a problem. I am not saying that those involved in such work do not care about the people they work with, but ultimately that is not what they are there to do; they are there to address a problem, resolve it and be paid for it before moving onto the next problem.

Whilst the managerial outcomes of these two approaches might *prima facie* be the same, the motivation and pedagogic relationship behind them is different. One is very much focused on a short-term intervention that brings about a change, and when that change is realised the working relationship ends. The other is about a long-term commitment to a person built upon trust that takes time to develop, and is focused on the social context of the young person and their general well-being. I would assert that this latter approach promotes a social capital building dynamic that, in turn, develops cohesion and notions of community – trumping any such outcomes found in commodified approaches.

#### 8.4.9 A More European Social Pedagogy?

Thus, it would appear that the pedagogical approach of my cases would seemingly have much in common with the holistic, personal and continental European social pedagogic approach to youth work described by Petrie et al (2009) and Cameron and Moss (eds. 2011).

In Chapter 3a I noted that Cameron and Moss (ibid:9-10) consider such a pedagogy to be:

- a broadly educational role that is holistic;
- socially concerned with the individual, the group, the community and society;
- rooted in relationships;

- committed to inclusiveness;
- confronting of social problems; and
- showing solidarity with the marginalised.

My cases seemingly reflect this pedagogy offering a gateway to new theoretical understandings of this type of faith-based work.

In summary it can be seen the actual work undertaken by the projects is founded upon a faith-motivation progressing through the human dignity, reciprocal shape and prospective intentions floors of my projects towards a realisation of the common good. Indeed, I consider the term *faith-motivated* is perhaps a more accurate descriptor than the hitherto used *faith-based*. Reflexively I would have expected *faith-based* work to more explicitly celebrate religious rituals, festivals and rites of passage and encompass a more ministerial or chaplaincy dynamic in its work. Where work is based upon faith or has a ministerial function this is seemingly at the behest of the individual worker's faith beliefs.

Pedagogically the cases do what they say they are about in their straplines and mission statements. However their pedagogical intentions do not separate into neatly compartmentalised elements of a curriculum, but rather exist as an interconnected matrix. Each of the seven individual strands I have considered interlinks with the grounding and philosophy floors discussed previously. The following quotation from Pete (P008), who is talking about the fundamentals of Paradise's work, illustrates how these elements exist and work together:

So I think there's ... things like resurrections, opportunities for redemption, opportunities for change, things like justice. So kind of just big picture, some of the real big picture, quite loose stuff, hard to pin down. Some of the fundamental, whether it's words, whether it's themes, that you can hopefully see in individual lives and in communities. Things changing, things happening. Whether it's forgiveness, whether it's broken relationships that are restored and you know, whether that's on a one-to-one level or on a community-to-community, faith-to-faith, people-to-God, you know, kind of restoring those relationships.

*The Big View* (Pimlott 2011b:45) conclusions suggested work with young people needed 'to be intentional in its strategic development, focus and operation'. In terms of triangulating my cross-case findings, I consider this is achieved by my cases. However whilst their work appears to avoid the much criticised 'tick-box' culture, they do not always operate within the proposed ideals of informal education and faith objectives. Whilst it is evident these considerations have

influence, they do not exclusively do so. The mix of pedagogic elements is much more a matrix of diverse intentions.

#### 8.4.10 Transformation

The third and final floor of my model represents the outcomes of the work undertaken by my cases. This metaphorical floor recognises the work of the projects is about bringing change and transformation by journeying with young people for the long-term. My data indicates this is rooted in developing a sense of hope and aspiration: evidenced by stories of individuals flourishing thereby leading to a greater realisation of the common good. Floor three of my model might thus be presented as an open, less structured and defined space:

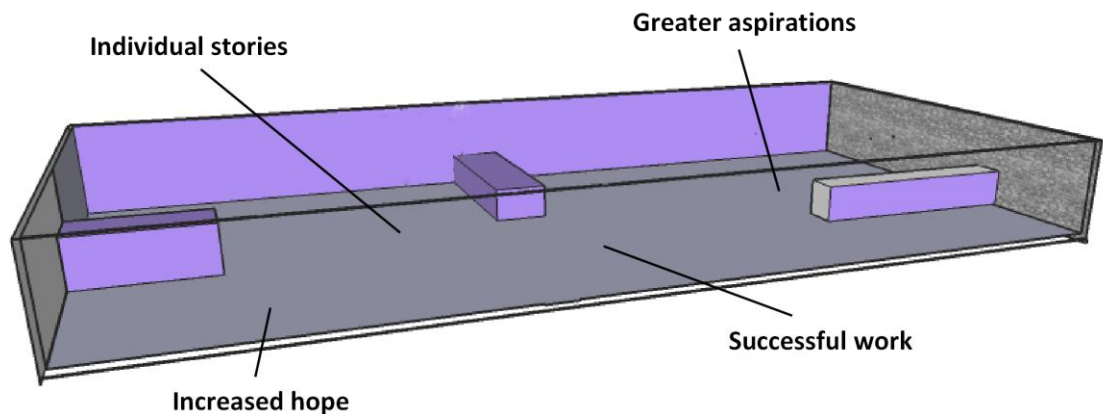


Figure 19. A visual representation of the third floor of my metaphorical model – transformation

It has not been the intention of this investigation to appraise or evaluate the extent of this transformation – this would need to be a self-contained additional study involving the young people in the projects. Whilst recognising that for the projects being successful is sometimes difficult to define and assess it is also clear that if their reflections, reports, stories and portrayals are to be accepted at face value, they then are successful in what they do.<sup>303</sup> Consequently, I do not propose further analysis of this floor in my study other than to note it is this floor that

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<sup>303</sup> I would contend there is sufficient evidence in my data (for example media reports, personal stories, web articles and social media references) to make such a case and, that the continuance of funding support and partnership work indicates significant outcomes are being achieved.

provides the practice evidence that links my previous discussions with the common good and wider societal benefits. For example, Sarah (N058) illustrates this saying Nirvana's work:

... has an impact on the wider society because the young people, say we're working with young people with anti-social behaviour, ... or anger management with young people – that has an impact when they're in society. ... if they've worked through an Anger Management class ... and they're less angry, then that's gonna impact their wider community and society they're living and working in.

In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I have presented and analysed my study findings and demonstrated how these address the aims of my investigation as set out in Chapter 1. I have considered the significance of the Big Society notion and, the place of faith in my cases and, examined the philosophy, pedagogy and outcomes of the work they do. I have identified a series of metaphorical floors that conceptually and theoretically explain faith-based youth work in the Big Society. Furthermore I have done so by discussing ways in which the findings of my literature and contextual review in Chapter 3 have addressed the fluid, multifaceted and contested discourses to offer new insights and perspectives. I now set out how all these elements conceptually come together to establish a new explanatory model for faith-based youth work.

## Chapter Nine

### 9. An Explanatory Model: Bringing the Floors Together

In this Chapter I draw together the conceptual and empirical elements of my investigation and set out my explanatory model for faith-based youth work in the Big Society. This model portrays the place of faith in the cases studied, my emerging hypothesis about *how* faith-based youth work operates and my theoretical framework considering *what* faith-based youth work does as it helps young people flourish in pursuit of the common good. These elements combine to present, review and critique a new and original contribution to knowledge in the form of an explanatory model.

#### 9.1 My Explanatory Model

As previously determined, my investigation establishes a series of metaphorical floors. These cement together to form a metaphorical house built upon a faith-motivation with a ground floor that is located in a belief of human dignity; a set of philosophical values that shape and form a first floor; a series of pedagogical intentions and functions making up a second floor; a set of transformative outcomes making up the final floor with a roof representing the realisation of the common good.

Thus when the components of my model are brought together not only are these determinations evident, but it can be seen how my model visually answers my overarching research questions to portray a representation of faith-based youth work in the Big Society.

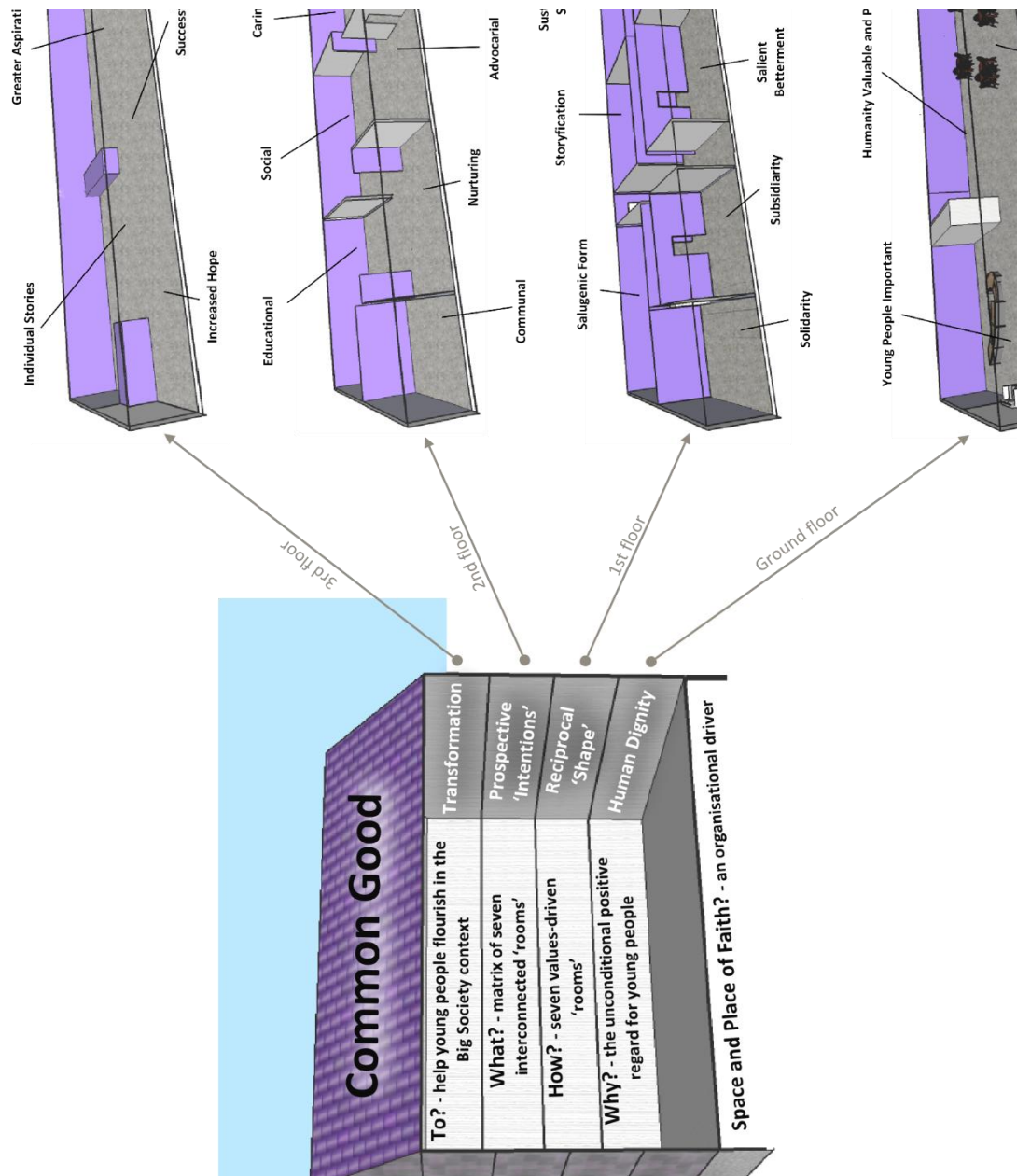


Figure 20. My explanatory model illustrating my research questions and findings

None of the floors in my proposed house model can be described as pure self-contained spaces. There are foundational, grounding, philosophical and pedagogical components that interlink and offer a representation of the previously described 'overlapping consensus' (Rawls 1993) conceptualisation. For example, undertaking long-term work is both a philosophical value and a pedagogical genre. Embracing the previously described 'unconditional positive regard for young people' is a faith-motivated paradigm, a perception of human dignity, a philosophy, pedagogy and aspirational outcome. In terms of the overarching metaphor of a house, I consider it to be like a number of stairways and mezzanines exist between each of the floors linking them together and representing intermediate platforms which support and aid viewing of the whole building. The stairways allow progression from the foundations upwards via interlinking floors towards the metaphorical common good roof.

My investigation has achieved what it set out do to: namely, establish a model that explains faith-based youth work in the Big Society. The original and unique model meets my research aims and objectives in a timely and accessible manner using rigorous processes and robust analytical techniques.

Whilst recognising the influence of my own subjectivity in the process, my investigation has been an authentic pragmatically constructivist and reflexive study that has, firstly, engaged with my subject matter and respondents; secondly enabled me to stand back to analyse my data; thirdly critiqued it and myself from a distance; and finally abductively develop a model that both reflects the complexity of the practice and policy context and my new understandings.

The mix-of-methods design enabled an investigation that facilitated the model's development. The initial scoping and consultation work produced data about my subject matters when none was available from any other sources. These *larger doll* approaches then informed the *smaller doll* of my case studies enabling a 'rich portrayal ... to inform practice' (Simons 2009:24). This design process was then redeployed to triangulate my findings portraying 'multiple perspectives' and exploring 'contested viewpoints' (Simons 2009:23).

These processes have also identified a number of limitations regarding my investigation. I now discuss these before considering how my study and model might be used as a basis for informing future investigations.



## 9.2 The Limitations of my Investigation

In this section I set out the limitations of my study and model. Walsham (in Lee et al 1997:478) declares:

There is not, and never will be, a best theory. Theory is our chronically inadequate attempt to come to terms with the infinite complexity of the real world. Our quest should be for improved theory, not best theory, and for theory that is relevant to the issues of our time.

It is in this spirit I propose my explanatory theoretical model for faith-based youth work in the Big Society. My attempt to explain the complexity of the faith-based youth work has taken place in a highly fluid and volatile policy and practice context. Whilst I believe it is not an attempt that is 'too chronically inadequate', it does, as with all theories, have a number of limitations; I now highlight those I consider most significant.

As noted in Chapter 5, one of the weaknesses of case study research is difficulty in making generalisations. I do not claim that all faith-based youth work or even all Christian faith-based youth work is like that portrayed in my investigations. Equally, I do not claim work with non-marginalised young people undertaking, for example, sports, specific arts or activity focused work would render similar findings. Whilst similar findings might emerge from a study of similar cases doing similar work, such a claim cannot be asserted with any confidence. However future investigations will be able to compare and contrast their findings with those set out here.

Furthermore it is not beyond the bounds of possibility to consider other studies might reach similar conclusions regarding the house model conceptualisation, but that the detail of the metaphorical floors might be different in different contexts: i.e. the exact philosophical content and pedagogical make-up may be different in other cases and settings. For example, a project may have a strong emphasis on more youth ministry type expressions such as worship or be pedagogically focused upon a specific issue-based agenda such as sexual health. Such factors will influence the detail of the explanatory model, but not necessarily negate the validity of the overall conceptualisation.

It might be argued my findings are somewhat inevitably self-fulfilling given that my sample selection criteria sought projects that were perceived to be working toward building civil society, had a Christian ethos, were working inclusively and in partnership with others. It might also be argued this type of youth work – focusing upon young people's personal and social

development, meeting needs and facilitating change – is simply part of any adolescent development work.

Rather than these confirmatory findings negating my investigation, I believe they should be seen as affirming the declared objectives of the projects. The possibility cannot be ruled out that my investigation findings may not have been so affirming. A similar study of similar projects might produce data that is more contradictory in nature.

Additionally, I do not claim the attributes set out in my model have exclusive association with faith-based youth work. It is clear they reflect many of the wider youth work discourses discussed in Chapter 3a. With the exception of the faith-motivating foundations, it might be the findings portrayed here are little different to ‘non’ faith-based work or similar work based on alternative worldviews such as, for example, secular-humanism. It could also be claimed that all work has a motivational foundation and, the fact that in my cases it is religious faith is largely irrelevant. It might also be considered that the outcome of the work undertaken by my cases is no better than that undertaken by those working from other motivating perspectives. Without a similar comparative investigation across differing youth work sectors it is not possible to conclude these argument and these limitations should be noted.

I have been reflexively conscious that the language used in my investigation has a general Christian worldview and paradigm attached to it. Whilst I have sought to minimise this to reduce any negative impact this may have on a wider readership, I do recognise this limitation. Whilst I was aware of the danger of being too presumptive, I consider that employing Strategy B (as described in Chapter 5) made my analysis somewhat easier as I was familiar with the language, concepts and theology of the type of Christian projects studied – such familiarity may not exist to readers from other faith backgrounds.

*The Big View* (Pimlott 2011b: 44-45) recommended that faith-based youth work should cultivate inter-faith partnerships. Whilst Valhalla manages to achieve this, there was little evidence found of this in the other cases. The reasons for this were not fully investigated and this is a further limitation to my conclusions.

In a similar vein, I did not investigate what young people thought of the Big Society, the place of faith in youth work and their views about my cases. This was largely due to the focus of my

investigation being about the *youth work* rather than the *young people* and the previously discussed logistical and ethical issues associated with their involvement.

Space has also not enabled a full discussion to be undertaken about matters considered more peripheral to my core investigation aims<sup>304</sup> and this is a potential further limitation. Whilst some of these matters are further discussed in the papers, book chapters and wider appendices referred to throughout this thesis, the rich data produced by my study could be subjected to further analysis and interpretation regarding some of these more subservient matters.

The limitations set out here point towards the need for future work and research, not to make up for failings in my investigation, but more to build upon and further my explanations. I now briefly, highlight this potential work.

### 9.3 Future Work

A number of considerations for future work have been identified as a result of my investigation. In addition to the limitations described above, these have arisen as a result of discovering further gaps in knowledge, recognising the need for additional work resulting from the data gathered in this study and the raising of new questions that require further exploration and consideration. Further studies could:

1. Map the extent to which faith-based youth work exists across different faith groups: no one knows how extensive it is, how it manifests itself, or the reach and impact it has. This makes understanding, analysis and determining general conclusions difficult to draw.
2. Consider the reasons why people from faith other groups other than Christian didn't participate in elements of my investigation so this informs, improves and shapes future research.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> For example, all the case study project leaders were white males approaching middle age. It would have been interesting to have considered if this was significant, but I regard it outside the main focus of my investigation.

<sup>305</sup> My experience encountered many emails, phone calls and invitations not replied to. One or two people said they were too busy to help and it was clear that funding cuts also had an impact as staff from many of the projects were simply not employed anymore. There may have been a degree of 'cultural dissonance' (Reddie 2003:97) at work, but all of these factors need further research to understand the true realities.

3. Disseminate the findings and implications of my investigation with reference to, and across, other faith groups. This could be undertaken with a view to ascertaining if such work follows dominant state ideologies and isomorphs accordingly.
4. Analyse the theological implications of my data. Throughout my investigation there has been a pull to consider the theological dynamics involved in my study. My data could be used to consider such factors as well as gather further evidence to give consideration to them.
5. Investigate additional case studies doing similar work but operating in different geographical or cultural contexts: for example, rural, coastal or ethnically distinct contexts so results could be compared and contrasted.
6. Undertake studies with similar projects that do not claim to be faith-motivated to compare and contrast foundational motivations, philosophical bases, practical expressions and theoretical frameworks.
7. Carry out a cost-benefit analysis of faith-based youth work to establish the wider benefits of such work giving specific consideration to societal costs if such work was not carried out.
8. Undertake research with young people. My study might be considered *Stage One* of a process (researching organisations, their gatekeepers, staff, partners and work). *Stage Two* could be undertaken directly with young people to investigate their experiences and perspectives.
9. Evaluate the extent to which my emergent model is applicable and an effective explanation of work carried out by faith-based providers in other fields. For example, work with homeless people, community development and/or children's work.
10. Appraise whether the status of staff and volunteers has bearing on the work. Throughout my investigation, there is a suggestion the views, understandings and perspectives of full-time staff are different to part-time staff and volunteers. This could be investigated further.

These possibilities for future work further highlight the gaps in knowledge associated with my subject matters. I now turn to conclude my thesis considering my explanatory model to be the only one of its kind and, therefore, highly 'relevant to the issues of our time' (ibid: Walsham).

## Chapter Ten

### 10. Conclusions

In this final chapter I conclude my thesis by revisiting my original aims and objectives, drawing together my research findings and considering their implications. I complete the chapter with a summative evaluation of my thesis and, portrayal of my unique and original contribution to faith-based youth work knowledge.

I began this thesis by declaring my long-standing interest in religion, politics and young people. I have undertaken a unique study that has investigated the faith-based youth work field where these interests coexist together. My literature and context review established and focused the research questions and methodological processes. I have demonstrated the relationship between faith-based youth work and the notion of the Big Society, examined the foundational place, position and characteristics of *faith* in such work, portrayed the philosophical shape of how faith-based youth work is undertaken and established the pedagogical intentions of what faith-based youth work does.

I developed a tripartite mix-of-methods research strategy to address the challenges presented by my investigation aims and objectives as I considered this the best approach given the dearth of other studies undertaken and lack of data available relating to my subject matters. This approach employed a *large doll* scoping survey to assess broad understandings about my topics, a *medium sized doll* series of focus group consultations to develop a more nuanced understanding and a *small doll* series of case studies to develop a pioneering explanatory model for faith-based youth work as my original contribution to knowledge.

#### 10.1 Revisiting my original aims and objectives

I have provided evidence in previous chapters to demonstrate I have successfully achieved my original aims and objectives and addressed my research questions. Specifically I assert my explanatory model achieves my investigation research aims and does so by:

1. Suggesting that a clear relationship exists between faith-based youth work and the Big Society notion; this is because there is an overlapping consensus between the two conceptions, rather than any wholesale endorsement of the notion.

2. Establishing the place position, characteristics and role of *faith* in faith-based youth work suggesting such work is foundationally 'faith-motivated';
3. Revealing such work is grounded in a belief in human dignity and the unconditional positive regard for young people: this capacitates young people to flourish;
4. Determining the philosophical values of faith-based youth work comprise of a reciprocal shape that equate and coexist, along with other identified variables, with the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching;
5. Discovering the pedagogical nature of such work is a matrix of prospective intentions that work together to bring about transformation; and
6. Presenting a possible representation and realisation of the common good in work with marginalised young people.

Furthermore my investigation objectives and outcomes have been realised as I have provided a contextualised analysis of faith-based youth work in civil society, albeit a time-sensitive snapshot within a rapidly changing practice and policy context. This has taken account of contemporary governmentality policy notions, dominant cultural ideologies and theoretical perspectives to portray four exemplar case studies of faith-based youth work.

I have developed a new practice model: defining and reflecting faith-based youth work in a manner that takes account of social justice and policy considerations. My model also has the potential to critique and inform future faith-based youth work, stimulate further research and debate, shape future policy considerations and develop emancipatory and empowering practice.

The use of a pictorial model resonates with my portraiture objectives bringing together the context, voice, relationships, emergent themes and aesthetic whole (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997) of the investigation in a manner that academics, practitioners and policymakers<sup>306</sup> alike can consider, explore, disseminate and evaluate. I believe my model facilitates a unique articulation of faith-based youth work and, enables greater understanding of what it is and what it is trying to achieve.

If I reflexively look at other faith-based youth work organisations known to me, I believe this model works and can be applied to their contexts also. For example if I consider my employers,

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<sup>306</sup> Researchers in other fields of study may also use the model to compare and contrast their findings with mine. See, also Section 9.3, 'Future Work'.

Frontier Youth Trust (FYT), my model increases a conscious understanding of FYT and offers critical insights which might not otherwise be attained. This enables a better critical evaluation of practice and a wider informed critique.<sup>307</sup> At the practice level, I anticipate my model will help faith-based youth work:

- establish more clearly its effectiveness;
- build resilience in a contested space;
- develop more robust approaches to practice;
- establish more concrete and justifiable claims about such work;
- aid understanding and currency in wider youth work settings;
- reduce criticisms of faith-based approaches by more clearly articulating practice;
- close any cognitive dissonance gaps;
- narrow any disjunct between what is said and what is practically done; and
- provide a starting point to develop a much better theology of serving the common good and/or a much better theology of mission.

In summary, I make the bold claim that I have developed a model that looks as if it works across theoretical and practice domains and may well have application in wider youth work and other socially ordained practices and settings.

## **10.2 Investigation Findings: Summary Understandings and Implications**

In demonstrating there is a relationship between faith-based youth work and the notion of the Big Society, I have identified this is because of overlapping objectives and common desired outcomes rather than any causal imperatives. I have shown that whilst knowledge of and understanding about the notion is somewhat mixed amongst youth workers, there is significant support for the values underpinning the vision – particularly those elements I have termed

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<sup>307</sup> In April 2013, I used the model at an FYT Staff and Directors Team Meeting to inform a piece of strategic development work.

*micro-embedded*. The implications for faith-based youth work resulting from the relationship are largely inconsequential. Such work existed long before the Big Society and I anticipate it will continue to do so in some form irrespective of what becomes of the Big Society idea.

What is of far greater consequence to faith-based youth work are the funding cuts to the youth and voluntary sectors that, either unfortunately or politically expediently depending upon ones perspective, have accompanied the Big Society notion. These, along with the commodifying and isomorphic threats identified represent a real risk to the type of work investigated in my case studies, particularly for those organisations relying upon some form of state-sponsored backing. This paradoxical governmentality backdrop provides the context within which my explanatory model exists.

I have determined the place, position and characteristics of any faith dynamic in my investigation concluding the most that can be asserted regarding any common denominator is that faith is *foundationally motivational* in my cases. I have highlighted how all youth work is motivated by some faith, ideology and/or value-base, but that it is not always clear on the ground what this is – I attribute this to the cases working in rapprochement ways and in postsecular contexts, where their focus is upon practical activism rather than proselytisation. The specific implication for faith-based youth work of this is that if it desires to honour and reflect its foundational values and beliefs in a way that enables young people to recognise such work has a faith component, then clearer representations need to be established. Some projects studied are more effective at doing this than others, and for those not so able there is a gap between their organisational mission and typologies and the experienced reality of their work.

In showing human dignity and the unconditional positive regard for young people is core in the work I have investigated, I have demonstrated such work is about valuing young people, opening up a world of aspiration and possibility and helping them realise their full potential. This narrative is in sharp contrast to dominant deficit and tick-box approaches common in other types of contemporary youth work. Whilst not exclusively so, this does appear to be a distinctive trait in faith-based work and one that sees young people as human beings in the process of flourishing rather than people who lack and/or who just have problems to be fixed. The implications for faith-based work is that this is a counter-cultural *alternate* modality and attribute and one that places the young person centre-stage, rather than any competing economic, social or educational policy imperatives that might impinge upon approaches.



By analysing the philosophical value-base of faith based youth work I have argued that such work is undertaken with a reciprocal shape that resonates with the CST principles of solidarity and subsidiarity along with five other emerging elements. Collectively I contend these elements combine to comprise a series of rooms in my metaphorical model establishing an emerging hypothesis for how such work is undertaken. This offers a means of explaining faith-based youth work that is nuanced, understandable and verisimilitude. Whilst I do not claim all similar work embodies the same shape, the implication for other work is that adopting this type of theoretical analysis would give a clear representation about how it goes about its work; thus it illuminates understanding and aids convergence between how it seeks to exist and how it actually does. I contend that applying this to all faith-based youth work would help such work make better strategic decisions reflective of the common good aspirations of such work.

My proposed theoretical framework about what faith-based youth work does is comprised of a matrix of pedagogical elements. The prospective intention of this work is diverse, fluid and interwoven. The work reflects social pedagogic intentions and adds further weight to arguments that seek to elevate this approach to work with young people as a reasoned and effective response to achieving the common good. The implication for faith-based youth work is to acknowledge it is a complex practice and say as such. Pressure to undo this complexity and present a simple narrative is both unrealistic and potentially betraying of the multiple ontological vocations that typify such work. If the type of work undertaken is 'of God' and part of a collective transformational pursuit of the common good, then eroding, justifying or simplifying the narrative as policymakers have requested<sup>308</sup> might be counter-productive.

My new explanatory model is an original, unique and explanatory theory for faith-based youth work. I consider it is theoretically robust, authentically conceived, conceptually accessible and the visual nature of it potentially gives broad appeal. It brings together all the *floors* of my investigation to explain why and how faith-based youth work is undertaken and how it exists to support young people's flourishing in pursuit of the common good in the Big Society context. The implications this has for the field is that for the first time a theoretical model is available which can be used to explain faith-based youth work. This fulfils the objective of my investigation and helps realise my intended outcomes set out in my introduction: namely informing faith-based practitioners, leaders and policymakers, stimulating further debate, impacting theoretical

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<sup>308</sup> Previously discussed in Chapter 3. See House of Commons (2011a).

understanding and identifying opportunities for further research and study. Only time will tell if my remaining two outcomes – shaping future policy considerations and promoting changes to practice that are emancipatory and empowering – are realised.

### 10.3 Thesis Evaluation

I have already considered the limitations of my investigation and so in this penultimate section, I set out the strengths, learning points and future opportunities resulting from my study.

I believe my investigation has a number of significant strengths; I have:

- undertaken a robust study – that is pioneering and addresses gaps in existing knowledge;
- employed rigorous and ethical approaches throughout – to ensure a credible and trustworthy study;
- compiled a comprehensive literature and contextual review of my subject matters – uniquely ground-breaking in my field;
- deployed a technically creative and appropriate methodology – making the best use of all methodological worlds;
- used sector-friendly research methods – enabling quality data collection;
- compiled a large amount of rich data – that lent itself to phenomenological, grounded and abductive reflexivity;
- undertaken good critical analysis of my data – developing new insights and theory;
- extended knowledge about my subjects – adding significantly to understandings;
- met my aims, objectives and measurable outcomes – fulfilling my strategy design; and
- fulfilled my primary goal of developing an explanatory model of faith-based youth work in the Big Society – confirming the unique nature of my investigation.

There are a number of learning points relating to my study.

Given the widely encompassing and rapidly changing nature of my subject matters there was a significant amount of ground work required to establish a contextual review that would shape my investigation. Even when done, the policy, economic and practice environments within which my study has been located continually developed and evolved. This meant that a continual reflective and cyclical analytical learning process had to be employed to ensure my study took account of these fluid parameters. This was a stimulating challenge throughout my study.

My methods taught me how to undertake an online survey and my use of the portraiture approach in my case studies was a new learning experience. Both these methods, along with my focus group work were time-consuming approaches that further developed my learning and skills regarding project and time management, data collection and analysis. I also consider I learnt a great deal about how to conduct effective interviews during my fieldwork.

In Chapter 2 I set out my investigation perch and position. Whilst steps were taken to ensure this did not impede my study, I acknowledged my potential influence on the research process and subsequent analysis of my findings. I believe I learnt to manage any influence effectively by, as previously described, 'constantly musing over objects' (Crotty 1998:50) to diminish my own role and potentiality for bias. Notwithstanding this I cannot rule out completely that my influences have not encroached upon my neutrality.

I have also learnt that addressing one research question opens up further questions<sup>309</sup> that are seductive in nature – potentially pulling an investigation in a variety of directions. Whilst these directions are of potential interest, I consider I learnt to remain focused upon the task in hand and the topic under consideration.

Likewise there was a *theological pull* which I had to contend with. Perhaps not unexpectedly, the subjects of faith and religion inevitably draw upon theological tenets and I have learnt to manage these dynamics in order to remain focused upon the social science ethos of my investigation. I have not been able to dismiss these considerations entirely from my study (and indeed would not wish to as they are important), but I have learnt to view them from a detached position setting aside my own perspectives in the process.

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<sup>309</sup> Some of these are set out in Section 9.3.

This thesis provided me with a highly valued opportunity to engage in a study reflective of my core personal and professional interests. Reflexively this is not something I have taken lightly, instead it is something that has consumed my entire being for the last thirty-two months and is an opportunity I am most grateful for. As such it has not just enabled me to develop my thesis, but it also opened up new vistas and provided professional and academic opportunities that have, in effect, become an extended part of my study. These have included the:

- opportunity to disseminate my new found knowledge through conference and seminar papers and presentations;
- publication (forthcoming) of some of my research findings in peer-reviewed book chapters and on sector websites;
- development of new youth worker training, teaching and lecturing opportunities;
- possibility of establishing a knowledge transfer exchange project; and
- confirmation and reinvigoration of my ontological vocation as a faith-based youth work practitioner.

My investigation has not only increased understanding about faith-based youth work, but advanced my own knowledge specifically regarding appreciation of research methodologies, research methods and data analysis techniques. I have taken encouragement that others researching and writing about different topics have reached similar conclusions – particularly about the Big Society. For example, a report published subsequent to my analysis by the Demos think-tank, entitled *Faithful Providers* (Birdwell 2013), reaches conclusions that have significant symmetry with my own. Although the report looked at faith-based work more broadly and did so largely from the economic benefits it might offer, it:

- noted with ‘cuts to youth services, faith groups may be called on increasingly to provide services for young people’ (ibid:28);
- recognised the importance of an underpinning faith motivation in any work undertaken (ibid:31);
- considered providers were ‘highly and uniquely effective in some policy areas’ serving the needs of the community’ (ibid:31);

- felt providers were well placed to meet social needs (ibid:31): largely operating in local communities on a small scale (ibid:38);
- found little evidence that providers proselytised, were discriminatory, or abused their power (ibid:34-35);
- placed values upon holistic approaches and community assets that looked beyond short-term policy initiatives and mere economic benefits (ibid:41);
- valued the emphasis on relationship and social action projects provided (ibid:42); and
- recognised organisations seeking external funding have to ‘tread a line between diluting the religious aspect of their work without losing vision, principles and credibility’ (ibid:42).

The context explored and the investigation aims of Birdwell (2013) are somewhat different from those of my own study but, nonetheless, such conclusions from a chronologically parallel study offer a timely triangulating affirmation of my investigation findings. I now conclude this thesis by reflecting upon the unique nature of my study.

#### **10.4 An Original Contribution to Knowledge**

This investigation adds to limited understandings of faith-based youth work and my portrayal increases knowledge about such work in contemporary contexts. I make the specific claims that my investigation has added to an underdeveloped area in literature and pioneered understanding about what is happening in practice.

My explanatory model enables a unique conceptualisation of faith-based youth work and offers a creative and original contribution to knowledge. I consider I have undertaken a reflexive study that has systematically acquired and analysed a substantial body of knowledge to develop a model that has advanced academic enquiry and, will enhance professional practice.

In a context that often sees young people as problems to be solved and in a policy environment that is highly fluid and looking for solutions to support society, I consider practitioners, academics and policymakers alike could learn from my conceptualisation of faith-based youth work as a means of helping people flourish. As my investigation drew to a close, Tim Loughton

(who was sacked as Minister for Children and Young People) spoke to the House of Commons Education Committee saying, ‘youth policy I don’t think is taken seriously enough ... I think it is a false economy not to be doing more around youth policy actively at the centre [of government] ... (Loughton 2013). Furthermore, UNICEF (Adamson 2013a) warned, ‘since 2010 the downgrading of youth policy and cuts to local government services are having a profound negative effect on young people age 15-19’<sup>310</sup> with Butler (2013) warning – and it is a warning not a commendation – ‘it’s a Big Society for youth services’.

These sobering assessments are a reminder of the contested place of youth work in contemporary contexts. It highlights how this government undervalues youth work and neglects the contribution it can make to realising the common good. We have thus, perhaps, come full circle and have to seriously consider that in the future the only type of youth work undertaken might be faith-based, linked or motivated (Buckland 2013). Whilst this is regrettable, it is a reminder of the significant role informal education faith-based work plays in society and the lives of young people.

I leave the final words of this thesis to Jim Ellis: a faith-based youth work veteran with whom Frontier Youth Trust has had a long-standing relationship based upon shared beliefs, aspirations and commitments to facilitating informal education faith work with marginalised young people. His words embrace the reflexive challenges and hopes of such work and cement the sentiments behind my commitment to undertake this study, make best use of what it has discovered and work towards helping young people flourish and realise the common good.

I do not believe there is one Christian youth worker who has not wondered whether all this informal education is not a waste of time and effort. Many have given up under the pressure of external hostility and internal doubts. Those who have survived have done so only because they are convinced that this approach is the only one capable of serving the young people with whom they are in contact. They know that to give up their commitment to informal education is to relinquish their commitment to the most needy young people in society. Ellis (1990)

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<sup>310</sup> Full report: Adamson (2013b).

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## **Appendix 1 – The Trustworthiness of My Methods**

Three tables setting out how credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity are achieved in each of my methods.

Methodological 'trustworthiness' of my scoping survey

	<b>Credibility</b>	<b>Transferability</b>	<b>Dependability</b>	<b>Confirmability</b>	<b>Authenticity</b>
<b>Survey</b>	<p>Engagement over a sustained period of time</p> <p>Tentative labelling of the salient factors</p> <p>Triangulation with consultation and case study data and findings</p>	<p>A somewhat thin description as designed to provide a specific time-relevant and snapshot account that would not be transferable at another point in time</p> <p>Metaphorically, a large size Russian doll</p>	<p>Selection criteria of research participants available</p> <p>Raw survey data kept</p> <p>Data reduction and analysis available</p> <p>Data reconstruction and synthesis available</p>	<p>Acted in good faith with no influence over respondents answers, whilst recognising my perch and position</p> <p>Sought a self-selecting sample across the breadth of the field</p> <p>Formal auditing not done by an external body, but could be</p> <p>Reflexive approach</p>	<p>Fair, in that the survey sought to have cross-faith appeal</p> <p>Enabled participants to at least become aware of Big Society and cohesion subject matters</p> <p>Other than the questions possibly causing participants to reflect, perhaps little educative authenticity</p> <p>Acted as a catalyst for new relationships, cross-faith dialogue and engagement with Big Society dynamics</p> <p>Tentative tactical actions and empowerment over social policy, funding and local issues</p>

Methodological 'trustworthiness' of my positioning consultations

	<b>Credibility</b>	<b>Transferability</b>	<b>Dependability</b>	<b>Confirmability</b>	<b>Authenticity</b>
<b>Consultations</b>	<p>Tentative labelling of the salient factors</p> <p>Triangulation with survey and case study data and findings</p>	<p>A medium thick description pointing towards emerging conclusions transferable to the setting and context of the case studies.</p> <p>Metaphorically, a medium size Russian doll</p>	<p>Selection criteria of research participants available</p> <p>Raw survey data kept</p> <p>Data reduction and analysis available</p> <p>Data reconstruction and synthesis available</p> <p>Transcripts available</p>	<p>Acted in good faith with a consistent facilitation process limiting influence over respondents answers, recognising my perch and position</p> <p>Sought a self-selecting sample across the breadth of the field</p> <p>Formal auditing not done by an external body, but could be</p> <p>Consistency in analysis and judgment of data</p> <p>Reflexive approach</p>	<p>Fair, in that I often adopted a 'devils advocate' position inconsistent with my own beliefs in order to facilitate different realities more effectively</p> <p>Enabled participants to better understand Big Society and different ontological realities</p> <p>Diverse nature of participants enabled educative authenticity</p> <p>Acted as a catalyst for new relationships, cross-faith dialogue and engagement with Big Society dynamics</p> <p>Tentative tactical actions and empowerment over social policy, funding and local issues</p>

Methodological 'trustworthiness' of my case studies

	<b>Credibility</b>	<b>Transferability</b>	<b>Dependability</b>	<b>Confirmability</b>	<b>Authenticity</b>
<b>Case Studies</b>	<p>Multiple cases and accounts</p> <p>Engagement over a sustained period of time</p> <p>Tentative labelling of the salient factors</p> <p>Referential adequacy in that data collected simultaneously, but archived and then analysed in turn</p> <p>Potential deviant case analysis</p> <p>Triangulation across cases</p> <p>Triangulation with survey and consultation data and findings</p> <p>Respondent validation</p>	<p>Thick description determining explicit patterns that might be expected to be found in similar contexts</p> <p>Metaphorically, a small size Russian doll</p>	<p>Selection of research participants available</p> <p>Raw survey data kept</p> <p>Data reduction and analysis available</p> <p>Transcripts available</p> <p>Coding of data available</p> <p>Field notes available</p> <p>Reflective diaries available</p> <p>Data reconstruction and synthesis available</p>	<p>Acted in good faith, whilst recognising the narrow participation criteria and limitations of the number of the cases studied, recognising my perch and position</p> <p>Respondent validation. Formal auditing not done by an external body, but could be</p> <p>Consistency in analysis and judgment of data</p> <p>Reflexive approach</p>	<p>Fair, in that I often adopted a 'devils advocate' position inconsistent with my own beliefs in order to draw out and highlight different realities</p> <p>Enabled participants to better understand Big Society and different ontological realities</p> <p>Helped and enabled educative authenticity as understanding was gained about wider social settings</p> <p>Acted as a catalyst for engagement with Big Society dynamics</p> <p>Developing tactical actions and empowerment over social policy, funding and local issues</p>





## **Appendix 2 – The Big Survey: Questionnaire and Information Sheet**

Details of the questions asked and the information provided to participants about my investigation.

## The Big Survey - Information Sheet

(In fact, it's quite a small survey and should only take a few minutes to complete)



**Firstly:** Many thanks for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

It should only take you a few minutes and your participation is most appreciated. The survey is designed to be completed by any faith-based youth worker (volunteer, paid, full-time, part time, qualified, not qualified, student) working with young people in the 11-19 age range.

**Who I am:** My name is Nigel Pimlott. I have worked with young people in a number of contexts for over 25 years. I currently work part-time for Frontier Youth Trust, undertake some consultancy work and am studying for a PhD in Faith-Based Youth and Community Work.

**What I am doing:** This survey is part of my post-graduate studies and the results will be used to inform my understanding and help develop the next stage of my research. My studies are based at Staffordshire University and are being undertaken in partnership with the University, Centre for Youth Ministry and Oasis College, supported by Frontier Youth Trust. Each completed questionnaire will contribute significantly to my research. It should take about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Please complete and return to me by 30 May 2011.

**Purpose:** I am looking to discover the scope, impact and understanding of faith-based youth work. Specifically, I am hoping to explore the relationship between faith-based work, community cohesion and the Big Society.

**Confidentiality:** The answers you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. Your answers and views will be safely and electronically stored and will not be shown to anyone else. You will remain anonymous and no identifying personal details will be used in any published findings

**Informed Consent:** Participation in this research project is voluntary. Completion of the questionnaire indicates your consent to participate in the research. This project has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Staffordshire University. If you prefer not to answer any of the questions, simply miss these out and proceed to the next question.

**Contact:** If you would prefer to return the questionnaire by post, please send it to: 28 the Grange, North Muskham, Newark NG23 6EN. You can also contact me; via this address and/or by email, [nigel@pimlott.org](mailto:nigel@pimlott.org) and telephone, 07940 54 54 69. To make contact with Staffordshire University about this research, please contact: Peter Twilley, L220 Flaxman Building, College Road, Stoke-on-Trent. ST4 2DE. Tel; 01782 294793, Email: [P.L.Twilley@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:P.L.Twilley@staffs.ac.uk)

Many thanks for your time, it is very much appreciated.

Nigel Pimlott





**4. How much do you agree with each of the following statements:**

a) My local area is a place where young people from different racial and ethnic and religious backgrounds mix well together

Agree a lot                      Agree    Not sure    Disagree    Disagree a lot

b) I think it is wrong to encourage young people to explore faiths different to their own

Agree a lot                      Agree    Not sure    Disagree    Disagree a lot

c) Britain today is a place where young people are usually treated fairly no matter what background they come from

Agree a lot                      Agree    Not sure    Disagree    Disagree a lot                     

d) This generation of young people are more tolerant of different faith perspectives than my generation

Agree a lot                      Agree    Not sure    Disagree    Disagree a lot                     

e) Faith-based youth work decreases the chances of communities developing the Big Society

Agree a lot                      Agree    Not sure    Disagree    Disagree a lot

**5. Please complete the following sentence:**

I think the 'Big Society' is

.....

.....

**6. How would you describe the 'opportunities' the Big Society brings? (Feel free to write a sentence and/or use three key words to describe your view).**

.....

.....

**7. How would you describe the 'challenges' the Big Society brings? (Feel free to write a sentence and/or use three key words to describe your view).**

.....  
.....

**8. Please state which age group you are in:**

- |       |                          |       |                          |             |                          |
|-------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 18-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 35-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 55 - 64     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 45-54 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 65 and over | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**9. Are you male or female**

- |      |                          |        |                          |
|------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| Male | <input type="checkbox"/> | Female | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|

**10. How would you describe your ethnicity?**

- White British
- Irish Traveller
- Black or Black British - Caribbean
- Black or Black British - African
- Other Black background
- Asian or Asian British - Indian
- Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Other Asian background
- Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed – White and Black African
- Mixed – White and Asian
- Other Mixed background
- Other Ethnic background
- Not Known
- Prefer not to answer

**Please leave your name and post code to confirm that you consent to me using your answers for my research. Your details will not be used for any other purpose.**

Name:

Post Code:

**If you would like to receive details about the results of the survey, please leave your email or postal address and I will contact you when they are available.**

Email:

Address:

## **Appendix 3 – The Big Survey: Process Time-Line**

A tabular view of the key milestones involved in The Big Survey research process.

Below is a tabular view of the key milestones regarding The Big Survey research process. These are set out along with the original 'target' dates and the 'actual' delivery dates.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Actual date</b>
Design draft survey	19 Jan 2011	6 Jan 2011
Discuss with supervisor	24 Jan 2011	17 Jan 2011
Amend and re-draft	1 Feb 2011	1 Feb 2011
Seek ethical clearance	10 Feb 2011	Approved 17 Feb 2011
Pilot with 5-6 people	14 Feb 2011	18 Feb 2011
Review, amend, final draft	15 Feb 2011	21 Feb 2011
Distribute surveys	15 March 2011	1 March 2011
End collection of data	30 April 2011	30 May 2011
Code and input data	30 May 2011	30 May 2011
Analyse data	15 June 2011	1 June 2011
Write-up findings	15 July 2011	Completed 26 July 2011
Write reflection on process essay	31 July 2011	Completed 26 July 2011



## **Appendix 4 – The Big Survey: Distribution Networks**

Information about the Big Survey and details of where it was distributed.

Information about the Big Survey and a request to distribute it across networks was sent to:

Alif Aleph UK	London Youth
An-Nisa	Maccabi GB
Bahai Community of the UK	Maimonides Foundation
B'nai B'rith Youth Organisation	Mohammed Seddon (Chester Uni)
Bmei Akiva UK	Mohammed Khan (Brunel Uni – MYWF)
Board of Deputies of British Jews	Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board
Bradford CVS	Muslim Youth League UK
Bradford Faiths Forum	Muslim Youth Work Federation
British Sikh Consultative Faith Action	Muslim Youth Work Skills
Buddhist Society	National Children's Bureau
Chris Worfolk Foundation	National Council Voluntary Youth Services
Christian Muslim Forum	National Council of Hindu Temples
Citizenship Foundation	Network of Sikh Organisations
Community Development Foundation	Network of Buddhist Organisations
Community Development South East	Nishkam Centre, Birmingham
Connect Online	Noam Masorti Youth
Council for Christians and Jews	North West Forum of Faiths
Creative Muslim Network	Nottinghamshire Youth Organisations Network
Derby Multifaith Centre	Redbridge Jewish Youth and Community Centre
Dudley Borough Interfaith Network	Youth Club
Ealing Gurdwara	Regional Faiths Network North East
East of England Faiths Council	RSY-Netzar
East Midlands Voluntary Youth	Sikh Community and Youth Services, Birmingham
Faith and Climate Change	Sikh Community and Youth Services, Nottingham
Faith-Based Regeneration Network	Sinai Youth Movement
Faiths Forum for East Midlands	South East England Faiths Forum
Faiths Forum for London	Southwark Multi-Faith Forum
Faith Net South West	Soka Gakkai International
Faith Matters	The Hub, South Manchester
Federation of Zionist Youth	The Jewish Lads and Girls' Brigade
Gujarat Association Barnsley	The Joseph Interfaith Foundation
Gujarat Hindu Society, Preston	The Muslim Council of Britain
Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (Leeds)	The Revival
Habonim Dror	The Young Muslims UK
Hampshire Interfaith Network	The Zone, Leeds
Hanoar Hatzioni	Three Faiths Forum
Hindu Council UK	Tribe Young United Synagogue
Hindu Forum of Britain	United Faiths
Interfaith Network	West Midlands Faith Forum
Jewish Volunteer Network	www.yanabi.com
Jubilee Centre	Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe
London Interfaith Foundation	

It was also distributed across the Frontier Youth Trust youth worker network.

## **Appendix 5 – The Big Survey: Pilot Feedback**

An initial draft pilot survey was discussed with my PhD supervisory panel. Advice was also sought from the University's Diversity Officer regarding the religion and ethnicity questions. These discussions helped inform and refine the survey. Specifically, the proposed semantic differential question was omitted and the religion and ethnicity question criteria confirmed.

It was then re-drafted and sent to eight faith-based youth work colleagues – selected on the basis of their likelihood of replying quickly and constructively to my request for feedback.

Five of these actually completed the survey and a number of helpful comments were made:

1. There were two comments about the adverts on the survey host web site. These were felt to be unhelpful and were not liked. I agreed and subsequently paid to have them removed.
2. Re Q2: There was one comment requesting an extra category/box for those youth workers 'working with young people of no faith'. Whilst I had no problem with idea, I did not think this helpful regarding what the overall aims of the study were, felt it would not inform my objectives and so rejected the idea.
3. Re Q4: There was one comment about the vagueness of term 'local area' and it was suggested I provide a definition. Whilst appreciating this was a vague notion, I was content to allow individual interpretation according to context and so kept the original question. I did not consider it would materially influence the scoping nature of the survey and would only add to the length and complexity of the question.
4. Re Q4: One person communicated that they never liked to give a 'middle option' in ranking questions. Whilst understanding their theoretical view point I decided to retain this option as I felt, in this case, there was no merit in forcing people to come down on one side of an argument just for the sake of it. I wanted the survey to accurately reflect people's views particularly given the relatively new and potentially sensitive nature of the question subject matter.
5. Re Q6 and 7: I originally asked people for a sentence to answer this question, but one respondent suggested this be contained to just three words to aid data collection and dissemination. I considered this a helpful idea and thus adopted it.

Dissemination of these comments resulted in a final draft that was used in the actual survey.

## **Appendix 6 – The Big Consultation Focus Groups: Information Sheet and Consent Form**

Details of the consultation venues and timings and the information provided to participants about my investigation.

The Big Consultations were carried out across four, two-hour sessions, in three venues, London, Stoke and Birmingham (twice) during April and May 2011. Six sessions were planned, but there was not sufficient take up to run the evening consultations in London and Stoke.

In total, thirty two faith-based youth workers participated in the Big Consultations. These workers were not asked for their faith background, but this did become evident during the consultations. All but two people were from a Christian faith background.

The following Information Sheet was given to participants:

## The Big Consultation

### The Big Society and Faith-Based Youth Work: Opportunity or Challenge?

#### Information Sheet

**Firstly:** I am planning to hold a series of consultations about the Big Society for faith-based youth workers (volunteer, paid, full-time, part time, qualified, not qualified, student) working with young people in the 11-19 age range.

These will take place in:

London 14 April 2011

Timings 2.30 – 4.30 and 7.00 – 9.00

Oasis College, 75 Westminster Bridge Road, London. SE1 7HS.

Stoke-on-Trent 24 May 2011

Timings 2.30 – 4.30 and 6.30 – 8.30

Learning Exchange, Flaxman Building, Staffordshire University, College Road, Stoke-on-Trent. ST4 2 XW

Birmingham 25 May 2011

Timings 2.30 – 4.30 and 6.30 – 8.30

The Blue Room, St George's Community Hub, Great Hampton Row, Newtown, Birmingham. B19 3LG.

**The Consultation:** These will be genuine consultations! There are no pre-decided outcomes. Your views and perspectives are really important and the consultation will be designed to discover these. We will be using the World Café process which is a very effective way of having conversations that matter in a non-threatening and participative manner. More information about the World Café can be found at: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>

**Why Come:** You are invited to attend these FREE events.

In these changing and challenging times it is hoped that this consultation will be mutually beneficial. By attending you will:

- Understand more about current initiatives, policies and the implications of these
- Have chance to network with people in similar contexts
- Gain more insight as you give to, and learn from, others
- Be able to pass on this learning to others in your organisation
- Have priority access to the consultation findings. These can then be used to support funding applications, strategic decisions and future work.

To confirm your attendance, please email me at [nigel@pimlott.org](mailto:nigel@pimlott.org) saying which venue, time and date you would like to attend. A contact phone number would also be helpful in case any unexpected events occur. You may also book a place by writing to me at the address below. I will confirm your booking once received.

**Who I am:** My name is Nigel Pimlott. I have worked with young people in a number of contexts for over 25 years. I currently work part-time for Frontier Youth Trust, undertake some consultancy work and am studying for a PhD in Faith-Based Youth and Community Work.

**What I am doing:** This consultation is part of my post-graduate studies and the results will be used to inform my understanding and help develop the next stage of my research. My studies are based at Staffordshire University and are being undertaken in partnership with the University, Centre for Youth Ministry and Oasis College, supported by Frontier Youth Trust.

**Purpose:** I am looking to discover the scope, impact and understanding of faith-based youth work. Specifically, I am hoping to explore the relationship between faith-based work, community cohesion and the Big Society.

**The Findings:** These will be made available to all those who attend the consultations. They will be written up and made easily accessible. In due course, a publication will follow providing analysis of the findings. These findings may then be used to inform work, influence policy making bodies, add to academic understanding and made available to the media.

**Confidentiality:** The contributions you make to this consultation will be treated in the strictest confidence. Your discussions, answers and views will be electronically recorded and then safely stored. They will not be shared with anyone else. You will remain anonymous and no identifying personal details will be used in any published findings

**Informed Consent:** Participation in this research project is voluntary. Booking (in writing) for, and attendance at, any of these consultations indicates your consent to participate in the research. I will confirm this with you at the consultations. The consultations will be recorded to aid my data collection. This project has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Staffordshire University. The World Café methodology has been chosen as the process for these consultations because it has an added advantage that enables participants to be involved as much or as little as they decide. You may withdraw from the consultation and/or research at any time.

**Contact:** If you would like any additional information you can contact me at: 28 the Grange, North Muskham, Newark NG23 6EN. You can also; email, [nigel@pimlott.org](mailto:nigel@pimlott.org) and/or telephone, 07940 54 54 69. To make contact with Staffordshire University about this research, please contact: Peter Twilley, L220 Flaxman Building, College Road, Stoke-on-Trent. ST4 2DE. Tel; 01782 294793, Email: [P.L.Twilley@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:P.L.Twilley@staffs.ac.uk)

Many thanks for your time, it is very much appreciated.

Nigel Pimlott

Additionally, participants were also asked to confirm (by signing the form below) that they consented to their contribution being used in the research.

### Registration

Please sign below to confirm your registration and give your informed consent for me to use your contributions to this consultation in my PhD research.

The consultations will be recorded to aid my data collection. The information recorded will remain anonymous and will not be attributed to any named individual in any subsequent publication. This project has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Staffordshire University.

The World Café methodology has been chosen as the process for these consultations because it has an added advantage that enables participants to be involved as much or as little as they decide. You may withdraw from the consultation and/or research at any time.

Name	Email	Signature



## **Appendix 7 – The Big Consultation: World Café Process**

A brief explanation of the World Café consultation process used in my investigation.

The World Café process:<sup>1</sup>

‘...the World Café is an innovative yet simple methodology for hosting conversations about questions that matter.’ [www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com)

The World Café format is a unique way of running a consultation, event or focus group that is creative, stimulating and involves everybody. World Café works well where there is no clear agenda and a need for conversations to clear the ground or develop thinking. The basic format is that a question (or series of questions) are discussed (for between twenty and forty five minutes each) around café-style tables and the outcomes of these conversations are recorded on paper. Each table has a ‘host’ who helps keep each conversation rolling and writes down a summary of what is said. Tables self-select hosts.

The World Café way of working is rooted in the following characteristics:

- Connections
- Conversations
- Contributions
- Collective discoveries
- Combined intelligences
- Committed actions

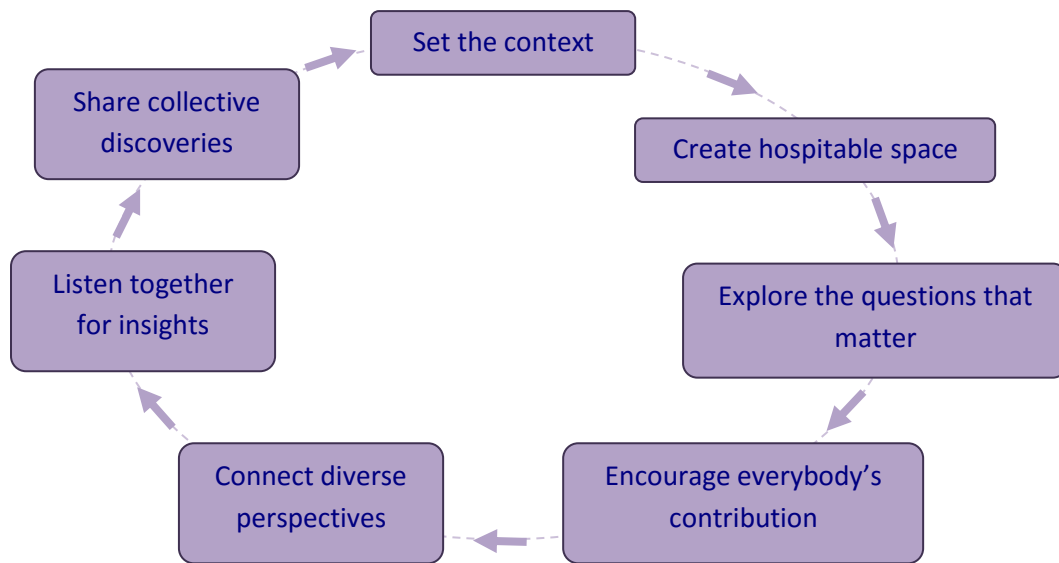
The effect should be that conversations link together and build on each other as people move from one table and group to another. Ideas are cross-pollinated and new insights and discoveries will emerge. It is essential to record what participants say and collect this to enable full dissemination.

A World Café event has some key components which link together to form an integrated set of design principles that enable conversations that matter to take place. These principles are summarized in the following diagram:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Pimlott (2009:18).

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from: Brown with Isaacs (2005).



The World Café format is one which helps address the most questions in the time available in the most inclusive way possible.

Possible numbers of people involved: Minimum of 12 to almost limitless numbers (1000+ is said to work)

Key Publication(s): Juanita Brown with David Isaacs and the World Café Community, ***The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter.*** (Berrett-Koehler, 2005).

Web Site: [www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com)

## **Appendix 8 - The Big Consultation: Questions Asked in Focus Groups**

The powerpoint presentation used in my focus group consultations.

This sets out the questions asked during the consultations using the Appreciative Inquiry five-stage model.



## Defining ...

A series of questions to explore our understanding ...

### Question 1

Do you think you have a good understanding about what the Big Society is all about?

**'Yes'** or **'no'** ?

## Question 2

How supportive are you of the government's Big Society vision?

1. Fully supportive
2. Cautiously supportive
3. Unsupportive
4. Unsure



## Question 3

Which of the following well-known sayings best describe your current view of the Big Society?

1. Golden opportunity – a chance not to be missed
2. Barking up the wrong tree – misses the point
3. Can't cut the mustard – not up to the challenge
4. Flash in the pan – it won't last long
5. Hits the nail on the head – exactly the right thing
6. Red herring – a distraction from the real issues
7. Rome was not built in a day – it's going to take a long time to get right



## Question 4

Which of the following well-known sayings least describe your current view of the Big Society?

1. Golden opportunity – a chance not to be missed
2. Barking up the wrong tree – misses the point
3. Can't cut the mustard – not up to the challenge
4. Flash in the pan – it won't last long
5. Hits the nail on the head – exactly the right thing
6. Red herring – a distraction from the real issues
7. Rome was not built in a day – it's going to take a long time to get right





## Discovering ...

What is the Big Society with regard to faith-based youth work?

## Dreaming ...

What impact might the Big Society have in the future?

The initial results from The Big Survey indicate the following factors might be key regarding any opportunities: community, creativity, responsibility, cohesion.





## Designing ...

As a result of the Big Society idea, what changes to practice (if any) might faith-based youth workers need to make in the future?

The initial results from The Big Survey indicate the following factors might be some of the key challenges: cuts, funding, inequality, uncertainty.




## Destiny ...

As a result of today and your overall view of the Big Society vision, what is the next step for you and your work with young people regarding your thinking, development and action?

Are there any words, aspirations, values, outcomes, principles (perhaps in the manner of the *Every Child Matters* outcomes) that need to be put in place?






## Review ...

Some questions to conclude our time together ...

### Question 5

I think that the Big Society is:

1. A great opportunity for faith-based youth work
2. A big challenge for faith-based youth work
3. Irrelevant to faith-based youth work
4. Too uncertain to form an opinion



### Question 6

What mark (smiley face) out of 5 would you give the process used today?



1 2 3 4 5



### Question 7

Because of the Big Society idea, I think the role of faith-based youth work will be more significant in the future?

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Not Sure
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree



07940 54 54 69  
nigel@pimlott.org

Thank You

## **Appendix 9 – Case Study: Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

Details of the questions asked in my semi-structured interviews used in my case study research..

The interviews undertaken with those involved in the project were of a semi-structured basis explored in full in my thesis. This meant that a core set of structured questions were asked, supplemented by additional questions that emerged as the interview developed. The structured questions are set out below for reference purposes.

### **Introduction**

- 1) What three words first come to mind when I mention '[organisation] and faith-based youth work'?
- 2) If you were to pick an animal, a car, an image or other metaphor to portray [the organisation's] work with young people what would it be?
- 3) How would you describe [the organisation's] faith-based work with young people?

### **Mission and Values**

- 4) Why is [the organisation] motivated to work with young people?
- 5) What are the key values of [the organisation]?
- 6) What is [the organisation] trying to do in their work with young people? What stated aims of [the organisation] are you aware of?

### **Relationships and Influences**

- 7) What relationships do [you/the organisation] have with other faith groups re the youth work you do?
- 8) What relationships do [you/the organisation] have with government bodies, funders, other stakeholders re the youth work you do?
- 9) How is [your work/the organisation] influenced by outside factors? E.g. government, culture, media, funders

### **Civil Society and Policy**

- 10) How does [your/the organisation] work with young people make a positive contribution to wider society?
- 11) Do you think faith-based work with young people is taken seriously by wider society?
- 12) Do [you/the organisation] want to be valued by wider society? Government? Local community?
- 13) I don't know if you have heard of the Big Society? (Explain if not) – does your faith-based work have any connections with it? Are you doing anything different in your work as a result of the Big Society?

### **The Future**

- 14) If there was one thing you could change about [your/the organisation's] faith-based youth work, what would it be?
- 15) How do you want [your/the organisation's] faith-based youth work to develop?

## **Appendix 10 – Case Study: Information Sheet and Consent Form**

Details of the information given to those participating in my case study research.



## Case Studies - Information Sheet

**Firstly:** You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Many thanks for taking the time to read this information and giving consideration to helping with my research.

**Who I am:** My name is Nigel Pimlott. I have worked with young people in a number of contexts for over 25 years. I currently work part-time for Frontier Youth Trust, undertake some consultancy work and am studying for a PhD in Faith-Based Youth and Community Work.

**What I am doing:** I am undertaking a series of case studies on a small number of faith-based youth work projects/organisations. These studies will form part of my post-graduate studies and the results will be used in my final PhD thesis. I plan to undertake some interviews, look at information about your organisation (for example, web sites, annual reports, business plans/strategy documents), make observations and talk to some of the people involved in your work. My studies are based at Staffordshire University and are being undertaken in partnership with the University, Centre for Youth Ministry and Oasis College, supported by Frontier Youth Trust.

**Purpose:** I am looking to discover the scope, impact and understanding of faith-based youth work, specifically, hoping to explore if there are any key themes, values and processes common to all the case studies.

**Confidentiality:** The answers you provide will be treated in confidence. Your answers and views will be safely and electronically stored and will not be shown to anyone else. You will remain anonymous and your name will not be used in any published findings. In order to anonymise the research: your name will be replaced with a pseudonym, reference will be made to the name of your project and a general universal description given to your role (for example, 'Sue, youth worker, abc church', 'Harpreet, manager, xyz temple', 'Hamza, trustee, Birmingham mosque', 'Rivka, stakeholder, 123 organisation'). Only this type of information will appear in my final thesis and any subsequent publications.

**Informed Consent:** Participation in this research project is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time. This project has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Staffordshire University. In order to confirm your consent to participate in my research, please sign the attached *consent form*.

**Contact:** You can also contact me via: 28 the Grange, North Muskham, Newark. NG23 6EN and/or by email, [nigel@pimlott.org](mailto:nigel@pimlott.org) and telephone, 07940 54 54 69. To make contact with Staffordshire University about this research, please contact: Peter Twilley, L220 Flaxman Building, College Road, Stoke-on-Trent. ST4 2DE. Tel; 01782 294793, Email: [P.L.Twilley@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:P.L.Twilley@staffs.ac.uk)

Many thanks for your time, it is very much appreciated.

Nigel Pimlott

Partners:



Oasis college  
Learn by doing



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## Case Study: Consent Form



PhD research into 'Faith-Based Youth Work':

Nigel Pimlott

a: 28 the Grange, North Muskham, Newark. NG23 6EN

e: [nigel@pimlott.org](mailto:nigel@pimlott.org)

t: 07940 54 54 69

w: [www.pimlott.org](http://www.pimlott.org)

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.
4. I agree to the interview / consultation being audio recorded.
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in the thesis and possible future publications.
6. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be electronically stored (after it has been anonymised) and may be used for future research.

.....  
Name of Participant

.....  
Date

.....  
Signature

## **Appendix 11 – Case Study: Coded Interviews Sample**

A sample from the Nirvana case study of an interview that has been coded and a list of codes used.



<b>Interview Transcription: Amanda REC012</b>		
<b>092. Just to kick us off, if I had to mention Nirvana what 3 words come to mind?</b>		
093. Hope, fun and integrity	Fun Hope Integrity	
<b>094. I know not everyone thinks this way, but if I were to ask you for some sort of image, animal, car, clothing Metaphor to sum up what Nirvana is about, what would that be?</b>		
095. What a great question. Okay ... I think when I was in Australia, this will be a bizarre image but there was people who in Melbourne that stood on the street with big red t-shirts saying, 'here to help to give you advice and pass you on' and (xxx) that kind of image of, it's not a sign post, it's much more friendly than that, but, 'we're here to help', 'do you need us to walk you somewhere?' 'Do we just need to direct you somewhere?' And being all that people need us to be and in that moment.	Meeting need Support	Likes my approach etc
<b>096. Thank you. How would you describe what Nirvana does in terms of its work with young people?</b>		
097. 'Relational Support Work' is the official title, but I suppose it's about journeying with young people in the context, so for schools workers for Neil in his role, Sam in hers, its always slightly different. The idea is about coming alongside of the young person and journeying with them for a period of time. And you know supporting them and empowering them, so it's not doing it all for them but actually, 'what can we do support you and help you .... you know, make good choices?' and sometimes when life is very tough bit like Sam its about just helping them out because they've been dealt a bad deal and they need a bit of support. In schools, in what I do, I suppose it's a bit more about helping them think reflect and make good choices themselves as well as when things are every bad just stepping in and saying, .ok when everything else fails we'll be the support that's still there'.	Journey with YP Support	
<b>098. Just to play, I slightly play devil's advocate so it's not meant to be accusing, but when you say 'good choices' who defines the 'good'?</b>		
099. Mmm, good question. I suppose its choices that are gonna have a positive outcome on, in their lives, I'm thinking specifically about students who are in danger of being excluded or using drugs or things like that I suppose, maybe rightly or wrongly from our point of view, is not a positive choice for them. But the danger being they are gonna get excluded and be in PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) and limited their options. Or as themselves as young person they say 'I don't want to be doing this and yet I am' you can never convince a child to do, stop doing something so our work is always voluntary	YP marginalised Meeting need	Again likes the process/questions

<p>basis. You do get kids who are sent to you by their Head of Year, but it's always very much; 'Why are you here? Do you want to be here?'. And if its 'no' then ok, 'off you go back to..' because there isn't a lot a point, their gonna sit there and I'll talk to them for a bit and they're gonna be like, 'I don't wanna be here I'm gonna go'. So a lot of the work happens when a young person says 'my life is not how I'd want it to be' and 'I need some help to make some changes', 'I know there are things that I want to do differently but I don't know how to go about doing that' so I think that's kind of where we are especially in the role I am in, that's when it comes into play; Ok you've identified something that you want to do different let's see if we can help you to do that.</p>	<p>YP's voices</p>	<p>Working in a formal setting, but participation is voluntary.</p>
<p><b>0100. So how, just to tease that out a bit – how voluntary is that, is that a kind of up-front choice you give them?</b></p>		
<p>0101. So when we have referrals that are made for us from Heads of Years and students come along, in that initial conversation it will be, 'This is who I am and what I do'. 'Why do you think you are here?' 'Do you want to be here?' and I do send them back to Heads of Year saying, 'chatted to xyz and at this point they don't want to access our services but I've explained that we are here and our support is there and ...'</p>		<p>Ditto</p>
<p><b>0102. How does the school respond when that happens?</b></p>		
<p>0103. This is the pressure and the difficulty in schools, they want you to fix so they go 'here you go, here are some difficult children that are making trouble in our classes make it all better', but you know I have explained and they do understand that actually I can't make a young person do anything actually if they don't want our help right now and so they do accept that and they do say to the young person, 'ok that's your choice here are some of the other things that we can put into place'. But sometimes a young person isn't ready to accept any help or support they don't ... It's not what they want right now and ok that's their choice.</p>	<p>Support</p>	<p>Deficit approach</p> <p>Being there for the long-haul means Nirvana are available as and when.</p>
<p><b>0104. I'm just curious as it's one of the tensions around informal youth work and formal expectations, which is a 'deficit fixing' model ...</b></p>		
<p>0105. and it is worth asking that question because sometimes you're under the impression that they come here voluntary when they go, 'I don't know why I am here, I've been sent by the head' and you're like 'oh' this is voluntary! Quite often what I will do is have an initial session if they say 'it's fine', then I say, 'Would you like to meet in a couple of weeks?' 'Yeah ok'. We've got an email system, 'why don't you drop me an email and then we'll arrange a date?', because if I put something in for them it can very easily become 'I am being polite and I have to go and I have to attend'. Whereas, if they email and say 'yes I would quite like that', then its them saying ... And other students I have kind of said to them, 'go away and think about it and come back to me' and it's taken a term and they've</p>	<p>Personal and social development</p>	<p>Empowerment and responsibility</p>

come and said, 'actually I would quite like that now'. But that's what you work with, if that's not there then there's nothing really to work with.		
<b>0106. I've got sort of sections really: The next section is around mission and values and those sort of things. What would you say the motivation of Nirvana is?</b>		
0107. I think it's the ... the message of Jesus in terms of 'Jesus brings hope and new life and has value for people' – you know people, people have value in and of themselves and we want to see that transformation, we want to see that hope, we want to see that life brought into other peoples world in a very practical way and me personally, yes I would love it if at some point they discover Jesus and had a relationship with him, but I see my role as very much practically showing that and having answers if they ask and sometimes they do. But not necessarily about conversions it's not what it's about for me, it's about actually about let me - in biblical terms feed the sick, feed the hungry rather, not feed the sick - but that kind of thing.	Transformation Hope  Incarnational	'see that life brought' = Salugenic ...
<b>0108. So is there ... in that sense, is there an end game, is there a success definition?</b>		
0109. I think success is really difficult in this kind of industry because normally you are doing preventative work, so you're stepping in to stop it get any worse and how do you measure that? I suppose a young person being 'happy' which is again a very broad term and having options for career and job and those kind of things - being in a place where they feel they have those choices - would be a success. And some of the ones you work they are very much on the edge of being excluded or they are very vulnerable from depression or things at home, so that kind of sense of a young person saying 'I feel better. My life is better. I'm on an even keel now', would be a success	Meeting need  YP marginalised  Support	Preventative element  What is success?
<b>0110. How would you describe the key values of the organisation?</b>		
0111. (Laughs) Key values, I think it is, we have an ethos about fun and integrity and the idea that actually hope can be borne out practically and actually within ourselves as a team, that's not about what we go and do, but that's about us together as a community and how do we support and care for one another in that tension 'that this is a work place' but also we want to live out values in our lives that are may be different from secular work places. Erm ... yeah	Fun Integrity Hope Community	
<b>0112. Just again to tease out, how is that different to secular?</b>		
0113. Ermm I think, personally I think there's a bit more of a buy-in from people when they are doing something because it's what they believe in, rather than what they're told to do. And so you can't make a sweeping statement about all secular work places because a lot of people will go above and beyond, but I think there is, we will go the extra mile for a young person and for the community. And also there are friendships within work places, but I think there is a bit more of a community feel here than your ... in my previous youth placements I have been I suppose.	Community	

## Transcribing Codes and Themes

Youth Work Frameworks
Believing in young people
Personal and social development
Journey with young people
Positiveness
Young people's voices
Young people marginalised
Role-modelling
Fun
Safety

Strategic Approaches
Locally and deep-rooted
Telling the story
Support
Intangible outcomes
Long-term
Vision
Meeting need

Social Impact
Transformation
Hope
Relationships
Community
Mutuality
Social capital

Political Context
Austerity impact
Political
Funding

Organisational Behaviour
Organisational development
Externally driven
Isomorphism
Partnership
Technology and social media
Expansion agenda
Integrity

Faith-Based Dynamics
Incarnational
Restoration and redemption
Kingdom
Meaning-making
Tacit faith
Spiritual aspirations
Explicit faith
Diaphanous faith
Latent underpinning faith

## **Appendix 12 – Case Study: Reflective Diary Sample**

A sample of reflections from the Valhalla investigation.

This reflective diary is an account of my research with the Valhalla project. It sets out what happened and when and focuses upon my thoughts and feelings about my research with this project.

Its aim is not to contain any theory, justifications, rationale or conclusions, but is a personal reflection based upon my field notes and thoughts to aid my own understanding, help me be aware of how my ideas and feelings have impacted my research and assist with my data analysis.

This diary has been written up after each event/date and is based upon notes made in the field, ethnographic observations and subsequent recollections, insights and reflections.

The names of those involved have been changed to preserve their anonymity.

### **28 Oct 2011 Approach to the Organisation**

Terry (project leader) was aware of my research from previous conversations, but I was a little nervous as I approached him re possible involvement as I knew how busy the project was. I was very much hoping that this project would be involved as I thought it would make a very interesting case given its very unique work with young people of different faiths.

### **6 Nov 2011 Set Up Email**

Received a positive response about an initial get together which is very pleasing - especially given the lack of progress re recruiting other projects from faiths other than Christian.

### **5 Dec 2011 First Field Visit**

My first field visit was to touch base with Terry.

I had visited the area and the project before so knew what it was about, but the difference in the culture of this area is so marked compared with the area where I live. It reminded me of when I lived in a Multi-cultural area of Nottingham, but that area was just a few streets; this area is huge and contains people from so many different cultures.

I was reminded afresh of the different places of worship that were located in the area. The project centre is next to a church and opposite a mosque. I reflected that this is one of the great things about the UK. Whatever the challenges are, there is a large degree of freedom to practice what faith people want to.

As I signed in as 'a visitor' at the centre I was struck by the number of 'non-English' originating names in the Visitors Book. Many were not written in English script, but other scripts unknown to me. I felt out of place. I was also aware that all the visitors to the centre on that day appeared to be women. Apart from centre staff and volunteers, there were few men around. Couldn't decide if this was simply due to the activities on offer at the centre (the ground floor was full of young Asian women and their babies – obviously some sort of clinic set up) or a wider cultural reality.

Terry is an engaging Australian man exhibiting many positive and classic stereotypical Australian values – relaxed, enterprising, accommodating, confident, positive, having a 'can do' approach. He is very easy to get along with.

We met in the centre, but then walked to a local coffee shop as the centre had no free rooms available – it was very busy.

We had a very long conversation about my research; the project, theology, the challenges they were facing appointing a Muslim worker (and possible back-lash from Christian supporters); history of FYT and his organisation; the current economic and political situation; their expansion plans and the details of their current work programme.

I explained to him the details of my research, passed over a copy of my Information Sheet and Consent Form for his consideration and he enthusiastically agreed to take part. We put a process in place to do the case study and I agreed a few dates when this might take place.

As I drove away, I was further struck by the diversity evident in the area. For some strange reason this made me angry – not because of the diversity, but because this diversity is not reflected in politics, the media and things like sport. Sure, we get people of different ethnicities and colours in these fields, but they all appear to be from a moderated middle class and educated spectrum. The people I saw in this community have no profile outside of where they live. Where is the women in the burkha on British TV, where is the man in traditional Pakistani dress commenting on the cricket, when is the sari seen in political life? I wondered how this made the people in these communities feel and how the young people in the area felt about their apparent lack of representation.

#### **10 Jan 2012 Chasing Email**

I have had no response to confirming the dates we talked about when we met, so I have sent a chasing email. Feel this is an anxious time as this is the only project so far that is on-board. Wondering if it will happen.

#### **17 Jan 2012 Reply to Email**

Terry finally responds with an apology for not getting back to me. Feeling of relief. He says that things are taking shape at his end and he has talked to the team and they are willing to engage.

Despite the lack of control I have had I am glad I went through Terry, as the gatekeeper, to arrange this. I don't think it would have been done very easily if I had to approach the project team etc. He has copied those involved in on his reply to me asking them to sort times, book interview rooms etc. This would be hard for me to do at distance and without relationship.

My joy at his response is somewhat tempered when I check my diary. He has arranged on a suggested date of 6 Feb, but this is date I said I couldn't do! T's mistake.

I email him by return and fortunately, he replies by return, re-scheduling for 1<sup>st</sup> March. Phew!

#### **25 Jan 2012 Email from Terry**

More problems over dates. Some of those being interviewed now can't do 1st March and so we agree to go for 2nd March. Terry is being very supportive and helpful and doing all he can to make this work for me, but this is causing me some stress. Lack of power and being at the mercy of other people. This coupled with the lack of success re engaging other projects is a worry.

Talking to Pete about having a 'Strategy B' in case can't engage other faith projects. Would go for Christian ones I know with a very tight brief. Valhalla would fit this brief so investment here wouldn't be wasted. Set a deadline of Valentines day – if Strategy A isn't realised then Strategy B will be implemented. Currently working on the brief to make as robust as possible. Whilst a bit disappointing re other faith's engagement, some good learning points here and a slight sense of relief that I have an alternative Strategy.

## 2 March 2012 Second Field Visit

This visit was to undertake my interviews and get a fuller understanding of the area. In between interviews, I watched and observed what was happening in the project and took photographs of the area.

I did four interviews in total. Five or six would have been better (as originally discussed) but circumstances on the day prevented this. This was a shame, but part of the uncertainty of doing research I guess. Just hope this produces the depth of data desired.

I met Terry, the project leader again, two of his youth workers, Najeed and Nina, and a junior volunteer leader, Alice. Two of these people came from a Christian background, the other two were Muslim. One person was white (Australian background), one black (Caribbean roots) and the other two Asian (one Pakistani roots, the other Dutch). This almost seemed to illustrate the level of diversity found in this community. Where I currently live, there are no Asian people and only one black person - the husband of my local vicar!

Terry was his usual self, offering many insightful comments – I would like to work with him one day as think we could really benefit one another.

Najeed was a lovely and gentle man; passionate, well thought out, strong views, analytical. I was taken aback by his very successful track record of working with different faith groups all around the world. This enabled him to offer a highly nuanced critique that was informed by a global perspective as well as clearly a very local understanding.

Nina was warm, assertive, with good reflection and self-awareness attributes. Particularly struck by how she was able to separate out her own (Black Pentecostal) beliefs from the wider dynamic of those of the project. She has been with the project the longest which provided an historical perspective as well.

Alice was young, very enthusiastic about Valhalla. Excellent at telling stories, but perhaps lacked more in depth analytical skills. Her perspective was very much about her and her friends that offered a helpful portrayal bridging the gap between *worker* and *young person*. I felt the downside was that she knew little about some of the big socio-political issues I was seeking to address.

I felt the interviews went well. Could have talked to Najeed all day about the parallels of Muslim and Christian youth ministry (my words), which meant we were prone to wandering off the main point of my investigation. Had to keep checking myself and bringing it back on track.

Nina was a bit too-preoccupied with the role she had in schools to really focus on what I was seeking to unpack. This was helpful in terms of understanding isomorphic pressures, ethnic tensions and how she worked, but less constructive re other elements of my investigation.

Alice was inspiring and a testimony of all that the project seeks to be. She has come through the ranks and now just led her first event. There were one or two language issues re the more nuanced and policy questions I asked.

Terry was engaging and forthright as usual, but at the same time humble and compassionate. Very clear views about everything and gave me some insights that I need to reflect upon further. E.g. the bullying by a school of anyone who was not a Muslim. Do I include this 'hot potato' in my discussions? Confidential plans to expand into other towns? Views about other Christian organisations?



He also asked me questions about FYT, my research, a project they were thinking of running. This was a touch off-putting. I wanted to help him, but balance this with my research objectives within the limited time we had – hope I managed to do this and wasn't too dismissive of his questions. I think I did.

I talked informally with new vicar from the adjoining church in the kitchen whilst having a coffee. He was very interested in what I was doing and very positive about the project exclaiming, 'you're never sure what is going to happen next!'.

Later I met the interns and people from the Tony Blair Faith Foundation – it turns out I know one of them from way back when I lectured him during his JNC training. We had a brief chat about what he was up to and my research. I reflected that the Christian youth work world is a small world. We later had an email exchange and he gave me details of a contact in Leicester who was doing some interfaith work with young people (I did follow this up, but she was not doing the type of work I was interested in – it was mainly very short term interfaith projects).

I spoke to Terry at the end of the day and he said everyone had been positive about the process and had enjoyed it, so that was encouraging to learn. As I looked around just before I left I felt the project was a little bit like the metaphorical swan – calm and serene on the surface but paddling like mad underneath to keep going, keep being creative and to keep on track.

On the way home I called at the local library to get a further feel for the area and see if I could pick up some magazines/newspapers for a creative type exercise I was doing for a group of Masters youth work students. Again I was struck by the number of different languages spoken, the books available in different scripts, the levels of diversity, but also the poverty of the area. In the library there was a special display about faith – all faiths. Made me think about what I was doing and I took it as some encouragement for my overall project.

The street was alive with activity. I am increasingly aware that some of my reflections might be wrongly interpreted as prejudiced or critical, this is not my intention. I thought this because on this road and at this time, the Highway Code was not in operation! Business vehicles parked where they liked and raw Halal meat carcasses were being carried down the street on a man's shoulder.

I went into one supermarket to get some Asian food supplies and most of the local people were communicating in a language other than English. This was both exciting and a bit bewildering. Perhaps it was me, but I did get the sense that I was being looked at. As the only white person in the shop this gave me an insight into what it might feel like for any of the young people in the area who found themselves in a school where they were in the minority.

As I was taking one photograph, someone said something to me – I didn't know what it was. It was something about my camera. This made me a little anxious. Were they saying I shouldn't be taking photos? They carried on walking, but I got a little nervous and decided it was time to head for home.

### **28 March 2012 Transcribing**

I now have the finished transcripts from my interviews. Spent the day putting them all into one place and giving them a read through to check for accuracy etc. Struck by how different the type of work they are involved in is to other types of work with young people. Think they are very brave to do this both politically, but also in terms of opening themselves up to being criticised and misunderstood by faith groups, schools and the wider community. Risky stuff, but such a simple approach. Thought to

myself that this has God written all over it! Once checked for accuracy, I have decided to put it to one side and concentrate on analysing the data from Paradise.

### **5 May 2012 Coding**

Started coding the interviews. Couple of new codes in addition to those identified in Paradise seem to be evident – fun and explicit faith. Have to go back and check these out re Paradise when finished on Valhalla.

### **12 June 2012 Area Portrayal**

Began assembling my case study and writing-up the portrayal re the area and community profile. Used my photos to add to the picture I am building, but realised that I could do with some more. Am near the area in a few days so will go early and take some time to take some more and wander around the area a bit more.

Really like their web site and it contains a host of details, data and things to incorporate and reflect upon. The web site appears to be a really genuine reflection of who Valhalla are and what they are about. This reflects their pursuit of transparency and integrity.

### **13 June 2012 Positive Stories**

Still analysing web site material and also looking at their Facebook pages. Newsletters are a particular good source of rich data, portraying positive stories about what they do and how they do it. This seems to be an emerging theme.

### **20 June 2012 Third Field Visit**

Wandered around the area to take some more photos. Even though it was gone 10 by the time I had finished, few of the shops were open. Highlights further that the cultural norms of the area are different to those I normally experience.

Met a local resident and Imam near one of the mosques. I explained what I was doing and I asked if I could take some photos. No problem, but the Imam didn't want his photo taking. The resident and I talked about the weather!

The area was a dedicated youth area with a MUGA and a couple of brick walls that were the goals – they had become graffiti walls. An Asian boy was playing football. Noted that boys play football whatever the culture they come from. Talked about the graffiti wall with the resident. He wanted more punishment for those who did it – I kept quiet.

Took photos of the Islamic school and nursery – very strongly marketed as Islamic schools which I found enlightening. Being Islamic is clearly viewed as a strong selling point in this area; something which might not be able to be said about many other areas of the country.

Was struck by the 'no rubbish' sign painted on the fence nearby. The area had rubbish in it. Felt it was a bit of a cry/plea for respect.

Part of me wished I could have seen one of Valhalla's events in person – it would have been insightful, but the consent issues would just have been so fraught and complex. Maybe if I do any further study this might be something that I explore.

### **29 June 2012 Rich Data**

Becoming increasingly aware that the data here is very rich; so many avenues could be explored: theological, political, economic, pedagogical, what is faith? Heritage/legacy of youth work and faith? Following advice in supervision panel meeting, concentrating for now on building the study and portraiture.

In that meeting NS wasn't that interested in the photos, but they are really important for me. Not just as part of the data, but because they act as triggers, resonators, prompts and stimuli re other data, but also other avenues of enquiry and interpretation. I keep looking at them and reflecting. Current reflection is 'wow – this is an exciting place and a buzzing project!' – must ensure this comes across in my study.

### **3 July 2012      Data Integration**

Spent most of the day analysing interviews. Some really interesting stuff especially looking at the symmetry between those who are Muslim and those who are Christian – they are all of one purpose. Need to bear in mind that whilst the interviews are important data sets, they are only part of the picture – reminded again of this yesterday at the Mixed Methods day at Nottingham University. As Prof Chris Day said, 'just doing interviews is not a case study!' Am glad that I have not done just the interviews, but need to ensure that I integrate the analysis of all my data into my final write up. Confident I can do this.

### **5 July 2012      Patterns**

More analysing of interviews. Lots of patterns and looking at how these connect together. Finding it hard not to compare the patterns to those found in the Paradise study. Will have to do this eventually, but wanting to hold back a little until done all the cases so that I don't prejudice my findings too much.

There are so many threads and avenues to consider – lots of patterns too. The interviews really bring out the emphasis on relationships – everyone talks about it as paramount.

The faith dynamic is very different to that seen in Paradise – mainly because the faith element is so very explicit. I think I might explore the idea of a faith continuum to aid understanding etc. Not sure how this would work nor what it would be a continuum *from* and *to* – will give it some thought as I look at my other cases.

Bit of a light bulb moment re the Sider and Unruh domains! This really visually portrays how Paradise and Valhalla are different. Suspect Nirvana and Shangri-La will be more like Paradise.

Again struck by how the younger people know so little or nothing about Big Society. Is this just re the Big Society or about politics and policy issues in general?

It is very clear that everyone is on a mission and it is fun! Personally really pleased to see so many people mention the 'fun' word – so refreshing in troubled times and outcomes driven cultures and frameworks. If this emerges as part of the overall findings will be interested to see some people's reactions – just doesn't fit with much current rhetoric.

### **6 July 2012      Draining**

Feeling that reading, thinking and analysing the transcribes over and over again is a draining process. It doesn't feel like I am achieving anything even though I know I am – must persevere, but need a break. Looking forward to a holiday to switch off (if I can) for a few days, but would like to complete first draft of this study by then if I can. Don't want to lose momentum by stopping.

### **7 July 2012      Terrorist Suspicions**

Heard on the news that people from the area (mainly youngish people) have been arrested on suspicion of terrorism; a sobering reminder of the tensions that exist across different ethnic/faith groupings. Highlights further the value of the work Valhalla does.

### **9 July 2012     Terrorism Charges**

People arrested now charged as carrying guns, a bomb and leaflets – allegedly on way to bomb an EDL march in Yorkshire. Do those involved know of Valhalla? Does Valhalla know of them? If not, what difference might an engagement/intervention have made?

### **16 July 2012     Relationships**

Analysis continuing. The emphasis placed on relationships is so dominant. Almost getting bored of reflecting upon it and trying to find new angles and insights about it. Permeates all aspects of their work and my study: mission, community, cohesions, faith, politics etc, etc. Left thinking the world would be a better place if there were more Valhallas.

### **17 July 2012     Big Society**

Reflections on the Big Society continue to follow patterns from The Big View and Paradise; older and more mature people like the idea, but dislike how it has been put into operation. Younger people somewhat ignorant about it, but when discussed, they like the idea. Reminded again what a hash government has made of communicating and implementing what could have been a radically transformative policy.

Again reminded that not all youth workers are interested in contemporary politics and policy. Find it hard to rationalise this given the passion they bring to their work – danger they exist in a vacuum, or I guess just get on with doing great work irrespective of what goes on around them. Actually have sympathy with this paradigm of work so feel torn between the two perspectives.

### **27 July 2012     Pause**

Stopping entries in my diary now. First draft of case study completed and I will let it be for a while and re-visit when all the studies are at this stage.

## **Appendix 13 – My Four Case Studies**

Portrayals of the Paradise, Valhalla, Nirvana and Shangri-La Case Studies.

# Paradise Case Study



Nigel Pimlott

June 2012

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## Case Study Extract

This is a case study of a faith-based youth work project called Paradise (not its real name). It is the first in a series of four studies. In order to establish a theoretical framework for faith-based youth work and propose a tentative emergent hypothesis regarding the determinants and territorial claims of such work, the studies seek to discover the relationship between the common good, the notion of the Big Society initiative and faith-based youth work; the role of faith; the space and place such projects have in society and the intentions, function, shape and form such work embodies.

Paradise is based in Birmingham and works with marginalised young people on two housing estates. It primarily operates a youth centre out of a shop located in a small shopping complex amongst the high-rise flats that dominate the area. It facilitates a number of activities, programmes and services that seek to respond to local young people and benefit the wider community, seeking the common good.

This study has been undertaken using a mix of research methods that have included: short-term ethnography, semi-structured interviews, collection and analysis of data in the public domain and examination of organisational reports and communications.

Attempts have been made to preserve the anonymity of the project and consequently, all the names quoted in this study have been changed. Where direct quotations from the interviews have been used these are pre-fixed with a coding number. This number is an administrative reference in my system of analysis and has no other bearing or significance.

My investigation revealed that Paradise is a highly motivated, locally rooted and passionate project that is very committed to the young people and the community within which it operates. It occupies a significant space and place within the community being the only deliverer of youth work in the area. It has a strong focus on meeting the needs of the local young people, being positive role-models for them, being positive about them and building relationships. The overarching objective of the project is to bring about transformation and develop community, which it achieves with little credence to the notion of the Big Society.

It wrestles with the on-going threat of isomorphism, having been over-influenced by external factors in the past. It is now more focused and purposeful, fully reflecting its strap-line of building hope, unlocking potential and realising worth. Partnerships are important in its work and it has a strong public profile.

Paradise exhibits a 'tacit' approach to the faith dynamic of its work, whilst aspiring to develop this further within the general dynamic of seeking restoration and redemption for the young people it works with and the wider community.

This study indicates that any tentative emerging hypothesis about how faith-based youth work undertakes its work is focused upon the principles of: Human Dignity, Solidarity, Subsidiarity, Flourishing and Thriving, Change and Transformation, Telling the Stories, Mutual and Creative Relationships, Money and Funding, underpinned by an organisational Faith Motivation.

The work of Paradise is focused upon: formation and education, informal education, pastoral care, support, development, community and advocacy.

# Introduction

This is a case study investigation of a youth work project working in an inner-city community in east Birmingham.

The project works with marginalised young people and the wider community to try and bring about individual and collective transformation.



The study is presented with reference to the principles of portraiture as outlined by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997); principles that seek to combine the dimensions and disciplines of rigorous social qualitative research methods and the more artistic, aesthetic, reflective and personal aspects of contemporary social science investigation and inquiry.

The actual name of the project and the names of those involved have been changed in order to provide as much anonymity as feasible for those participating in the study.

This case study sets out:

- How the research was undertaken;
- A portraiture of the area within which the project operates;
- Details of the project - based on information in the public domain that the project itself offers;
- The key findings of my investigation;
- Analytical discussions regarding these findings;
- Conclusions and emerging theoretical conceptualisations.

## Research Methodology

### Method and Timing

A full critique of the methodology used is set out in my PhD Thesis and detailed analysis is not considered here. For reference purposes, the study involved:

- A series of six semi-structured interviews – see page 48 for the structured element of the questions asked;
- Ethnographic appraisal
  - Observing staff
  - Observing visitors to the project
  - Walking around the community
  - Driving around the area – photographing, pausing and reflecting;
- Reviewing project literature and public documents;
- Examining artwork and displays in the project building;
- Reviewing project newsletters and publicity materials;
- Evaluating the organisation's web site;

- Examining government, infrastructure organisation and policy reports and documents;
- Watching, reading and reflecting upon media reports and articles;
- Evaluating relevant blogs, critiques and perspectives of the work and area;
- Reviewing and analysing local leaflets and newsletters;
- Incorporating prior practice and reflexive knowledge of the project's work;
- Talking informally to local passers-by (at their instigation);
- Taking photographs of the project building, the work of the project and the local community.

The study took place during the period January - May 2012 and involved: site visits, remote electronic research, literature reviews and email communications. This is the first study in a series of four.

## The Area and Contextual Terrain

### Location

The area was described by one participant as a 'forgotten place' (Mark). Surrounded by a network of roadways and motorways that are some of the busiest thoroughfares of Britain's second city, the F [place] and B [place] Housing Estates in East Birmingham are not easy to find. If you didn't know where they were, you would likely miss them. I travelled on the surrounding roads for many years simply unaware that present behind the fences was an extensive community where people lived.

### Physical Environment

The physicality of the area is dominated by what were described by one participant as 'wretched tower blocks, crappy shops and housing'. What were once shiny, new and innovative high-rise housing blocks have now become tired relics from a previous era, no longer considered a desirable or socially responsible approach to modern housing demands.

In parts of the estates, the dominance of the tower blocks is interrupted by a variety of mixed private and social housing stock with a number of open green spaces, across which march electricity pylons and wires.

There are several new developments including a new health centre, multi-use games area and an outdoor play facility which is right next to the M6 arterial route into the city centre.

On the surrounding road networks, there are no traffic signs highlighting the existence of the estates that are home to thousands of people. Roads into and out of the estates are difficult to negotiate with seemingly endless regiments of speed bumps standing guard to slow down over enthusiastic motorists and the stereotypical errant boy-racer fraternity.



The physical community looks as though it could do with a face-lift and a coat of paint. It feels tired and in a state of dis-repair. Broken glass litters the street, the litter bins are broken and burnt, the post box is rusty, concrete bollards are cracked and up-rooted. There are lots of fences with barbed wire protecting buildings and graffiti-embellished shuttered-up shops. It resembles a 1970's development and could easily be mistaken for the fictitious 'Chatsworth Estate' from the Shameless TV series.



## Community Profile

Given the size of the community, there do not appear to be many people walking about on the streets; an eerie quietness pervades. This could simply be down to the colder weather experienced during site visits, but it does embody a somewhat quiet and mysterious paradox that so many people appear inactive. The shopping areas would not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as 'vibrant' and it was simply not possible to purchase a sandwich in the locality.

What is apparent, however, is that in general terms community here is, or at least in the past has been, considered important. As one commentator notes, 'behind the faded scenes there are a few dedicated people working hard to restore B [place] to its former glory; youth workers and spirited local residents alike, engaging at times with the local authority' (Baker 2011).

There appear to be disproportionately large number of community buildings, relative to the size of the area, endeavouring to achieve these objectives. These include: community centres, a residents' club, churches, a social club, entertainment venue and public houses (some seemingly enjoying better days in the past).

There are clearly attempts being made to improve the area and the lot of local people. Shannahan (2012b) notes, 'I've met and worked alongside incredibly positive, hard working people who are resisting social exclusion, who are rising above marginalisation and developing incredibly creative projects with older people, with children, with young people on the estate. So I wouldn't want to suggest that the people of the B [place] are not organising, are not working hard to improve the quality of life on their estate.'

Field observations witnessed a minibus transporting elderly and disabled people to a morning gathering, elderly gentlemen enjoying a lunchtime pint and taxi drivers parked-up reading newspapers as they awaited their next booking.

Recent news that The Big Lottery 'Big Local' is to invest £1 million into the area over the next ten years offers additional hope that the evident embers of potential will be fanned into flames of possibility. The Big Lottery describes the community as having, 'widespread passion and commitment to see change happen' (Big Local Trust 2012). Such a commitment indicates that the area has significant social, economic and developmental investment needs.

The *Be Birmingham Neighbourhoods Board Strategic Assessment* (2009) concluded:

- Worklessness remains a distinct challenge for this neighbourhood, F [place] and B [place] has one of the highest worklessness rates of all twenty five (Birmingham) priority neighbourhoods;

- Anecdotally, residents relate to ‘the B [place]’ as being a ‘sink’ estate. In general a lot of the problems experienced by residents are as a result of the poor urban design of the estate with effectively only two service roads that lead into the estate;
- Violent crime appears to be an issue in this neighbourhood; both the crime rates of serious violent crime and violence against a person are higher than the overall citywide crime rates. In contrast however this neighbourhood has seen no incidents of gun crime between 2008/09;
- Anecdotally, the tower blocks within this area are largely seen by local residents as a magnet for drug dealing, prostitution and general criminal activity. Local people believe that ‘challenging families’ and people experiencing mental health issues are placed in the tower blocks;
- A significantly lower proportion of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live;
- Neighbourhood infrastructure is limited within the neighbourhood, with the third sector especially under represented. However there is a well-established community association and there are a number of other small groups in the area. Perceptions of community cohesion seem only slightly below that of the city; however a smaller proportion of residents compared to citywide feel that they can influence decision making.

Additionally, this report estimated that the 2007 population demographics were: 86.8% white, 2.6% Asian, 5.7% Black, 4.5% Mixed Race. 13% of the population were aged 10-17 years old. Child Poverty Action Group (2012) estimates child poverty in the area is 41% - the thirteenth worst in the country. The Index of Multiple Deprivation places the area in the bottom 4% in England.



It was reported by several people being interviewed that the ethnic demographics of the area were changing rapidly.

Whilst accurate data is not available, anecdotal evidence offered and observation of people on the street suggested a rapidly growing Somali population and a growing sense of ethnic diversity.

Shannahan reports (2012b) that, ‘unemployment is running at about 18% according to last week’s figures, the second highest in the country, and it’s closer to 30, maybe even 35% amongst young men on the estate.’

A large shopping and hotel complex can be seen from the Estates. However, this is not readily accessible to local people. Shannahan (2012b) remarks, ‘unless you’re willing to swim across a canal, take your life in your hands by crossing the London to Birmingham railway and the M6 motorway, unless you have a car, it would take you at least an hour to get to the Fort shopping centre.’

According to recent research, 34% of children are in poverty (End Child Poverty 2012). The area is ranked 19th in England regarding having the biggest risk of poverty in the future and 30th for child poverty out of 326 local authorities (Experian 2012).

## Symbols and Metaphors

A number of symbols, metaphorical reflections and portrayals came to mind during the investigation. The following are the ones observed that made a lasting impression along with my interpretation of their meaning:



- Broken glass on the streets – reflecting a sense that this was a damaged community;
- Speed bumps on every road – portraying a sense that it was hard to pick up momentum in the area;
- High-rise flats dominating the landscape – suggesting that people struggle to connect with one another;



- People wearing football shirts and flying England flags – hinting at territorial and tribal positionings;
- A variety of hats and hoodies being worn by people – a stereotypical portrayal of the type of community investigated;
- A taped-up letter box - suggesting fear and unwelcome intrusions;
- Areas of green grass on the estate – communicating hope and possibility of growth.

## Summative Feelings

These were augmented by a number of personal feelings and intuitions, summarised as a:

- Sense of the area being a forgotten and isolated place;
- Feeling that many things were dormant and waiting to be re-awakened;
- Conviction that life's challenges and struggles were kept under the surface;
- Recognition of latent potential;
- Place with signs of life and hope;
- Hope and determination that things could be made better.

## The Project<sup>1</sup>

The project is an independently managed branch of a growing national organisation. It facilitates a number of youth and community work projects. It operates as a youth centre and community building out of a shop, which is in a row of similar, mostly empty, shops in the middle of the estate.



### Project Strap Line

The project strap line is:

Building Hope, Unlocking Potential and Realising Worth of marginalised young people.

### Vision

The organisational vision is for local Christians to be equipped to make a contribution to addressing the needs of marginalised and excluded young people throughout the UK as part of the wider Christian mission to the world.

<sup>1</sup> Information largely adapted from the organisation's web site.

The vision comes to fruition through local people bringing hope where there is despair and inclusion and participation where there is risk of exclusion and disaffection.

Teams of staff and volunteers seek to live out the lifestyle advocated by Jesus, engaging with local culture, modelling grace, hope and justice and demonstrating the worth of young people, wherever they are at.

Their strong portfolio of programmes is creative, innovative, flexible and engaging, but they see that their identity is being defined by who they are rather than what they do.

## Aims

Their organisational aim is to set up sustainable youth work projects in deprived local communities and estates across the West Midlands.

Paradise is committed to building sustainable projects with young people in their specific area that suffer from the effects of deprivation. Looking to make a difference in local neighbourhoods is at the core of organisation's work.

## Ethos, Values and Faith

They are creative, innovative and flexible youth workers offering personal support and experiential learning opportunities through their network of grassroots branches and partners across the United Kingdom who relate to a small core infrastructure which develops new initiatives and provides professional support services to the frontline teams.

They are entirely committed to developing a learning community within the Christian youth work community that operates at the edges of society and they are working together to seek to continuously improve their understanding and approaches to the needs of young people.

Underpinning their story as an organization is their belief in: an incarnational approach, the arrival of the Kingdom of God and the good news of Shalom; terms defined in the Glossary of my Thesis.

They seek to be agents that, 'loose the chains of injustice, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke.' The significance is in the 'here and now'.

They quote a definition of shalom that is enlightening and further illuminating of their aims: Shalom is a 'kaleidoscopic vision of what life is like when lived in line with God's agenda'. It is the 'equipping of a person so they can cope with life's sufferings and sorrows whilst basking in the beauty and joy it brings. Shalom is about comprehensive well being and flourishing at every level or life' (S. Chalke *The Lost Message of Jesus*).

## Community Work Consists of:

- Starting new projects in local communities;
- Assessing community needs;
- Consultation work with young people;
- Strategic planning and local partnership development;



- Delivery of project work including centre-based work, detached work, youth cafes, social enterprise set-up etc.;
- Providing infrastructure, resources and management to local projects;
- Supporting local vision and interest in working with marginalised young people;
- Connecting projects and youth workers into Paradise’s learning community;
- Providing local community projects with access to a wide-range of programmes and training;
- Access to information, advice, fundraising and management support.

### Work with Young People Consists of:

- Personal and Social Development Programme;
- Helping underachieving young people to obtain 4 GCSE’s (grade D-G);
- Employability Project for NEET (not engaged in education, employment or training) young people;
- Specialist programme for Prolific Young Offenders;
- Mentoring and One-to-One support;
- Mentoring Training;
- Emotional Literacy Programme for schools;
- Anger Management Programme;
- Social Skills and Team Work Programme for schools;
- Creative Learning;
- Social Enterprise opportunities;
- Sports, Music and Media Projects;
- Providing Community Venues as Inclusion Support centres for schools and communities.

At the time of one of my field visits, the project had just completed a piece of 12ft-high community artwork. Designed by young people to reflect their thoughts and views, it was funded by the Arts Council in England and produced in conjunction with a local artist, Mohammed Ali, and the University of Birmingham. This installation attracted significant local and media interest, the impact of which is specifically discussed below.

### Staffing

Paradise currently has the following staff working out of the Hub:

Three staff – two full-time, one part-time  
Ten volunteers

Recent cuts in local authority and national government grants and funding have meant that staffing has been reduced in the last eighteen months. As their Annual Report (2010) states, ‘it is not clear at all who will now champion marginalised young people in funding terms’.

### Funding

Paradise is funded from a number of sources. These include: Donations, Children in Need and the Big Lottery.

They also undertake contracted work and currently have a ‘Payment by Results’ sub-contract with a body contracted by the Department for Work and Pensions to help get young people into work. This involves working with young people in years 10-13 helping them improve their behaviour, school attendance and achieving Level 2 and 3 qualifications. They get paid if the young people get a job and stay in it for more than six months.



## Findings

This section is broken down into a number of headings that are informed by: Firstly, those findings shaped and perceived by a general overview of the case; Secondly, those informed by the answers given to the questions asked of those interviewed; Thirdly, by additional ethnographic observations; and finally by supplementary miscellaneous portrayals and evidence.



Some of the quotations used to highlight individual findings could equally be applied to highlight other findings. However, where this applies I have opted not to duplicate the quotation for reasons of prudence and efficacy.

### Overview

Paradise is a highly motivated, locally rooted and passionate project that is very committed to the young people and the community within which it operates. It occupies a significant space and place within the community being the only deliverer of youth work in the area. It has a strong focus on meeting the needs of the local young people, being positive role-models for them, being positive about them and building relationships. The overarching objective of the project is to bring about transformation and develop community.

It wrestles with the on-going threat of isomorphism, having been over influenced by external factors in the past. It is now more focused and purposeful, fully reflecting its strap line of building hope, unlocking potential and realising worth. Partnerships are important in its work and it has a strong public profile.

Paradise exhibits a ‘tacit’ approach to the faith dynamic of its work, whilst aspiring to develop this further within the general dynamic of seeking restoration and redemption for the young people it works with and the wider community.

### Perspectives and Lenses

Those interviewed were asked what words came to mind when they thought of Paradise (each person was asked for three words, but some offered more and some less). These were their responses:

Caring communities	Change	Relational
Positive	Transforming	Believing in young people
Integrity	Commitment	
Long-term	Hope x 3	
Authentic	Incarnational	

When account was taken of the tone, emphasis and frequency of the responses made, the following is a summary conclusion of what was being communicated. Paradise was said to be about:

Hope, transformation, being authentically compassionate.

Those interviewed offered the following metaphors and images as portrayals of Paradise:

- Butterfly – helping young people spread their wings and be beautiful;

- People carrier – reliable and always room for more;
- Climbing up a mountain/going on a trek – a challenging expedition;
- Building blocks – of character, leadership, personal and social development, spiritual awareness, change-making and journeying with young people.

Within the description and sentiments offered and observed about the project, there was an overwhelming sense of a hope that things could be different. This sense of possibility, life and anticipation of transformation underpinned everything. There was a strong pedagogy and approach that was very much focused on young people, rooted in a desire to see the transformation of individuals and the community. Within the language of my overarching investigation it was evidently a faith-motivated project operating in pursuit of the common good.

006. the hope, the hope that the world can change and individuals can change, everyone's born with potential and everyone's born with skills, you know and everyone's born with the opportunity and can achieve something, whereas a vast part of society wants to write a lot of young people off. The faith element is that you believe in young people, you believe in what they're capable of, but also there's a Christian belief there that's kind of some fundamentals and some things that kind of hang, some hooks to kind of hang them things on. Which can make, hopefully in relationship, can help young people explore their life and what is life. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

200. I would say that it is long-term relationship based, trying to raise young people's aspirations and maybe challenge their lifestyle as well. *Mark, Paradise staff member*

264. I think they're a team of good people who see good in young people. A lot of people tend to just brush young people off and think they're not worth the time of day and I think Paradise actually takes these young people and does see good in them and they want them to have a positive future for them. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

321. I mean I guess one of the things to start with is that on this estate they are effectively the only voluntary organisation here. And that means that their presence is very significant, but also really quite demanding on the people involved in that work and there are all kinds of pushes and pulls that come with that in terms of expectations to doing everything and wanting to try and do everything and a kind of practical need to stay focused within that. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

The following are specific findings broken down into a number of sub-headings, reflective of the subject matter and aims of my investigation.

## Mission and Values

### Motivation

A number of clear, strong and well-evidenced motivations were apparent, namely:

- **Being positive about young people and facilitating the telling of their stories was a prime motivation.**

036. ... we do a newsletter that goes out locally which is very much about telling stories, good news stories. Trying to show people that things are happening. Young people's lives have been, you know we're working with young people and things are happening and things are changing. *Pete, Paradise staff member*



156. [re *The Art Project*– see below] I really like it because it shows that young people quite ... are doing something. Instead of getting this bad press of just causing trouble, they're working together to put something together that's displaying a message and I really like that, its bringing young people together trying to break that bad publicity they get, and the message it portrays, I really like that. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

236. How I see it is that this place is like a forgotten place and I feel like that any sort of positive attention, media attention is going to be a good thing. *Mark, Paradise staff member*

339. ... but I think the 'outer' estate context tends to be dismissed really quite negatively in the media and the whole discourse about chavs and the like and tends to be fairly unglamorous when it comes to youth work and even the church, in favour of things like the inner city which has words like 'vibrant' and 'multicultural' and 'rich and diverse' attached to it. And actually I think some of what we've done here has been wanting to say to some of those wider audiences 'actually there is good stuff here and there are good people here and we'd like you to take us seriously because you can learn some stuff from us'. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

We want to show that the media portrayal of the youth of today isn't really true ... some of us are different. We can do things to help the community, we don't wanna destroy it. Summit different like this it shows that B [place] we've got people that wanna help the community. The way that B [place] is portrayed isn't really true. It might not look the best but the people on here are good people and we wanna show it. *A young person interviewed about The Art Project by the BBC*

- **Creating space for young people and making sure their voices were heard was significant.**

This was evident in a number of interviews and in a rap/poem that had been written by one of the young people about the area:

Is anybody listening?  
I pray to God even though I'm far from being a Christian  
To give me strength, give me guidance give me all I need  
Cos I feel like I'm suffocating with this fucking air I breathe  
I'm trying to put my feet up, cos right now I'm feeling beat up  
I'm full of hate, things I don't really speak of  
I've seen things that only you could dream of  
I've been to hell and back

I'm living in a war zone cos every day's a fight

Extracts from an *Urban Prophetic Lament* (Morris 2012).

012. So young people are having their voice heard, expressing themselves, seeing that things are possible, being part of something bigger ... Just giving these young people just an opportunity to become heard which doesn't happen often ... at all. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

036. [We] use them [the media] because they want to listen to what you're saying and use that as a way of ... giving young people a voice. And we're very clear ... It's very much trying to get the young people's voices heard kind of using the media. And we're very clear, I don't know if it came across or not with the Midlands Today of the positive story. So not like there's deprived here and these are tough kids and these are hoodies and these are violent kids. It's about the positives and these young people are trying to do something and wanna do something. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

341. And the stories from the young people who were involved in [the Art Project] this week was actually seeing themselves and hearing themselves on BBC local TV was actually really quite a positive boost for them and it was a really positive story in terms of the local neighbourhood. So actually that was a positive bit to counter the Daily Mail proclaiming us as the 'seventh most work shy neighbourhood in the country last year' and that kind of stuff. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

- **Supporting the personal and social development of young people and helping them succeed was important.**

137. ... before I was volunteering and doing stuff here for Paradise, I was, for want of a better word, a 'bum'. I was like unemployed and stuff and on benefits cos I'd left college after doing a Music Tech course, but I didn't ... I could have went to University but I didn't really have the funds. So I just kind of sank into this 'I'm not doing anything'. I sat on benefits and didn't really apply myself to anything. So in a way, without making them sound like my big saviours, it kind of gave me something, a direction to move in, I guess. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

214. ... so sort of giving them chances to become part of the community to - like you can see around - to express themselves and to find out who they are and then going on from there really. *Mark, Paradise volunteer*

266. Seeing young people succeed [what Paradise is described as doing]. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

333. I mean I think there's some quite sort of explicit programme focused stuff like the Thrive course which has been about recruiting and seeking to equip local young adults primarily in skills to able to deliver youth work, but also to get a wider sense of ... sense of kind of growing in to positions of leadership within the community. And I think the story of that programme's been interesting in the sense that it's done its job to the extent that it's ... it has recruited people, it has built their confidence and their skills ... *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

I have worked extensively with Paradise in my constituency ... [they] are passionate about our community and the development of our young people ... *Local MP in Paradise leaflet*

- **Having solidarity with those young people that were marginalised was a key component.**

064. For me it's giving young people who are maybe written off by other people that chance and opportunity to experience something different, to give them different choices and hopefully guide them into making the right choice. *Dave Paradise staff member*

133. ... young people get a lot of bad press these days. What with young people's unemployment rates and riots and things going on. They definitely seem like they need some attention. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*



204. This is where I live ... I wanted to work to make this place a better place, the best place it could be and I studied like the Sermon on the Mount and stuff like that, and I feel like the work that Paradise is doing is, has something of like that ... those kingdom values in it, sort of going to work in the marginalised place with deprived young people. *Mark, Paradise staff member*

214. I think that ... the young people that we work with are the marginalised people so they don't get on at school if they go at all. They don't engage with any other sort of ... anything else, NEETS ... *Mark, Paradise staff member*

238. ... it is a place that has been forgotten, almost ... I think that's because this is an example of good work in a hard to work place. *Mark, Paradise staff member*

- **Being role-models and modelling something different to dominant narratives was also a motivation.**

306. ... now I'm just like volunteering and helping out. Basically like I said I was 17 I was on a NEET project 'cos I didn't really have any idea what I wanted to do in life I was kind of lost. And I got onto this project and I met this youth worker Esther, who works for Paradise and like she like really, really inspired me and I was like 'wow!' I would rather actually know where I wanna go in my life and I felt very much better about myself. Really given me a lot of confidence and that. And I was like this is fantastic. I would love to go out there and you know give the same, give young people in my situation the same inspiration to wanna do something with their life. *Mark, Paradise volunteer*

337. Because I think also if you ask people in the right way, kind of what are the values of this organisation, I think you get some good stuff out of it. And ... and ... if a lot of that is about generosity, commitment to an area, kind of actually living here as well as working here, building friendships and growing trust that lasts over time, encouraging self-belief and hope and sparking imagination and those kind of things. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

- **Developing community was crucial.**

187. I think the best thing about being involved with Paradise is the real feeling of family and community you get. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

212. It's not like trying to get people to be better so that they can leave this rubbish place. It's more like, let's like I say, let's get this place going and build community here and make this a place where people want to come rather than the last resort sort of thing. *Mark, Paradise staff member*

268. ... we do try to make an impact on the community as well [what Paradise is described as doing]. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

333. There's also a sense that just by *being* here and with people like Pete living on the estate and a personal but also a sort of organisational commitment to community development, there's been a whole load of contributions that Paradise and the centre have made locally in terms of the beginning, engaging with the beginnings of what you might call community regeneration and stuff on the estate. *Adam Paradise external stakeholder*

## Values

In a similar fashion, a number of tangible underpinning values were evident:

- **Seeing young people thrive and flourish.**

159. ... trying to bring out the best in everything, help out those who need help, just kind of ... I can't use the tagline again, but it really is that trying to find the good in everything and helping those who need help. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

274. I think the overall is like the whole seeing good in the young people and like you know seeing young people thrive. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

- **Making a long-term commitment to the people and area.**

014. ... and just kind of being here and sticking it out, being here for the long-term, seeing that change and development is a long-term process. So you kind of ride out the storm and believe that something is, that things are possible, things can happen. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

329. ... one of the senses of tension more explicitly within that is really more and more shying away from the kind of outcomes-driven sources of funding that simply want numbers on paper and want, sorry outputs-driven, that want 'x' number of people into work in the next two weeks or whatever. Because of the relational approach and of the long-term kind of community-based approach that kind of stuff just actually becomes increasingly unhelpful. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

- **Operating locally.**

020. And on one level you, we could have sat here and said we're doing this and we're doing that and I think you get caught into that kind of mind-set that says we're doing this, we're doing that, we're working here, yeah, we're working across 20 neighbourhoods blah, blah, blah, but actually to say we're working in one or two or three neighbourhoods but we're *deep* for me, and *now* we're in a position where we're trying to make sense of what that means to be deep and to be rooted. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

080. ... hopefully engaging local people is making a difference and I hope that people see that you know local people living in the area, see the change maybe of the young people who were previously causing trouble in their areas and seeing a difference in them ... *Dave, Paradise staff member*

- **Believing in hope.**



012. you can see with things like [Art Project] we've just done, you can kind of see things are actually, just within that week and the bit before and the future, you can kind of see where with some of those individuals that's starting to come about or just little chinks of change or hope or difference. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

323. They've got a very nice strapline which I think actually comes through in practice, so if I can remember it, it's something about releasing potential, realising worth, or is it unlocking potential, realising hope, something like that. Hope, potential and worth. And I think that expresses a lot about what happens in practice. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

- **Expecting change and transformation.**

008. So I think there's fundamentals like, things like resurrections, opportunities for redemption, opportunities for change, things like justice. So kind of just big picture, some of the real big picture, quite loose stuff, hard to pin down. Some of the fundamental, whether it's words, whether it's themes, that you can hopefully see in individual lives and in communities. Things changing, things happening. Whether it's forgiveness, whether it's broken relationships that are restored and you know, whether that's on a one-to-one level or on a community-to-community, faith-to-faith, people-to-God, you know, kind of restoring those relationships. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

131. A lot of the people that I know in Paradise, me as well, see young people they're going to be the next generation, whatever. So if you want to change something the best place to start is at the beginning I guess, and that's kind of what you see young people as. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

... they can make things happen and can create lasting change in our youth *Local MP in Paradise leaflet*

We exist to help young people transform their view of themselves and make a valuable contribution to the wider world ... we have a bold ambition to see young people once 'written-off' by society become transformers for change in their community. *Paradise leaflet*

- **Valuing community.**

177. I really like the idea of ... the idea of the healthy ... promoting the healthy lifestyle and getting people involved, and doing something for the community with the community's interests at heart instead of just profit. I really like that. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

- **Seeking shalom and the Kingdom of God.**

327. I think if their faith position was more *conservative* it would be an issue. If it was more of a model of we're doing this community work to with a view primarily or ultimately to convert young people I think I'd have issues. But I think there are some shifts towards being more explicit about the kind of faith position that they do have which is about ... seeking shalom within a local neighbourhood, nurturing community that is loving, that is just, that is peaceful, that is reconciled and reconciling, those kind of things. I think it's good news that they're exploring ways of being more explicit about that. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

- **Seeing something in everyone and everything, believing no one is lost.**

014. I think believing, believing that nobody's, I suppose is lost ... That no young person is beyond support and help. I think that's quite, that's challenging because there's times when you kind of, it's really hard to ...because you do have that little bit where you do have, well you know what it would be so easy to write this young person off, just to say 'no'. And you know, you can't do everything, you can't do ... but believing that every single person has got that opportunity to achieve if they were given the right opportunities. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

135. Along with the tagline, it's very much kind of seeing something in everything and everyone. There's always something to be had there, something good, some potential everywhere. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

141. Well I think a lot of it is not just giving them something to do but like making young people feel part of something. Certain young people might feel separated from others or, you know, feel like they're on their own and it's about bringing them together. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*



- **Creating space for reflection.**

064. [it's] about reflection, so ... Getting them to think about even if it's just their local area, their upbringing, their futures...Just letting them grow in that sense. For me it's about giving young people, that maybe don't have those opportunities and those spaces, to do that, and giving them that chance and that. *Dave Paradise staff member*

### **Aims and objectives**

Several clear aims and objectives were manifest:

- **Achieving the objectives of the strap line.**

012. Fundamentally, the organisation, (is) about building hope, unlocking potential, realising worth is something actually I firmly believe we're about. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

323. They've got a very nice strapline which I think actually comes through in practice, so if I can remember it, it's something about releasing potential, realising worth, or is it unlocking potential, realising hope, something like that. Hope, potential and worth. And I think that expresses a lot about what happens in practice. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

- **Meeting the needs of the young people.**

016. Getting a young person a qualification, again you know we've got, one of the guys here who can't read and actually him working towards a qualification and getting a qualification has been quite a big step. You know and I think you can kind of ignore those things, oh you know that's just ticking boxes that's ... but actually these things are significant. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

113. I guess the stuff that we really want to do and what the young people need [is] just to do what the young people really need in the area. *Dave, Paradise staff member*



- **Helping young people make better life choices.**

066. For me, I don't know if there's ever an end point as such. But I guess, I might word it differently and say that 'what's maybe a success?' and what's a, 'what could be achieved?'. And maybe ... It's just that for me if a young person finds themselves in a situation that maybe a year or two ago they would have reacted very differently or made a very different choice but through our mentoring or through our work with them the relationship at that point they make a different or better decision in that situation and are able to kind of point themselves in a new direction, and for me that's a success and we've made a real difference there. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

There were also two more subtle and nuanced findings .....

- **Making small, incremental and on-going progress was valued.**

068. ... throughout working with young people I see a lot of those *mini* kind of journeys. ... I would say that there's been a lot of kind of *little successes* ... And some people, some young people you see you know make big jumps and big improvements, but then you know maybe drop back again. For me there are lots of little successes and little journeys that young people make rather than necessarily always one kind of big transformation. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

345. ... people have great skills and gifts and capacities here, but just don't have the robustness and resilience for that to turn into something world changing overnight. I think it's about growing it really slowly, and one person by one person, and year by year. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

- **Some of the work was difficult to measure, but no less important.**

012. ... it's never step-by-step kind of you know, 'we're going to do this and then we'll do that' because people will drop out, people have crises, the kind of things that happen. So it gets very messy to evaluate, to kind of make sense of, to sometimes see if there's any progress that's been made. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

### **Faith dynamic**

The faith-based nature of the project was not particularly explicit and, for anyone not fully aware of the faith positioning or theological stance of the project, somewhat open to conjecture:

032. I think some people, a lot of people probably wouldn't know [that we were faith-based]. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

082. Honestly, I think a lot of people maybe aren't even aware of necessarily a faith element with a lot of our work and a lot of our projects. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

I propose describing this dynamic as 'tacit faith'. As such it is not always distinguishable in the work of Paradise, but the motivator of it:

062. Just giving young people the space really just to explore things ... *Dave Paradise staff member*

086. ... the Christian side of, the faith side to it is in the background maybe. I don't think 'hidden' would be the right word, but I think it's just the way it kind of comes across and the values of the way we work. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

088. ... it's fine also just to get alongside people, get alongside a community of people and help them just to explore faith and God and ... the kingdom if that's what you want to call it. And just maybe just to give people space to reflect and to explore that for themselves rather than really putting something upon people. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

127. I think it's a good thing [that faith is not explicit] because if you're offering help to people who aren't necessarily religious they might be off put by that. I like the fact that it's there, but it's not in your face. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

224. Our sort of approach to it isn't as explicitly faith-based as other youth work charities might be. But I think here it is sort of taken seriously and appreciated, partly because there's nothing else happening down here. *Mark, Paradise staff member*

325. I think Paradise's work locally in terms of what young people see I think is pretty soft and gentle on the faith dimension but from my point of view as a partner with Paradise here, the fact that we're kind of on the same page in terms of the sense of mission and the theology behind it means that it works for us. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

335. I think if you ask most people who came into contact with Paradise on the estate here they probably wouldn't think of it as an explicitly faith-based organisation. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

Two of those interviewed, who practiced their faith, had an aspiration for the faith and spiritual dynamic to be more prominent. One talked of 'playing around' (086.) in his mind the faith positioning of the project as he attempted to reconcile different perspectives and possibilities. Others commented:

032. I think our partnership with the church is gonna start to open up some more of the understanding of us being Christian. *Pete, paradise staff member*

050. I mean we haven't kind of set up a 'spiritual development group' if you can call it that. We haven't set up an explorational group or taking young people to Greenbelt or anything like that. And I think there might be something, I'd love to see something [like] that ... Let's see this something that involves spiritual exploration, it involves 'what it is to be a good character?' 'What is it that involves being a good citizen?' I'd love to see something like that to grow and develop. Because I think that's kind of ... potentially a slight missing link in what we do in that there's not those spaces where young people on a longer-term basis can feed in but also take something out .... *Pete, paradise staff member*

228. I feel like it could be more explicit, but I don't know how that would actually work its way out. I don't know how you would do that without introducing yourself as 'Hello I'm Mark I'm a Christian.' I think it is something that we're sort of, we went to another project ... and they had a prayer room reflection or space to do that sort of thing in every session. And that was a challenge to us 'cos that's not something that we really do with the young people, we do it as workers, but not with the young people. Yeah, I think that can be more of that sort of spiritual ... spirituality sort of side of things, not necessarily Christian, but you know. *Mark, Paradise staff member*

There is what might be termed a 'Christian atheism' (Altizer 1966; Mountford 2011) present amongst those people who work in the project who said they were not religious.

125. For me it's a weird one cos I'm not necessarily very religious but yet I still believe in what everything stands for and stuff. I know that they do things like reflection and prayer time. It's very kind of 'there' but it's not in your face at the same time. It's you know ... *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

272. See, I'm not a Christian myself, but I think a lot of Paradise's values is a lot to do with Christianity which I completely believe in the values and morals of Christianity, I just don't actually believe in God. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

As to whether Paradise's faith-based work is any different to secular youth work:

157. To me, I wouldn't see it as different because it's still fundamentally the same. It's all about, you know, trying to do good. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

The following exchange in one interview examined this further:

280. ... they do try to bring in Christianity, but for me I don't really get that. If you know what I'm saying? Cos for me, I can go up to a bunch of young people and chat to them and God could have nothing to do with that or how I'm like portraying myself to these young people or what I'm trying to do for these young people. But I think for like some of the other workers they think like God has got a big part in it. But for me, nah.

281. *So do you think faith-based youth work is any different to no faith-based youth work?*

282. I'm not too sure to be honest, I think cos it's a bit awkward cos I work for a faith-based but I'm not actually a believer myself. I don't think it would make much of a difference to be honest.

283. *Is there any difference in the way you go about it than the way that those who say they do have a faith do you think?*

284. I don't think it's the faith, I think each personality which makes you different in your job that you're doing. I think faith that's a bit personal to you.

285. *So, if someone said, oh I see you're a Christian organisation, what would your response be to that?*

286. Um, I don't see it any different, because I don't see, if you're a Christian then you're a Christian, that's fine. Do you know what I mean, I don't think 'whoah – Christian!' do you know what I mean? So I don't know, no. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

I believe in God but he doesn't live round here – young person (Shannahan 2012b)



## Relationships and Influences

My study discovered that the project experienced a variety of significant relationships and external influences. Most notably:

### *Strong community connections and evidence of partnerships*

The significance of connections with the wider community has already been noted above, with this additional quote further typifying the general approach to their work.

080. On one particular estate you know we're seeing a project that's now run by some quite elderly, well they're probably you know in their 60s, who are really engaging with some young people in a project now. Who've kind of gone, looked at these young people causing trouble and seeing some of the work going on but have taken it upon themselves, to kind of do something, so it's partnering it with local kind of residents really as well and empowering them to make a difference in their community. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

The interviews, available leaflets, posters on display, social media postings and general observations evidenced a number of partnerships with other organisations.

These included: local churches, skills and training bodies, infrastructure organisations, funders, Local Council, political parties, schools, the police, Neighbourhood Managers, Ward Support Officers, a local university, creative artists, media outlets and commercial enterprises. In fact, many of these appear to be more than mere partnerships, but rather they embrace a mutuality and symbiosis that aptly reflects the overarching ethos of Paradise.

345. So what we've been doing here is a kind of twin-track approach. We've been working with local people really extensively but we've also been working to try and bring local practitioners together. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

One of their social enterprise projects recently gave a presentation to fifty senior executives of the O2 company.

024. So it's nice to see things happen that we couldn't do as one organisation but as a collection. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

However, the impact of the economic crisis has revealed that some of these were relationships with individuals and not necessarily the organisations the individuals worked for and that when those individuals were made redundant and were no longer around, the relationship ended or was threatened:



024. It was always an interesting one about very local relationships and then actually getting to the decision makers. So actually one of the things with the cuts is so many people have gone ... so actually when you thought you had a relationship with the school, you didn't really, you had a relationship with somebody themselves that was actually, I'd not say struggle but, you never actually had a proper relationship with the school. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

### Externally driven influences

It would appear that in the recent past the ideology and demands of those funding the work have shaped and driven the work undertaken to an unhealthy extent:

018. I think if you'd been here two years ago it wasn't working because, I wouldn't have said it at the time but I'll say it now, because I think we were very funding driven, very government programme driven. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

020. I think we might have got to a point where we might have just said you know what, we're not actually achieving what we want to be achieving, we're just delivering wherever there's money and we think we're making a good job but we're not. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

074. ... certainly when I first came two and a half years ago it was very much, maybe funding driven as to where we would work, so we worked on the three estates because the local council gave us funding to work in those estates and then we also, prior to all the cuts, had PAYP [Positive Activities for Young People] which was ... very much focused on one area and because of the successes that brought, the following year, it was moved on, we were asked to then go and move on to another area and work in that area, so in one sense yeah that funding has determined where we've worked ... *Dave, Paradise staff member*

The following exchange was particularly illuminating:

102. ... part of it with some of the funding we have particularly at the moment is in one sense responding to other people's needs, i.e. the police, or local Councillors or residents who see their need as getting young people off their street corner and engaging with those young people. So in one sense, yeah, it's responding to that, the need of those people rather than ... initially ... than responding directly from the young people. And then I guess in one sense responding then to the needs of the young people is almost, which is wrong, but just thinking right now, which is almost a secondary kind of thing because that comes after the fact that we're responding to ... kind of local people, local authority needs, so we're kind of fulfilling their needs before the young people *Dave, Paradise staff member*

103. *I'm interested in the whole thing of why people do what they do. Whether they're doing what you just described without knowing it. I haven't heard the phrase you've used which I found really interesting. That you 'respond to other people's needs' – that's really ... insightful and helpful.*

104. Yeah no definitely. Like you said I probably haven't actually ever thought of it like that really but I think you know the reality of it is that that funding is responding to those people rather than us going directly out to the young people because we've got a pot of money to go and work with young people so we.. and you know I think through the projects and as you build up that relationship with those young people then you find out about them and their needs, that's when I think we do respond to their need, you know I'm not saying that we don't, but I think initially very much so it's responding to kind of local authority needs, or Council needs, or the police really.

105. *I think one of my big question is whether it's, whether that's okay as a means to an end?*

106. Yeah, I think on one hand, certainly over the last 18 months there's been a necessity because I think without that funding I wouldn't be here I don't think. So in that sense it's been a necessity and out of that's been some very positive kind of outcomes. But, yeah, I would like to reverse that, that way of working I think ... *Dave, Paradise staff member*

### **The threat of isomorphism**

What has happened in the past regarding the allowing of external agendas, funding and drivers to shape the work has meant that isomorphism has been an ever-present threat and reality. The recent economic cuts and consequential staff reductions made in the project have meant that this threat is now more fully recognised and has forced a re-think about what work is actually done and how it is resourced. It appears that the economic situation has acted as a wake-up call and the work is now more driven by Paradise's mission and values:

018. Though for instance we've got a contract coming up which is quite outcomes driven, we get paid on delivery but we very much feel it fits what we're about. ... We can grow a little bit capacity wise and actually deliver something as well as it being a part of what we do. So it fits into the vision of what we're trying to achieve. It's not the funding driving. There will be an element of that because there will be outcomes we have to hit and things we have to do, but it actually fits into where we're at ... what our values are. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

021. And I think sometimes, you know the word 'no' has to be said because it actually won't ... in the long-term benefit the community that you're working with. It will actually potentially reinforce some of the issues ... that are already there. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

074. [continued from above] ... up until this point really where we've looked to seek help or diversify our funding streams really in order to not be pushed around too much about where we work. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

331. ... at times in the past it's found itself a little bit more kind of captive to funding that's been on offer, but I think there's been an increasing sense of clarity ... about the importance of our own vision and, and making that the guiding priority. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

### **Engagement with other faith groups**

Apart from the previously described partnership with local churches, there was no evidence of any significant relationships with other faith groups. I deduce that this was not due to reasons of working in an exclusive manner, but simply down to the demographic of the area; within which there are few people from other faith groups.

The two exceptions to this are an emerging Somali cohort with whom a relationship is developing and work with a Muslim artist on [the Art Project] (see below). This raises the questions about whether the catalyst for cohesive work is 'faith', a common social cause like the common good or being local or single issue type initiatives.

There was reference from one person interviewed to an Evangelical Pentecostal Church that met in the area. A relationship with this church did not exist because they tended to preach at people and were:

032. ... people that come from outside the estate and so it's quite hard to navigate where you stand against those guys. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

## **Big Society, Civil Society and Policy Factors**

### **The Big Society**

There was no mention of the term 'Big Society' in any of the interviews undertaken until the notion was raised by me. Equally, there was no mention of the term in any project information or publicity.



The more senior members of staff were aware of the Big Society vision, but more junior members were not, typically saying:

166. *One of my areas of interest is the Big Society. Are you familiar with what that is?*

167. I dunno, probably not. *Sean, paradise volunteer*

239. *I don't know if you're familiar with The Big Society idea?*

240. A little bit, yeah. I'm not really political.

241. *Can you tell me what you know about it, just to help me - it's not a test?*

242. (Laughs) The Big Society is a way of getting society to provide more for itself rather than just relying on the Government to provide it. So the Government can't, I'm not a Tory. The Government can't afford to pay for things like libraries and schools and whatever, so it needs people to fund those things itself, like academies and that sort of thing, but like I don't really know that much about it. *Mark, Paradise staff member*

299. *Are you familiar with the Big Society idea?*

300. Err, no. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

The idea was treated with a degree of cynicism and the Government were heavily criticised by many of those interviewed.

039. *One of my subject areas I'm studying is about the Big Society.*

040. Yeah, yeah ...

041. *Tell me if you don't know about it.*

042. Yeah, yeah I do. Although it's disappeared hasn't it? (laughs) It doesn't get talked about anymore.

043. *Do you think that faith based work has any connection with that whole notion, that rationale behind it? And the second part to that has it caused you to do anything new which does align to that or have you realigned anything you do towards it?*

044. I wouldn't say we've realigned or done anything new. I think it's, we've not done anything new. I think it's an interesting thing the Big Society because as I said I made a little joke about it disappearing, it's just kind of doesn't really get mentioned anymore. But when it was being mentioned it was kind of like as a lot of people said, this is happening, this is happening. The whole Localism Bills, you know we're not really sure what that is and what that means. And it was that Big Society and it was about Local Government being able to make more decisions. So I think there's not enough on the ground that says 'well this is what it is' from a Government level. Because actually Big Society or the Good Society whichever one you want to use is something that us as an organisation was nurturing anyway. And will continue to nurture. Kind of empowering of local people enabling change to happen is something that we'd started and firmly believe in. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

(continuing) So I think the rhetoric and what was said is actually potentially really positive. On one level there's a slight, you know, slight cynicism about the Conservatives and actually what is underlying and probably about the State. I think that's part of my criticism of it. And then secondly, it's like well let's not reinvent the wheel because a lot of this stuff is already happening. Ok you might need to change things a little bit and organisations like ourselves that were funding driven before have started to become much more missional driven, which is great and now we can actually ... we can now more ... I think we can better feed into Big Society. But actually there needs now to be some programme and some things to kind of

feed into to kind of shape it. Whereas, I don't ... I might be wrong, but I can't see ways in which those things are happening. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

048. And I think that although the Conservatives, or the people that developed it, you know that David Cameron bought into it. It was something that he bought into from outside of politics and government. I think there's always a fear and a ... when something becomes driven by a *government* or a *party* because it gets drawn into the political machine of party politics and driven by outside of the neighbourhood. And I think that people perhaps that worked in it much longer than me are much more, potentially much more sceptical because they've been involved in the New Labour days they've been involved in the old Tory days. So they've kind of seen it and they're probably thinking, 'you know what, it's just another Government spiel and we'll just get on with what we're doing and maybe we can tap into some stuff and get some funding and some money and hopefully some people will listen but actually the machine will change and keep doing what it's doing'. It's hard ... it's hard to not have that level of scepticism. And a lot of that can be locally driven you know people's mistrust of politics, politicians. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

094. I'm not a big political person but, for me, it almost seems like something that was kind of already happening and going on in this area and also probably a lot of other places that I imagine there's a lot of organisations and communities that might say that they were already doing the Big Society or seeing the Big Society kind of happen to a degree. I think what I struggle with is the fact that maybe they're asking people or organisations or communities to do stuff that maybe we, I think, should be coming from the Government. But then if you are asking for community groups organisations or the third sector to take on the responsibility to see this army of volunteers come out of nowhere, but not giving them the resource or finances to do that, then that's the bit that I kind of struggle with. There's got to be a balance of a bit of both for me. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

244. I think the whole Big Society thing is something which ... is something which is already happening and doesn't need to ... It's like people should give their time to something else, and do something else in their local community and build community and then society will be better in general and stuff. I think that's something that is already happening so I didn't see David Cameron go and talk about The Big Society and go 'oh right, OK I'll start working for Paradise.' *Mark, Paradise staff member*

347. I think in the national political arena, and I have tried at times to be charitable, but I find myself feeling much less charitable these days, Big Society is so inter-linked with, not just cuts, but a sense that this current Government is anti-Local Government and anti-community professionals that are paid through the state in one form or another. And also that this Government is anti-poor people ... that actually wanting, the idea of being co-opted into any of that agenda, which I find personally quite nasty, is ... is far too much to stomach. And I think because as I was saying earlier, the rhetoric of Big Society doesn't seem to engage with the reality of neighbourhoods like this then actually, you know there are all kinds of bits of the picture here that might sound good and look good at a Conservative Party Conference, but I would just want to be standing up and shouting 'You just don't get it!' *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

This was despite the fact that it appeared that the work of Paradise was much located within the Big Society frameworks. There was evidence from three interviewees that the criticism was made along partisan political lines, with those who had little knowledge about the Big Society being positive when informed what it was actually about.



## Civil society

In terms of the overarching definitions used in my investigation, Paradise is very clearly a 'civil society' organisation. It is 'located between the family, the state and the markets (and) people associate voluntarily to advance common interests' (Anheier 2004: 22).

It also seeks 'associational life – aiming for social, economic and political progress; the good society – providing opportunities for people to act together, developing values and skills; and, (promotes) the public sphere – a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good' (Edwards 2009: viii).

022. We've never had a desire to go in and then just leave a neighbourhood. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

096. Paradise does a training programme you know of getting people on the estate engaged in youth work, engaged in projects and seeing new projects come up by getting people on the estate involved in that and training, and giving them the training to do that not just expecting them to go out and go off and do stuff, but giving them the resources and the support that they need in order to see that happen. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

163. ... with a lot of things you have to make people aware of what you're doing. You can't really help someone who doesn't know that help is being offered. It's very much trying to build up this image to allow not only us to go to people, but to allow people to come to us. And I think it's about getting people involved. A lot of people might not really want to get involved 'cos it's this kind of work, charity work, faith work, but if you kind of get them involved ... the more people involved the better I think. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*



## Community

Reference has already been made to the relationship the project has, and the importance it attaches, to the local community. This relationship and importance runs through all aspects of the work undertaken and this is reflected in many of the quotations already referenced, examination of community newsletters, the organisational web site and programmes on offer.

183. I guess cos I've been involved with it, the social enterprise side of things ... underneath that branch of trying to encourage people to start their own businesses and do things for the community. I'd really like to see that take off with big ideas coming through 'cos the potential for it is amazing really if people bring their ideas to the table with the community's interests at heart anything can be done. *Sean, Paradise volunteer*

## Strong relationship with citizenship ideas

Although the word 'citizen' is only mentioned once by those interviewed, a strong relationship with the ideas behind the notions of citizenship and civil society were evident both in the interviews and in organisational publicity materials. Words and concepts such as: identity, relationships with others, transitions, personal development, building blocks, understanding communities and society, empowerment, participation, interdependence and transformation were commonplace.

044. So a little bit of money, that's not Government money, so it doesn't restrict you as much can actually start to enable some real local empowerment to happen and local

structures in place to kind of take that on, take the vision on and sorry .... To actually start to develop a vision and a plan and actually start to make things happen locally. But it's a struggle because you're dealing with one; people that are busy and like I said before, there's a level of dysfunctionality of people and then there's this nasty cycle of here's a need, the Council, Government should be doing something about it. They either do or they don't and if they do they kind of never really do it well so you kind of get fed into well its rubbish and we've still got the problem but we need the Council to do something about it or we need the Government, we can't do it ourselves. So you get in that kind of mistrust and misunderstanding and ... but also this kind of washing your hands of it - 'this neighbourhood's crap but we can't do anything about it, it's down to the Government, it's down to the kids. When actually if you did something, run a kid's club, whether it be, yeah whatever you could actually start to change this neighbourhood bit by bit ourselves you know with support, in partnership you know.' *Pete, Paradise staff member*

### ***The importance of 'being and working locally'***

This has already been mentioned above, but bears repeating here given the weight with which it was portrayed by those interviewed. It was evident that any initiatives need to avoid being 'top-down', but rather be rooted in Community Organising ideas and ideals:

046. ... there's still that issue with top-down, you know policy driven. And I think that ... I just have this cynicism of things that are driven by the Government it's never quite gonna ... I think it can help. True, true Big Society is driven local and actually starts local. So community organising, you know that sort of principle of regeneration starts with the people and some of the best examples of regeneration are when there's been an issue and it's kick started a process. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

048. Things really do have to start locally and I can't see, there's always that thing as well where like the whole [official Legacy, Government backed] Community Organising thing which it hasn't touched this estate from the Government and I don't know what's happening with that now. So it's like ... where, that again wasn't something that started locally. And I can't see them saying well actually we're going to create something where local people can really do something locally and not have any political influence. I can't see, I can't see that happening. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

290. Whereas Government, I'm just not happy, I don't like the Government at all, I could sit here all day and moan about them. Basically, Government for a start I don't think they do right by people, I think there's a lot of people up in a high house that try and do what's right for us and how could they know if they don't live among us and know what's right for us. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

### ***Young people having a voice and stake***

Again, this has already been referred to as a significant factor in the work of Paradise. An additional element of seeking to be 'intergenerational' was also referred to within the context of community involvement and connectivity:

030. So we don't do any kind of specific intergenerational stuff, but I think that's a bit of a gap in what we do I think we should look into some kind of intergenerational kind of projects. Start to break down those barriers between the older generation and the young generation. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

## Social capital

Several of those interviewed referred to ideas associated with the concept of social capital:

044. You've got neighbourhoods like this one that haven't got social capital or faith capital to enable things to happen without support from professionals like myself and others - paid or unpaid. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

226. Councils and Governments can only provide so much, they can only do so much. And I'm not saying that faith-based youth work should just only be there to fill the gap, but it ... I think it does have an important role to play ... *Mark, paradise staff member*

298. I think most of everybody does see this place as doing positive. I mean when me and Pete first started working round here there wasn't this place the community centre wasn't being used there was no activities at all. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

321. [There is] something really significant about building up a core of relational network within an estate that is kind of pretty thin on social capital, and some energy to make things happen. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

## The Future

There were a number of different sentiments portrayed by those interviewed when they were asked about the future and how they would like to see the work develop. There was one minor quibble about project organisation, a personal reflection about one persons needs and a non-committal type answer.

However, there were two emerging findings that came up throughout the interviews and case study visits; the issue of money and re-growing and developing the work following a difficult period of financial cutbacks.

## More funding desired

112. ... finding a nice sugar daddy (laughs) that's just going to give us nice pile of money to just do, I guess the stuff that we really want to do and what the young people need, and just to do what the young people really need in the area. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

245. *The last section, is just a couple of questions; if there's one thing that you could change the future of faith-based youth work here, what might that be?*

246. I would say ... I would say that the - that there was more funding, I'll just get them out of my head, that there was more funding, that we can afford, afford to pay more workers and also have a good strong base of, a larger base of volunteers. [Continued below] *Mark, Paradise staff member*

307. *If there was one thing you could change about Paradise and its work what would it be?*

308. If there was one thing I could change? ... To be honest I'd like to see more ... projects.

309. Money as well. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

## Expansion of the work

181. I guess do more of it would be the only thing I would really change. *Sean. Paradise volunteer*

245. That we work with more young people and that we ... sort of reach every, sort of reach all of the estate, the whole of the estate ... Yeah. *Mark, Paradise staff member*

And repeated from above:

308. If there was one thing I could change? ... To be honest I'd like to see more ... projects. *Sarah, Paradise volunteer*

## Organisation

Having been through a difficult time financially the organisation has proved itself to be highly resilient. This has meant a re-appraisal of what they are trying to do, post the economic crisis. Whilst two staff had to leave, they did not give up on young people they were seeking to serve, but instead re-shaped and re-focused what they were trying to do. Indeed, one of the staff who left subsequently returned as a volunteer.

Their general work (specifically their art projects and social enterprises) designed to serve the community, portray them as creative and enterprising. Young people are at the heart of this creativity and enterprise.

The organisation has a strong public profile, producing extensive and high quality publicity and information via traditional printed means and more modern media approaches.

036. It's a space where you can promote what you do, what you're doing and actually you know, promote on a level trying to get people to come but also promote just about ... so that people will recognise us as some people that do stuff locally. *Pete, Paradise staff member*

As previously discussed, it appears that this profile is mainly motivated by a strong desire to communicate what the project does and how it impacts the lives of the young people rather than being rooted in any sense of being self-serving or empire-building:

036. But there is something about PR. I don't know how uncomfortable it makes me. I cringe, I cringe at some of the other things that I see, what some other organisations do. Where it's very much about the organisation rather than the young people and the neighbourhood. And the other side to that is how political can you make things? *Pete, Paradise staff member*

238. I don't feel like anybody is, there's nobody here that's sitting down and going right we need to make loads of links with the media and ... it's not like an intentional thing, people are approaching us and we're saying 'yeah, yeah come', sort of thing rather than the other way round, and I think that's because this is an example of good work in a hard to work place. *Mark, Paradise staff member*

There was also a view that this profiling was a consequence of the nature and skills of those involved in the work, most notably, the Chief Executive Officer, project leader and wider stakeholders, rather than a deliberate and highly resourced strategic intention:

339. I mean I guess here it's partly about the particular people that we are and that we have links with, so as well as Pete, have [a] CEO [with] a kind of national profile and he's got his sort of Council dimension as well, so the political side and I suspect if we, if ... if that dimension wasn't around then I suspect Ed Milliband probably wouldn't have been coming to visit the centre. So it's partly about particular personalities and links there. And I think all

of us who are quite active in what Paradise does here are natural networkers and I think have quite an eye to actually who can we pull in to help us achieve what we want to do here. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

A recent visit from Labour Party Leader, Ed Milliband, typifies this dynamic and resonates with the political associations of the work.

## Staff and Volunteers

The staff and volunteers appear to be very passionate, motivated, self-aware and committed people. Most of them live on or near the estates, giving them a fuller understanding of the challenges and possibilities associated with working in the area. They are committed to delivering high quality work and training others to do the same. It is perhaps no coincidence that two of those interviewed were formerly at risk young people who had been engaged by the project, inspired, motivated, trained and they were now working to help others.

It was clear from the interviews, public relations work and social media commitment that they want their story to be told. They want to make a difference and make the area the best it can be by working with those young people who are very marginalised.

Whilst they recognise the problems and challenges associated with the area, they are passionate about the positive things that happen and the positive impact of their work.

The Paradise strap/tag line is very important to everybody. It was mentioned by everyone involved, is reflected in the operation I observed and is embedded across the project. It does what is says on the tin.



## Atmosphere

The project has a community feel and welcoming persona. It is an oasis in a desert of closed shops. It oozes life and excitement in contrast with the greyness of its surroundings. During one of my field visits, two young people came to the door during the afternoon – at different times. One had an enquiry about the social enterprise bicycle project. They were welcomed, treated very well and helped in their enquiries. If they were seen as customers, then it could be said that they received a high level of customer service.

Those who came to be interviewed stayed and talked about work, watched You Tube videos, undertook administration tasks and planned future work. They behaved and it was evident that they were a team.

The artwork in the building is bright and life promoting. There are computers, primary coloured chairs and sofas, recording equipment, art materials, a kitchen and an office.

The project building is spotlessly clean (it was being cleaned on one of my visits), well-organised and looks professional. This all adds up to convey a collective feel that this is a good place to be. The atmosphere and environment reflects the hopes, beliefs and aspirations of the project.

I now turn to analyse and further reflect upon these findings.

# Discussions, Analysis and Reflections

Following the coding of the data collected, a number of consolidated categories became evident. These were:

- Youth Work Frameworks;
- Social Impact;
- Organisational Behaviour;
- Strategic Approaches;
- Political Context;
- Faith-Based Dynamics.

These are now each discussed in turn, followed by a specific discussion relating to art project, before considering the wider issue of the *space and place* Paradise occupies.

## Youth Work Frameworks

The data and findings set out above point toward a youth work pedagogy and framework that is:

- Focused around being positive about, and believing in, young people;
- Centred on hope and the possibility of change and transformation;
- Creating spaces, places and forms that help young people thrive and flourish;
- Supporting their development and being life-affirming;
- Explicitly recognising the needs and voices of marginalised young people;
- Concentrated on the local community;
- Intentionally telling positive stories about young people.

The data indicates that it is the on-going small changes in the lives of young people, the positioning of the work for the long-haul and finding things that young people can most easily connect with that most effectively promotes the aspiration, and embeds the possibility, of transformation and resilience. Inevitably this brings into question other work that seeks rapid and quick-return changes in the lives of young people, short-term work and dislocated methods that are difficult to access; seemingly challenging approaches such as the National Citizen Service which typifies these other approaches.

Ensuring that the voices of marginalised young people are heard is highly important to Paradise. However, this is not enough on its own. The intention is to not only get the voices of young people heard, but to tell the subsequent story and outcome to a wider audience. This is paramount to their work. This premise is based on the belief that young people have important and meaningful things to say and that often their voices are not heard. Projects like the art installation provide a medium by which their voices can be heard and the messages they convey communicated to a wider cross-section of society. There is significance in telling the 'good news' stories of what is happening and this brings insight into the complexities of working with 'at risk' young people.

This storytelling seeks to convey a sense of hope highlighting that the journey young people are on can be a positive one with a different outcome to the dominant expectations associated with the area; namely joblessness, isolation and lack of aspiration. Whilst achieving this is a real challenge, there is a clear sense that the project is positively journeying with young people and sharing life with them. The quality work they undertake is highly professional, but this relational 'journeying





together' approach (eds. Rogers and Smith 2010) that develops a 'rich tapestry of practice' (ibid 143) casts further doubt on the separatist professional worker/client orientated pedagogy and language of Sercombe (2010) identified in my Literature Review.

The youth work framework operated by Paradise is drawn together by an underpinning and foundational building block of reflective practice. This was strongly evident in project publicity, ethnographic observations, examination of social media postings and the interviews undertaken. It is habitually embedded across the organisation. This processes thinking about what Paradise is and does, propagates the work it undertakes and contributes to the outcomes it seeks. I consider the position reflective practice has within Paradise is one of the key determinants that enables it to successfully respond, operate transformationally and adapt to the challenges it faces in a changing policy landscape.

This results in work that is considered well thought out and of extremely high quality worthily reflecting the ambitions it has for the young people it seeks to serve.

## Common Good Social Impact

In order to discuss the findings regarding the common good social impact of Paradise, I will use the 'p priori specification of constructs' (Eisenhardt 1989: 536) as used by Edwards (2009), as a backdrop.

### *Associational Life - aiming for social, economic and political progress*

It is clear from the data that making associational life progress is significant in the work of Paradise. They make social progress in how they work with young people and the wider community helping young people have a sense of aspiration, make better life choices and reach their potential within a cultural value base that promotes hope and worth. It is perhaps factors such as these that have helped Paradise establish such a positive profile within the community and outstanding reputation.

Economically they are helping young people develop their character, skills and levels of employability and they are offering young people help in gaining qualifications, by signposting them to suitable providers and also running their own accredited courses. This is done within a caring manner that seeks to model ways of living consistent with their beliefs. This is in contrast to some service providers who appear to only see unemployed young people as numbers and units to be processed (Frontier Youth Trust and Church Urban Fund 2012) rather than human beings who are precious and unique individuals having distinct needs.

It is very evident they have a clear solidarity with the community and those young people who are marginalised. Politically, Paradise is seeking a better deal for the people and the area, raising issues of injustice, addressing local concerns, advocating on behalf of those it serves and engaging with wider political movements; the discussion below regarding the art project, further highlighting this aspect of their work. The data indicates that they are looking to build social capital both geographically and demographically; thus, in this regard, practising what they preach in their publicity.

The interviews with Sean and Sarah draw together and typify the associational life that Paradise seeks to develop and characterise so much of their work. These two young adults were not so long ago the very young people that are the target reach group of Paradise. They were engaged, given hope, offered opportunity, up-skilled, trained and inspired to now become a social enterprise pioneer and youth worker respectively.

### **Good Society** - providing opportunities for people to act together, developing values and skills

Strong relationships and effective partnerships are pivotal for the work of Paradise. This is exemplified by the projects they facilitate, most recently illustrated by the Big Local project they are involved in. Big Local is all about helping people make their communities better places to live in, both now and in the future. The focus is on helping people develop the skills and confidence they need to identify priorities that matter to them and to take action to change things for the better (Big Local Trust 2012). As these projects have a life cycle of 10 years, this illustrates Paradise's commitment to being part of pulling people together for the long haul, with the objective of transformation of individuals and the community. In this regard, their work might be described as classic 'community development work' (Ledwith 2011), believing that solutions to local challenges can be found within the local communities themselves and that the skills and confidence of local people can be developed to respond to such challenges, thus combatting social exclusion, inequality, lack of appropriate facilities and opportunities and challenging oppression.

As commented upon earlier regarding the National Citizen Service, this long-term community development approach and role-modelling dynamic is in sharp contrast to a plethora of short-term schemes and cutting of provision that has come to typify much youth work in the last few years.

The physical space of the shop frontage alongside the virtual space of social networking and internet platforms facilitates an exchange of ideas and interactions where 'free and equal citizens come together to share information, to debate, to discuss or to deliberate on common concerns' (Odugbemi in eds. Odugbemi and Jacobson 2008: 17). As already referred to, this enables the voices of marginalised young people to be heard alongside those of the wider community, so that Paradise can respond positively to the dominant narratives of isolation and brokenness found in the area.

### **Public Sphere**

Edwards (ibid) asserts that this public sphere aspect of civil society comprises 'a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good.' It would appear that Paradise's direct work with young people, community connections and partnerships provides such a space and negotiates such a sense.

Whilst it would be easy for Paradise to get consumed, influenced and overwhelmed by their context, they maintain a sense of hope that things can be different and clear perspective (with the possible exception of their faith positioning – see below) about who they are and what they are seeking to do. This underpins everything they do and enables them to create a participatory space where young people's voices can be heard and amplified. At times these voices can be potentially threatening (see the Art Project, below) and confrontational. In terms of my contextual analysis, this is to be applauded and is a key element of citizenship, but it needs to be recognised that this might not lead to the harmonious 'ideal' consensus perceived by Habermas (2008), but rather a more Freirean (pedagogical) or Alinskyian (community organising) confrontational and disruptive approach.

These factors point toward Paradise being an organisation that seeks to develop social action, alongside a sense of citizenship and community development whilst being both motivated and informed by a political dynamic. This political dynamic embraces both the capital 'P' of politics regarding national governance considerations and positionings and the small 'P' of politics relating to the grassroots activism and interaction of contextual justice and power pursuits.

## **Organisational Behaviour**

### **Threats of isomorphism**

As discussed above, the austerity cuts have had a significant impact upon Paradise and have forced a re-think about what work it should undertake and how this should be resourced. The cuts have led



to a reduction in capacity, but a re-focussing of activity, that may well not have occurred had the cuts not taken place. The power of external forces to shape the work of projects like Paradise cannot be underestimated. This can have both positive and negative consequences.

The threats of isomorphism have been extensive in the work Paradise has undertaken. At times it has clearly succumbed to these threats resulting in a vulnerability when the nature of the threats changes. Most notably these have been coercive and mimicking threats associated with particular funding streams and policy directives. When the streams dried up, so did some of Paradise's work.

Positively, isomorphism increased the remit of Paradise and extended its reach and influence by changing to adapt to funding and policy demands. More staff became employed and more outcomes were achieved. However, it appears that these outcomes were often those of other people rather than those located within the missional objectives of the project. Whilst clearly there was a degree of mutuality within this, the possibility that Paradise simply became similar to other secular and statutory youth work organisations must be considered; the impact on the clarity over what 'faith-based' means for Paradise (discussed below) being part of this consideration.

Whilst lessons appear to have been learnt with regard to these threats, there was evidence that some of the patterns of the past were repeating themselves; the new isomorphic threat being new policy ideology and language normative pressures rather than coercive funding streams. There was talk of 'social enterprises' being part of the solution to unemployment, 'social impact bonds' being an important community development tool and a need for 'more funding to support project expansion'. Whilst these dynamics may represent important strategic elements for future work, questions remain as to whether the actuality of these is a constructive way forward or if they too are merely the new isomorphic threats; isomorphic in the sense that these might be mimetic responses to uncertainty (Di Maggio and Powell 1983: 151) and simply the new dominant narratives and ideology, portrayed as the solutions by state policy makers and the market alike.

'We needed our youth workers to switch their mindset to running a business, which was a big change for them ... which enabled us to put the structures and processes in place to be successful locally.' *Paradise CEO, quoted in a social enterprise publication.*

If this is the case then submitting to the demands of them could put Paradise at the further mercy of state imperatives and market mechanisms, thus further threatening their missional objectives.

### **Partnerships**

Reference has already been made to the significance of partnerships within the work of Paradise and this significance should not be underestimated regarding the behaviour of the organisation. Their collaborative working appears to be fundamental to all that they do. This enables them to have a greater reach and profile in the area, communicate news of their work and messages to a large group of stakeholders, mutually benefit from the support of others and keep focused on the big picture needs of the area. As a consequence they appear to have a bigger space and place within civil society than they would otherwise do, were they to operate exclusively on their own.

As noted in the *Findings* section above, some of these partnerships are and were built upon individual, rather than corporate or collective relationships. They thus have a degree of fragility about them and are vulnerable to changes of personnel. When this happens their work would appear to suffer. The evidence of my findings suggests that many of their current partnerships and relationships are similarly based upon individual contacts and understandings. Whilst this no doubt resonates with their relational youth work pedagogy, reflects community aspirations and is testament to the esteem they are held in, it does represent a risk, in a context of funding cuts, people moving on and an endemic culture of change that might negatively impact them.

## Storytelling

In a similar significant manner, the storytelling dynamic of Paradise warrants a degree of further analysis from an organisational behaviour perspective. Whilst the telling of good news stories about young people is clearly significant, there also appears to be an organisational dynamic that invests into public relations work and positive media portrayals. Whilst this might not be a clear strategic intention it does nonetheless take place and does so effectively and to a favourable and high standard. This clearly has the double benefit of not only communicating positive stories about the young people, but also raising the profile of the organisation bringing resultant benefits of support, credibility and presence. Again, the positive effect of this should not be underestimated within the work of Paradise.

## Strategic Approaches

Several of the considerations relating to this Strategic Approaches category have already been referred to above:

- Being locally orientated;
- Working for the long-term;
- With a focus on one particular community;
- In community development and community organising ways;
- Existing, so that the story can be told.



I do not propose analysing them further here other than to note the strategic significance (as well as the context in which previously considered) of working in these ways.

## Capabilities Approach

Whilst the work of Paradise is not focused on the stereotypical deficit approaches previously referred to, it does nonetheless strategically prioritise meeting the needs of young people. There is an overwhelming sense that this is about building hope in and equipping young people for the future, not simply trying to correct perceived failings, shortcomings and making up any deficits.

They aspire to develop community and social assets and look for the positive in what they do. Having recently been trained in an asset-based model of community development working they concentrate upon the 'capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential' (Foot with Hopkins 2010: 6); this being much more in line with Norman's (2010: 127-132) 'capabilities' approach than dominant deficit strategies. This means that Paradise looks to develop the strengths, resources and possibilities of the young people and the community in order to bring about change and development. In short, they position themselves to accentuate what might be, rather than be overwhelmed with what is wrong, thus endeavouring to build resilience and, as their strapline says, 'realise worth and unlock potential'.

## Getting It!

It would appear that one of the key strategic dynamics for Paradise is 'getting it':

033. He's been one of the few people around that gets it, gets community, gets community development. *Adam, Paradise external stakeholder*

My own experience resonates with the significance of this dynamic. It is what drives a piece of work forward, inspires others to join with the work, helps overcome disappointments, discouragement and obstacles and keeps everybody motivated. The people at the heart of Paradise all seem to 'get

it' and this is what makes their project work in a community that might be said to be lacking in some of these characteristics and considerations.

## Political Context

### Big Society

The absence of any comments about the Big Society that were not solicited by me is a telling indictment of the notion. Whilst, when questioned, senior workers were very aware of it, junior workers were, as previously mentioned, largely ignorant of the term further indicating that there has been a failure to communicate the vision adequately.



Where the data did relate to Big Society associations and discourses, these focused on the 'micro-embedded' aspects (for example, being locally rooted, community empowering and volunteering) of the notion even though much of Paradise's work also embodies much of what the 'macro-marketisation' Big Society vision aspires to, namely, contracted work, social enterprise, social investment bonds and payment by results.

When interviewees were pressed on this dynamic, there were a number of reasons put forward as to why the Big Society idea was not valued, namely, 'it is a top-down agenda', 'discriminatory', 'an excuse for government cost cutting', 'all rhetoric and no reality' and 'nothing new'. These were all well-reasoned arguments, but they were shrouded in an overarching anti-Conservative political positioning, that I perceive clouded interviewee's views of the Big Society idea.

My analysis is that Paradise is the very type of project that embodies all that the Big Society is about. However, it is not acknowledged as such by those who work in it primarily because of its association with a political party those involved are ideologically opposed to. This prevents engagement with the visionary concept even though they are practically engaged with the actuality; this paradoxical dissonance being reflective of my Literature and Contextual Review findings.

In one sense, this doesn't matter to Paradise - it might be said it is just political semantics. It does, however, highlight many of the criticisms of the Big Society. Perhaps if the idea had been presented along common ground and cross-party lines (as discussed in my literature review) and/or termed something like the 'good society' it would have been ideologically and conceptually more palatable to projects like Paradise. Because it wasn't, its chances of being universally accepted and adopted look somewhat slim in contexts where there is base-line political opposition to certain ideological perspectives.

## Faith-Based Dynamics

The finding above that the faith-based dynamic of Paradise was 'tacit' is somewhat at odds with the explicit and extensive description portrayed on the organisations web site; a description that is both theologically rooted and practical described. Consequently, there is a lack of clarity as to what it means for Paradise to be a 'Christian faith-based project.



082. ... how things [the Christian dynamic] were worded and how when you read it, it

came across and how we work maybe in practise wasn't, ... it didn't match up with me. *Dave, Paradise staff member*

It would appear that faith in action is embedded into the work of the project with Christian faith values such as justice, acceptance and serving community very evident. More public, and perhaps more visibly tangible practices like prayer, preaching, bible study and worship are not evident in any public persona.

This positions the faith dynamic of the project as a curious mix of incarnational work, with aspirations for it to be more spiritual, with the actual day-to-day work not as explicitly faith-based as it might appear to be given the statements on the organisation's web site. The quote attributed to Francis of Assisi perhaps aptly describes the approach; 'preach the gospel, use words if necessary'. From a personal perspective, I consider this a perfectly acceptable position to adopt and practice to employ, however, it is evident that this approach is a long way from the 'youth ministry' (ed. Nash 2011; Ashton 1986) type work referred to in my Literature Review and Contextual analysis.

This is an opposite type of scenario to that more often laid upon faith organisations by some secular colleagues. The more usual criticism is that faith-based organisations say moderate things in publicity and profiling, but then engage in deceitful practices by cajoling and manipulating young people into greater exposure to coercive faith messages and influences. There was no evidence of this latter type of practice or any hidden agenda in here.

This is further illustrated by the involvement of non-Christians in the project. They were very aware of the ethos of the work, but didn't feel pressured by it. The focus for Paradise is clearly about being inclusive, incarnational and letting actions speak for themselves. The problem and challenge of this for those either supporting or valuing the organisation because of its public faith stance is that this expectation might not be matched by what happens on the ground. This lack of explicitness may mean local people are not aware that the work is faith-based, with the consequence being that there is a disjunct happening, it being the polar opposite to that normally portrayed.

My analysis regarding the faith element of Paradise can be summarised by mapping the data against the 'conceptual categories' of Sider and Unruh (2004). The following table assesses the pertinence of the various categories:

	<i>Typology and Characteristics</i>					
<b>Genre</b>	<b>Faith-Permeated</b>	<b>Faith-Centred</b>	<b>Faith-Affiliated - Motivated</b>	<b>Faith-Background</b>	<b>Faith-Secular Partnership</b>	<b>Secular</b>
<b>1. Mission</b> The place of faith in the organisation's identity and purpose		X				
<b>2. Founding</b> The connection with faith in the heritage, original and on-going vision of the organisation		X				
<b>3. Governance</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment in the selection of board members		X				
<b>4. Project Leaders</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment		X				
<b>5. Other Staff</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment					X	
<b>6. Support</b> The extent to which funding is from faith-based sources					X	
<b>7. Beneficiaries and Users</b> Whether activities are aimed exclusively or not at people of a particular faith					X	
<b>8. Practices</b> The integration of faith practices into the organisation					X	
<b>9. Environment</b> Whether the activities take place in a space/building associated with the faith						X
<b>10. Programme Content</b> Whether the programme content is explicitly religious						X
<b>11. Project Outcomes</b> The extent to which religious and spiritual experience is connected to the project's desired outcomes					X	

## Notes

- 1) Sider and Unruh's (2004) original work had twelve genres: eight characteristics of organisations and four characteristics of projects. For layout and analysis purposes I have merged these together and removed genre '3 – affiliated' from the original as none of my cases studied are affiliated denominationally. My study is not about churches and more inclusive and universal language is required to reflect this.
- 2) The general language and terminology has been adapted to more succinctly be applicable to my cases.
- 3) Of significance wider than semantic changes is the fact that I have changed the typology 'Faith-Affiliated' to 'Faith-Affiliated/Motivated' to reflect the lack of affiliative characteristics in my cases, whilst recognising the motivational place of faith within them.

The table highlights the apparent mismatch between the foundational faith basis of the work, its missional prerogatives and how it is governed and managed with the day-to-day operations, activities and perceived presence. This may well lead to uncertainties about what the work is trying to strategically achieve and lead to misunderstanding about what it means to be faith-based.

This sense of confusion is also present regarding Paradise's relationships with other Christian groups working in the area. Whilst they have a very effective partnership with a church operating from a similar theological position, they have little to do with churches working from different theological perspectives. These churches are seen as made up of people who parachute into the area to try and convert people, whilst being perceived as not committed to the area as they don't live there. This raises the question for Paradise as to whether faith is the catalyst for collaborative working or whether it is more wide-ranging and encompassing considerations such as, aspirations for the common good, being locally rooted, helping young people, addressing a particular issue and /or seeking justice and political solutions to identified problems and community dynamics; my data suggesting it is the latter.

Despite possible confusion over the place of faith within the work of Paradise, there is a sense at least at leadership level, that they have a secure set of beliefs that they don't need to defend or justify. They are not engaged in any faith-orientated arguments or debates that need to be won. As discussed above, if people 'get it' then that seems to be sufficient. This engenders a degree of confidence within the project that is held in tension with any aspirations for the faith aspect to be more spirituality explicit.

## Art Project

As mentioned, the art installation was developed just a few days before one of my visits. It was facilitated by a local artist where young people came together for a week and designed a piece of public art that could express their feelings and frustrations about life, where they live, the challenges they face and the dreams they aspire to. It had clearly attracted a great deal of interest from members of the local community and the media. During one of my field visits, I was taking photographs of the area and as I approached the art installation, I was engaged in conversation by a group of local residents.

Their opinions were divided about the messages installation was communicating. Some felt the spirituality side of the installation (communicating two people from different faith communities praying – see photograph opposite) was divisive, whilst others thought it was 'fantastic'.

As I returned to my car to collect my recording equipment, a car horn was sounded in my direction. It was a taxi driver. He beckoned me over and asked me what the installation was all about. We had an engaging conversation about young people and how the art was a portrait of what they thought about the estate. He simply smiled.



It was clear from the interviews that the installation has witnessed a significant and creative engagement of young people. The artist, Mohammed Ali, has done similar projects all around the world, but he said that this was, 'a life changing experience' (Ali 2012). Many people were asking if it was staying in the community. The plan was that it was, but then it would be moved to the centre of Birmingham and also displayed at Birmingham University so that more people would have the chance to see it and consider the messages it is communicating.



Following television coverage of the art project, there was passing reference to the fact that the general West Midlands area had the second worst unemployment rate in the country. This has been perceived by local young people as the B [place] Estate having the second worst rate. This highlights how an area that has a low level of resilience, poor esteem and a history of problems can soon become labelled with its residents embracing negative worldviews even when they are factually unfounded, thus illustrating why the storytelling dynamic identified is important in helping combat negativity.

There was initial concern from the project that the messages of the installation were too negative and violent. However, on reflection it was felt that they accurately reflected the 'reality' (Ali 2012) of life and feelings of the young people who designed the artwork

and the fact that, 'the young people have a really strong hatred of the police' (Pete). The installation project leader said the images were both 'disturbing and profound, painting gritty, potentially disturbing images of power and powerlessness. The tower blocks, described by one guy as 'slums in the sky' are there, and images of joblessness, but there's also positive values and images' (BBC 2012).

A project newsletter (March 2012) had the following illuminating and summative reflection on art project:

*No struggle, No progress, No limits*

*This was the statement put on [the art] project by young people in east Birmingham in a profound half-term project. The young people were expressing that without the struggles of life and their lives in particular, there is no progress for them as individuals and us as a community, but that the possibilities for progress had no limits. From a group of young people often written off and for whom life had not always been kind, this was an amazing reflection.*

*Our job is to give young people the space and opportunities to reflect and express themselves, often as prophetic statements to the rest of society about what makes for the 'good.' It's also our job to support and empower these young people to live out the changes that struggle can bring in their lives. It is also our job to be humble, to recognise in our own lives that often we want the progress but not the struggle. As we move towards the season of Easter with its story of sacrifice for the sake of something bigger but also its story of resurrection, may we be willing to struggle with the process of being human alongside these young people and so together we may all come to realise that indeed there are no limits!*

This aptly sums up and confirms the findings of this case study.

## Space and Place

The following conclusions can be drawn regarding the space and place Paradise occupies:

- Paradise occupies a significant space geographically in the work that it undertakes in the community and a unique place regarding the type of work it undertakes. The space is bounded and limited to the F and B [places] housing estates. It is the only provider of such work in this area;
- In terms of both the work it undertakes and the wider civil society aspirations of aiming for an associational life, developing the good life and promoting the public sphere, Paradise is a key civil society organisation in the community;
- Embracing the ideas of solidarity and subsidiarity (see below), Paradise strongly favours a space and place in civil society. Whilst it works with government, it does not wait for it to act before acting itself to bring about change and transformation;
- It has inspired, instigated and helped shape the broader space and place of civil society as a whole in the area and endeavours to similarly impact for the common good youth work, community and social policies at work in the area;
- The actuality and reality of the notion of the Big Society occupies a broad-based space and place within the work of Paradise. However, the rhetoric of the notion is largely denied any space and place within the project; the notion being rejected on political and ideological grounds;
- Paradise is well known and highly regarded by young people and the community. It occupies a significant place in the hearts and minds of those with whom it works and relates to;
- In terms of social capital – it is the glue that holds society together in the area with regard young people, the wider community and key stakeholders. There is evidence that Paradise embraces bonding, bridging and linking social capital components;
- Paradise enjoys a significant space regarding its relationships with other civil society organisation and state bodies. It has been unduly influenced by state policies, prerogatives and programmes in the past and is in some danger of being so again by new market mechanisms that isomorphically threaten its space, place and modus operandi;
- The organisational faith position of Paradise is clear, but the space and place faith occupies in its daily work is somewhat ambiguous and tacit;
- Paradise seeks to extend its future space by telling positive stories about its work and the young people it seeks to work with, whilst maintaining its focus on a tightly defined geographical space and place.

## An Emerging Hypothesis: The Shape of Faith-Based Youth Work



My 'p priori specification of constructs' (Eisenhardt 1989: 536) proposition that four key benchmark ideas of Catholic Social Teaching are particularly relevant to current debates and help shape an emerging hypothesis regarding faith-based youth work is significantly borne out, albeit with a number of shortcomings and additional considerations emerging.

My findings and data strongly indicate that there is a high degree of respect for **Human Dignity** within the work of Paradise. There is an underpinning belief that every person is important and valuable and has the latent capability to realise their full potential. Supporting the development of young people and helping them succeed was important. Each is afforded equal rights to respect, freedom, justice and peace and there is an immense valuing of young people and concern for the wider community, with the work continually promoting hope and possibility

There is clear evidence that Paradise has **Solidarity** with the people with whom it works with. Having solidarity with those young people that are marginalised is a key component of its work. Paradise is focused on meeting the needs of the young people and helping young people make better life choices. However, they also work with the wider community in the area that they are based, having solidarity with them as well. There is clear evidence that they are 'loving their neighbours' and seeking better outcomes for them, welcoming people from all backgrounds, seeking the common good and promoting interdependence.

As an independently managed branch of a national organisation, Paradise is very much focused on the local. It operates as a decentralised entity having made a long-term commitment to the area it works within. As such, the principle of **Subsidiarity** is embedded into how it works. In the spirit of subsidiarity, Paradise seeks to empower and enable others at a grass-roots level to fulfil their aspirations, accomplish whatever they can by their own enterprise and industry and resolve problems relative to them. It role-models this approach, creating space and opportunity for others to bring about change at a local level.

The elements of human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity combine to help Paradise work towards achieving the **Common Good**. By supporting, empowering, giving confidence to, training and enabling young people to more effectively participate in the community, they are helping achieve a greater sum total of social conditions that enable individuals and the collective to achieve greater well-being, fulfilment and better outcomes more fully and more easily. They very much achieve the goals of their strap-line – building hope, unlocking potential and realising worth, believing in hope and expecting change and transformation.

However, this representation does not fully portray my findings. Five other notable defining philosophical values also emerged. These are:

1. Flourishing and Thriving;
2. Change and Transformation;
3. Telling the Stories;
4. Mutual and Creative Relationships;
5. Money and Funding.

### **1. Flourishing and Thriving**

The data points overwhelmingly to an project narrative that seeks to be positive about and advocate for young people. Paradise wants young people to flourish and thrive and sees something positive and worthy in every young person. It believes that no one is lost nor without hope and that it is possible for all to realise their full potential.

By responding to the needs of young people and focussing on the capacities and resources that people have, Paradise works towards helping young people reach their full potential as human beings.

## **2. *Change and Transformation***

This narrative of helping young people flourish and thrive, works hand-in-hand with the attribute of seeking change and transformation both in the lives of young people and the collective of the local community.

This change is aspired to and valued at every conceivable level from the very small transformations witnessed at individual level to changes at the wider macro community level and beyond.

## **3. *Telling the stories***

Not content with simply working with young people and wanting the best for them, Paradise wants the stories of its work to be told.

It is very active in creating space for and ensuring that the voices of young people are heard. It is both positive about young people and the facilitating of the telling of their stories. This is one of their prime motivations.

There is also an organisational storytelling delivered through strong branding and public relations efforts that portrays the work of Paradise and disseminates its activities to a wider audience. This enables a multi-faceted set of outcomes to be realised that raise the profile of marginalised young people, highlight the challenges, hopes and possibilities for the area, increase their profile, raise support, challenge social injustice and develop a critical consciousness about all of these dynamics, thus achieving their strap-line objectives for both young people and the organisation.

## **4. *Mutual and Creative Relationships***

Paradise enjoys a number of key relationships and partnerships that support its work and help it achieve its objectives. The data indicates that a highly significant portion of these are more than just partnerships or relationships of convenience. They are relationships that embody a sense of interdependence, reciprocity, mutuality, collaboration and accountability, formed, to support the common good aspiration.

They are creative innovative, energising and productive relationships that involve working together in a manner for the benefit of all those involved. This seems to produce an enhanced effect, oft summed up by the idea that the relationship achievement is an Aristotelian ‘greater than the sum of the individual parts’.

The main incursions that threaten these relationships are when external agendas and institutional isomorphic risks gain an unhealthy and domineering foothold in the missional agendas, positioning and activities of Paradise.

## **5. *Money and Funding***

The long-term and committed positioning of Paradise to the communities within which it operates is dependent upon the work being financially sustainable. This sustainability demands careful stewardship coupled with an embedded survival mentality and determination to ensure that the work continues.

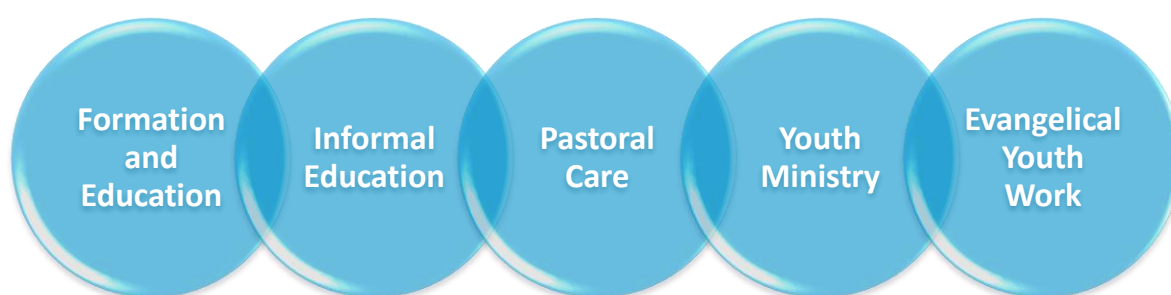
However, continuation of the work is about developing not only economic, but also spiritual, social and environmental sustainability that makes best use of all the available resources and makes

explicitly prominent an 'option for the poor'; in the case of Paradise, the 'poor' being the marginalised young people and people in the community it seeks to serve.

When these additional emergent themes are combined with the original Catholic Social Teaching dynamics, underpinned by an organisational Christian motivation and imperative of shalom that is important to Paradise, summative conclusions can be drawn about how Paradise undertakes the work that it does.

## **Towards a Theoretical Framework: The Intention of Faith-Based Youth Work**

Using the theoretical framework proposed by Doyle and Smith (2002),



Paradise has the following pedagogical elements that describe its intentions and functions regarding what it does in its work:

1) Present: -

- Formation and Education – through instruction (all be it with a soft touch), accredited courses and formal intervention programmes. Often these are not rooted or located within a faith paradigm or pedagogy;
- Informal Education – via consultation work, creative projects, mentoring and relationship building work, but again not located within a faith paradigm or pedagogy;
- Pastoral Care – of individuals over a sustained and long time period.

2) Absent: -

- Youth Ministry – any evidence indicating that this took place was limited to occurrences when a young person raised the issue of faith or spirituality;
- Evangelical Youth Work – There was no evidence of this. There was, at best, a prerogative to transmit elements of the Christian faith when asked about it, but there was no evidence that it was of a proselytising nature.

A number of additional findings emerged from the study. These indicated that Paradise's faith-based youth work has elements that are about:

- Creating spaces for the voices of young people to be heard;
- Championing social justice and advocating for young people;
- Supporting personal and social development amongst the marginalised;
- Seeking restorative peace-making from a politically left of centre positioning;

- Developing social capital;
- Being role-models;
- Building identity with young people and creating a family environment;
- Developing future leaders and promoting virtuous responsibilities;
- Seeking better outcomes (shalom) for the community as a whole;
- Undertaking social action and community development work;
- Acting counter-culturally to the dominant culture to create a better environment for both the young people and the wider community; and
- Bringing about systemic change by embracing a worldview that believes change is always possible, is absorbed, circulated and that this is often achieved in small, incremental and on-going ways benefitting both young people and the wider community.

It is not suggested that these elements have exclusive association with faith-based work, but in this case, the motivation, positioning and intended aspirational outcomes are rooted in and motivated by the faith beliefs of the project and those workers facilitating and implementing them.

## Conclusions

The portraiture element of my methodology determines that the tone, gestures, and seeking understanding of those interviewed is analysed in order to capture the ‘texture and cadence’ (Lawrence-Lightfoot in eds. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997: 99) of the study. When combined with a ‘search for goodness’ (ibid 141-146) and an ‘empathetic regard’ within my observations that resonate with my own aspirations for such work (ibid: 146-152), it is clear that Paradise is very much a civil society organisation seeking the common good. As such it occupies a significant space and place within the area it operates, but largely ignores any Big Society rhetoric.

It is very much motivated by its founding faith motivation and positioning, but the extent to which this faith is evident in its day-to-day work is more associated with a ‘faith in action’ narrative than any explicit attempt to convey a set of beliefs to others. Paradise exhibits a ‘tacit’ approach to the faith dynamic of its work, whilst aspiring to develop this further within the general dynamic of seeking restoration and redemption for the young people it works with and the wider community.

In recent times, its work has been influenced heavily by social policy and external funding agendas and this has tended to pull the work away from its original mission and seduce it toward the dominant political ideologies of the day. It wrestles with the on-going threat of isomorphism, but is now more focused and purposeful, fully reflecting its strap-line of building hope, unlocking potential and realising worth.

Paradise is a highly motivated, locally rooted and passionate project that is very committed to the young people and the community within which it operates. It is the only youth work provider in the community and works closely with others in the community. It has a strong focus on meeting the needs of the local young people, being positive role-models for them, being positive about them and building relationships. The overarching objective of the project is to bring about transformation and develop community as it pursues common good objectives.

Based on the evidence of this case study, any tentative **emerging hypothesis** about how faith-based youth work is undertaken and the form it comprises has merit in appealing to the stated principles of Human Dignity, Solidarity and Subsidiarity found in Catholic Social Teaching as a foundational

starting point from which a model can be developed. Additionally, several new elements help portray how Paradise goes about its work, namely: helping young people flourish and thrive, bringing about change and transformation, telling stories about the work, engendering mutual and creative relationships and adequately resource the work. These elements enable a hypothesis to be considered that has the aspirational objective of achieving the common good and being a reference point for further investigation in my other case studies.

With regard to this study of Paradise, any developing **theoretical framework** about what faith-based youth work does and how it functionally operates needs to embrace elements from the framework suggested by Doyle and Smith (2002), namely: Formation and Education, Informal Education and Pastoral Care, with a number of additional elements also identified that embrace ideas of support, development, relationship building, community and advocacy.

# Questions Asked

The interviews undertaken with those involved in the project were of a semi-structured basis explored in full in my Thesis. This meant that a core set of structured questions were asked, supplemented by additional questions that emerged as the interview developed. The structured questions are set out below for reference purposes.

## Introduction

- 1) What 3 words first come to mind when I mention '[organisation] and faith-based youth work'?
- 2) If you were to pick an animal, a car, an image or other metaphor to portray [the organisation's] work with young people what would it be?
- 3) How would you describe [the organisation's] faith-based work with young people?

## Mission and Values

- 4) Why is [the organisation] motivated to work with young people?
- 5) What are the key values of [the organisation]?
- 6) What is [the organisation] trying to do in their work with young people? What stated aims of [the organisation] are you aware of?

## Relationships and Influences

- 7) What relationships do [you/the organisation] have with other faith groups re the youth work you do?
- 8) What relationships do [you/the organisation] have with government bodies, funders, other stakeholders re the youth work you do?
- 9) How is [your work/the organisation] influenced by outside factors? E.g. government, culture, media, funders

## Civil Society and Policy

- 10) How does [your/the organisation] work with young people make a positive contribution to wider society?
- 11) Do you think faith-based work with young people is taken seriously by wider society?
- 12) Do [you/the organisation] want to be valued by wider society? Government? Local community?
- 13) I don't know if you have heard of the Big Society? (Explain if not) – does your faith-based work have any connections with it? Are you doing anything different in your work as a result of the Big Society?

## The Future

- 14) If there was one thing you could change about [your/the organisation's] faith-based youth work, what would it be?
- 15) How do you want [your/the organisation's] faith-based youth work to develop?

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Organisational Leaflets  
Project Newsletters  
Community Newsletters  
Annual Reports

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# Valhalla Case Study



Nigel Pimlott

July 2012

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## Case Study Extract

This is a case study of a faith-based youth work project called Valhalla (not its real name). It is the second in a series of four studies. In order to establish a theoretical framework for faith-based youth work and propose a tentative emergent hypothesis regarding the determinants and territorial claims of such work, the studies seek to discover the relationship between the common good, the notion of the Big Society initiative and faith-based youth work; the role of faith; the space and place such projects have in society and the intentions, function, shape and form such work embodies.

Valhalla is based in Birmingham and works with young people in a very multi-cultural part of the city. It operates out of a community centre and exclusively works with young people of faith. It facilitates a number of activities, programmes and events that seek to respond to the faith needs of local Muslim and Christian young people.

This study has been undertaken using a mix of research methods that have included: short-term ethnography, semi-structured interviews, collection and analysis of data in the public domain and examination of organisational reports and communications.

Attempts have been made to preserve the anonymity of the project and consequently, all the names quoted in this study have been changed. Where direct quotations from the interviews have been used these are pre-fixed with a coding number. This number is an administrative reference in my system of analysis and has no other bearing or significance.

My investigation revealed that Valhalla is a unique, innovative and relationally rooted project that is centred on developing community cohesion between Muslim and Christian young people. It occupies a significant space and place within the community being the only deliverer of this type of youth work in the area. It has a strong focus on exploring faith, building cross-cultural friendships, having fun and creating safe spaces that enable lasting and transformational intercultural exchanges and common good developments to take place. It does this without reference to the Big Society.

Given its work with Muslim young people there is a constant isomorphic threat from the security forces relating to preventing extremism agendas. These threats might divert the project away from its core objectives by using it as an intermediary to reach Muslim young people at risk of becoming extremists. These threats are resisted by working in ways that promote peace, justice and cohesion to combat extremism rather than by infiltration of potential extremist groups. Partnerships are important in its work and it has a strong public profile.

Valhalla is very explicit in how it portrays its 'faith-based' positioning and only works with young people from identified religious groups. This demands that it acts with great sensitivity, integrity and cultural awareness so as not to offend or alienate any one particular faith group that it works with.

This study indicates that any tentative emerging hypothesis about how faith-based youth work undertakes its work is focused upon the principles of: Human Dignity, Solidarity, Subsidiarity, Life-bringing Relationships, Fun, Telling the Stories, Effective Partnerships and appropriate Funding and Resourcing, underpinned by an organisational Faith Motivation.

The work of Valhalla is focused upon: formation and education, informal education, pastoral care, supporting youth ministry, living relationally and inclusively, developing, supporting and empowering young people, undertaking social action, campaigning and transformation. These dynamics come together to effectively build social capital and cohesive communities.

# Introduction

This is a case study investigation of a youth work project working in an inner city multi-racial community in south east Birmingham.

Valhalla is a Christian charity, primarily working to promote community cohesion between Christian and Muslim young people.

Young people today are growing up in a country surrounded by different faiths yet often lead separate lives. As a result Christian and Muslim young people can experience barriers of ignorance, fear and mistrust in their communities, which sometimes even progresses to hostility or conflict. Valhalla is empowering young people to spearhead social change and break down these barriers.

The study is presented with reference to the principles of portraiture as outlined by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997); principles that seek to combine the dimensions and disciplines of rigorous social qualitative research methods and the more artistic, aesthetic, reflective and personal aspects of contemporary social science investigation and inquiry.

The actual name of the project and the names of those involved have been changed in order to provide as much anonymity as feasible for those participating in the study.

This case study sets out:

- How the research was undertaken;
- A portraiture of the area within which the project operates;
- Details of the project - based on information in the public domain that the project itself offers;
- The key findings of my investigation;
- Analytical discussions regarding these findings;
- Conclusions and emerging theoretical conceptualisations.



## Research Methodology

### Method and Timing

A full critique of the methodology used is set out in my PhD Thesis and detailed analysis is not considered here. For reference purposes, the study involved:

- A series of four semi-structured interviews - see page 45 for the structured element of the questions asked;
- Ethnographic appraisal
  - Observing staff
  - Observing visitors to the project
  - Walking around the community
  - Driving around the area – photographing, pausing and reflecting;
- Reviewing project literature and public documents;
- Examining artwork and displays in the project building;

- Reviewing project newsletters and publicity materials;
- Evaluating the organisation's web site;
- Examining government, infrastructure organisation and policy reports and documents;
- Watching, reading and reflecting upon media reports and articles;
- Evaluating relevant blogs, critiques and perspectives of the work and area;
- Reviewing and analysing local leaflets and newsletters;
- Incorporating prior practice and reflexive knowledge of the project's work;
- Taking photographs of the project building, the work of the project and the local community.

The study took place during October 2011 - July 2012 (with the bulk of the data collected between January and July 2012) and involved: site visits, remote electronic research, literature reviews and email communications. This study is the second in a series of four.

## The Area



### Location

The area is a vibrant and cosmopolitan part of Birmingham made up of people whose ancestors predominantly originated from many parts of South Asia, the Caribbean and Africa. It is a bright, colourful and densely populated area with long buzzing streets, shops that spill out onto the pavement and a wide variety of restaurants, take-aways and supermarkets that reflect the diverse cultures found in the area. It is an area that faces major economic and social challenges (Birmingham City Council 2012). I consider the area is about as far away as

it is possible to get in the UK from the white, rural and middle class area I was brought up in.

### Physical Environment:

The housing areas of the district are somewhat typical of many inner-city contexts; a mix of terraced properties, semi-detached houses interspersed with small storage buildings, industrial units, community facilities and public amenities. It is not until you encounter the shopping areas that you are struck by how different the area is to other parts of the city and majority of the country.



The shops are an exciting and vibrant array of retail units that often trade from the street. They are busy and a hybrid mix of the modern and trendy and the more traditional type of shop typically found in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan with many signs written in languages other than English.

Few high street national chain shops can be seen, but rather an eclectic mix of local supermarkets, halal butchers, fruit and veg shops, food outlets, jewellers, Asian sweet shops, international money transfer agents and Asian cloth



shops. What western influences there are, take the form of branded bookmaker shops and the occasional bank.



There are churches, temples and mosques representing many denominations, branches, sects and factions. Men and women clothed in traditional dress, but also younger people in contemporary western dress, walk the streets; a place 'of many faces, and hugely diverse realities' (Gurling 2007:1), a cauldron of competing cultures and dynamics that could be a country far, far away rather than part of England's second largest city.



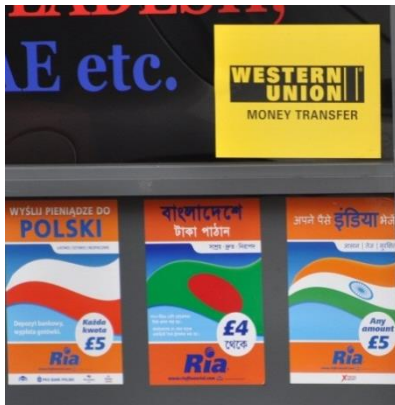
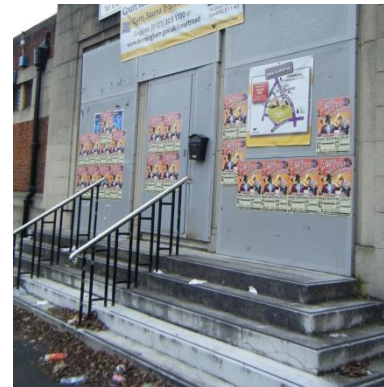
## Community Profile

The community has been described by one online tourist guide (Virtual Tourist 2012) as a 'dodgy area' and a 'ghetto'. My observations made, community profiles examined and media reports analysed would certainly confirm such perceptions, albeit these perhaps overstating the challenges



and problems of the community particularly with reference to the alleged crime-ridden and fear filled culture of the area.

Whilst there are clearly difficulties and challenges to be addressed, there is also evidence of on-going community work, children’s nurseries, health projects, benefit and welfare advice, projects to combat domestic violence, volunteering opportunities and family support initiatives.



In the community there are many different languages spoken. Publicity leaflets, shop frontages, community notices and public service information details are portrayed in many languages, reflective of the diversity evident in the community. As I signed the visitors book at the community building that hosts the Valhalla project, I noticed that many of the names in the book were ‘unknown’ to me, often written in a different script to English. People at the centre spoke in a variety of tongues, which they interchanged with English when I was present.

The community is truly multicultural and cosmopolitan. To my shame I was ignorant of many of the cultures in evidence and had little knowledge about who was who. I was largely unable to identify the nuanced ethnicities of all the people I encountered.

The *Be Birmingham Neighbourhoods Board Strategic Assessment (2009)* concluded:

- This neighbourhood has one of the lowest proportions of residents who are claiming Incapacity Benefit, however a substantial proportion of these have been claiming this benefit for over five years;
- This neighbourhood has the lowest rate of alcohol related harm across the priority neighbourhoods;
- Gun crime appears to be an issue within this neighbourhood - the gun crime rate is over twice that of the city as a whole;
- Residents’ satisfaction with the local area is below the city average. Moreover satisfaction levels with local service providers for this neighbourhood are in general below the city averages;
- Within this neighbourhood there appears to be a positive perception of community cohesion in comparison to the rest of the city. However evidence regarding trust shows that there is low level trust for people and institutions within this neighbourhood - this could potentially lead to cohesion problems in the future;
- Perceptions of Community Engagement are positive within this neighbourhood - this could be due to the governance structures and neighbourhood forums which are in place in the area.



Additionally, this report estimated that the 2007 population demographics were: 16.1% white, 75.4% Asian, 4.6% Black, 15.6% Mixed Race. 15.6% of the population were aged 10-17 years old.

Child Poverty Action Group (2012) estimates child poverty in the area is 45% - the ninth worst in the country. The Index of Multiple Deprivation places the area in the bottom 4% in England. The area is ranked 19th in England regarding having the biggest risk of poverty in the future and 30th for child poverty out of 326 local authorities (Experian 2012).

## Symbols and Metaphors

A number of symbols, metaphorical reflections and portrayals came to mind during the investigation. The following are the ones observed that made a lasting impression along with my interpretation of their meaning:



- A Hajj poster advertising a trip to Mecca – representing the importance of faith and religion to the people of the area;



- Carcasses of Halal meat being carried down the street – I considered this representative of the fact that in this area things are done differently to the way that I am familiar with;

- A UK Citizenship test class advertisement – this offered a glimpse of some of the cultural and identity challenges that people moving into the area might experience;

- A boy playing football in the sports area outside a mosque – this reminded me that some things transcend cultural, religious and ethnic barriers and football is one such thing; football is the same in every culture;
- A painted sign on a fence that said, 'no rubbish' – this resonated as some sort of plea for people to stop dumping in the area and show some respect. Sadly, there was some rubbish dumped and this somewhat undermined the plea for respect and appreciation;



- I took one photograph of a group of young mothers out with their babies. They were from different ethnic backgrounds, wore different clothes and appeared to be teenagers – this both reflected the hope of people living together cohesively in the way that Valhalla aspires to and, in

a manner similar to the football symbol above, highlighted the fact that humanity shares many common hopes, challenges and aspirations; child-rearing being one such commonality.



- People wearing many different types of head coverings – this highlighted the degree of diversity found in the area and caused me some confusion as I was ignorant as to what some people's backgrounds, culture and beliefs were.

## Summative Feelings

These were augmented by a number of personal feelings and intuitions, summarised as a:

- Feeling that this was a place about which I had much to learn;
- Recognition that the work Valhalla was doing was humbling, brave, risky and open to criticism from different elements of differing faith communities;
- Belief, perhaps incorrectly perceived, that I was an outsider who was being watched. I felt, as a white person, the odd one out. I thought I was being looked at in supermarkets and felt conspicuous taking photographs in the street. I sought to be culturally sensitive and endeavoured not to invade anyone's space;
- Sense that this was an exciting, but largely unknown place, where a desire to discover, inquire of and seek out was mixed with a fear of the unknown and uncertainty that I was welcome. An entry from my Reflective Diary illustrates my feeling here and reads, "wow – this is an exciting place and a buzzing project!";
- Reminder of some of my trips to Africa where I encountered similar feelings and reflections; namely that it is probably a place most white people have not been to, the sort of place I suspect, given their background, my parents wouldn't even believe would exist in the UK.

## The Project<sup>1</sup>

The project, which initially began in 2000 and became an independent charity in 2008, is a Christian charity working to promote community cohesion between Christian and Muslim young people. It facilitates a series of events that bring young people from different faiths together. It is based in a modern community centre located in the heart of the area where it operates.

### Project Strap Line

The project strap line is:

Exploring faith, creating friendships, changing lives.

### Vision

The vision is to see Christian and Muslim young people who would not normally mix, coming together to form real friendships that move them to be peace-makers amongst their peers and in the world. The way they work is basically to build good relationships with Muslim and Christian young people and then invite them to events where they can meet one another.



They seek to close racial and faith divides and promote community and collectiveness so that young people won't just live in their own cultural groups, but will come to know each other and develop neighbourly friendships and understanding.

The real name of the project was chosen to engender an image of fun, something young people wanted to be part of and come back to.

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<sup>1</sup> Information largely adapted from the organisation's web site.



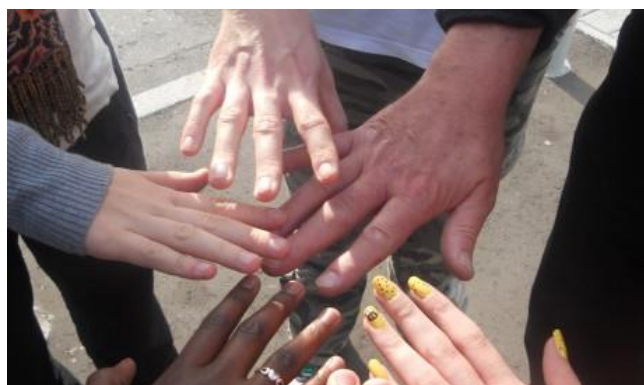
## Aims

Their aim is to enable young people from different faith groups to come together by:

- Exploring faith: young people are encouraged and equipped to discuss their faith in ways which draw out both the similarities and differences between different faith beliefs;
- Creating friendships: by bringing together young people in a positive and fun environment, providing the opportunities for them to get to know one another, work on projects together and build on-going friendships that are built on trust and respect;
- Changing lives: having been to events run by Valhalla the young people are challenged and enabled to live out the lessons they have learnt in their everyday lives amongst their friends, family and the wider community.

## Ethos, Values and Faith

Valhalla is a unique and creative project that seeks to combat prejudice and overcome religious divides. As their promotional video states, the 'work is very simple, but has a big effect upon people's lives.'



The events they run are totally youth focused and tend to be small in number (typically a maximum of twenty young people) and they work hard to make sure there are equal numbers of Muslims and Christians. Over the years they have found that small events have a much bigger impact on the young people than large events. Whilst they could run one event for a hundred young people, running five events for twenty is considered more effective, but also more costly in terms of time and money; an investment that they think is worthwhile.

They are committed to respecting the faith position of others whilst maintaining and promoting the distinctiveness of each faith. Listening to other people's perspectives and being able to ask questions of them is paramount so that understanding increases and trust develops.

The Christian principles to which they ascribe include:

- A belief that all people are made by God and are equally valuable - therefore there is a duty to befriend, serve and care for those they meet regardless of race, faith or gender;
- A commitment to Jesus' teaching that they should 'love their neighbours as themselves' whoever they might be;
- Jesus promises God's blessing for those who are peacemakers, consequently they have a concern for the peace and well-being of the community of which they are a part and to equip others to be peacemakers;
- Recognising when people of different beliefs get together the environment should be welcoming, inclusive, stimulating, relaxing and fun;
- Facilitating a safe place for people to discuss the similarities and differences between their faiths in an atmosphere of honest friendship;
- Recognition of their dependence on God for all their needs.

## Community Work Consists of:

Valhalla operates out of a purpose built community facility in the local area. This facility is all about children!

During one of my visits, children were shouting and running in and out of the office I was using saying, 'Hello, hello, hello'. There are a multitude of activities and projects for children, young people and families to engage with and the centre is full of life. Valhalla is one of these projects.



## Work with Young People Consists of:

The relationships with the young people are developed in distinctive ways, recognising that the Christian and Muslim communities both have different structures and youth programmes in Birmingham. There are a number of secondary schools where the majority of pupils are Muslims, but none where the majority are Christians. However, there are a number of Churches that run youth groups for Christians, but very few Mosques that do the same for Muslim young people. Consequently they seek to work with Muslim young people in schools and Christians in churches before bringing them together.

They use good youth work practice and have the interests and needs of the young people at heart. A typical event involves warm-up activities, discussion starters, group work, games and refreshments. They also make sure that the needs of all the young people are catered for including provision of *halal* food and prayer times for both Christians and Muslims.

The topics they discuss are ones of concern to young people rather than those that faith leaders, theologians or other adults think they ought to be discussing. This helps the young people to share their beliefs, experiences and ideas with one another rather than them being told what they ought to be sharing.

The discussions they have look at a topic (e.g. fashion, peer pressure, the environment etc.) and then explore what Islam and Christianity say about that issue. As they do this they highlight both the similarities and the differences between the two faiths, and, where there are differences, they encourage the young people to find ways to disagree peacefully. To help the discussions flow and to avoid unhelpful conflict they have developed *Guidelines for Dialogue*, which are used at every event to set a framework for their discussions.



Following the events they encourage the young people to take the lessons from Valhalla out into their everyday lives. This might be reflecting on the way they treat people at school, inviting friends to future events or by spreading the word through videos or blogs.

At the time of one of my field visits they were planning/setting up a *Lads Scavenger Hunt* around the city with boys from different faith backgrounds.

They also offer a gap year scheme and run a Young Leaders programme.

## Staffing

Whilst Valhalla is Christian in ethos, it employs staff and volunteers from a variety of faith backgrounds. It currently has:

Six staff and a large number of volunteers (precise numbers were difficult to ascertain when account was taken of regular volunteers, irregular ones, trustees and occasional supporter inputs).

## Funding

Valhalla is funded from a number of sources. These include: private donations, grants from local and national trusts, government grants/money, paid work undertaken in schools, sponsorship of young people and community quiz, food and entertainment nights that creatively bring people together (I attended one), highlight the work and raise money.

# Findings

This section is broken down into a number of headings that informed by: Firstly, those findings shaped and perceived by a general overview of the case; Secondly, those informed by the answers given to the questions asked of those interviewed; Thirdly, by additional ethnographic observations and, finally those considered supplementary miscellaneous portrayals.

Some of the quotations used to highlight individual findings could equally be applied to highlight other findings. However, where this applies I have opted not to duplicate the quotation for reasons of prudence and efficacy.



## Overview

Valhalla is an ambitious, courageous and fun-filled project that is very committed to building relationships and understanding between the diverse groups of young people it works with.

It occupies a unique space and place within the community being the only deliverer in the area of the type of youth work it undertakes. It seeks to see community transformation and aspires to develop the common good and, as its April 2012 newsletter states, wishes to see 'a better world ... free of prejudice and fear and hate ... defined by grace, compassion and love.'

It has a strong focus on achieving the aims of its strap line; exploring faith, creating friendships, changing lives, and appears to do this effectively. It has a clear Christian foundation, and maintains allegiance to this, whilst working with integrity to respect and honour people of other faith traditions. I do not consider that its mission could be achieved without such a positioning.

Valhalla is very aware of the on-going threats of isomorphism, and is aware of a number of actual and potential stakeholders eyeing the project for their own ends and agendas. Partnerships are important in its work and it has a strong public profile.

Valhalla exhibits a very 'explicit' approach regarding the faith dynamic of its work. As well as being the motivator of its work, it is also core to what it does and who it does it with. It does not work with young people who do not have a declared religious allegiance. Rather than this being viewed as an exclusive form of 'youth ministry type' work, it is rather an inclusive and creative response that seeks to build more cohesive and harmonious communities between young people of differing faiths.

## Perspectives and Lenses

Those interviewed were asked what words came to mind when they thought of Valhalla (each person was asked for three words, but some offered more and some less). These were their responses:

Fun x 2	Creating friendships	Beyond community
Love	Changing lives	Co-existence
Respect	Friendship	Getting to know other people
Faith x 2	Friendship movement	
Exploring faith	Change	



When account was taken of the tone, emphasis and frequency of the responses made, the following is a summary conclusion of what was being communicated. Valhalla was said to be about:

Fun, faith, friendships and change.

Those interviewed offered the following metaphors and images as portrayals of Valhalla:

- Logo – youth friendly;
- Mini car – fun little cars that you want to get in and participate with;
- Food – coming together and relaxing;
- Horse – strong vehicle and surviving;
- (James) Bond car – keep discovering more things that are great.

Within the description and sentiments offered and observed about the project, there was an overwhelming sense that developing positive relationships across faith and cultural boundaries can change things for the better.

There was a strong pedagogy and approach that was very much focused on young people coming together, asking questions of each other and having fun in order to develop a more rounded and holistic view of their community.

Within the language of my overarching investigation it was an explicitly a faith-permeated project endeavouring to build strong cohesive communities.

071. The three things it's about your faith, exploring faith and then there's creating friendships, which is a key element to anything and everything and then there's just changing lives which comes naturally as things progress. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

139. I think it's trust building, ... And I think creating friendship as well. Because there's like ... you might have a session today and then you meet and again and you're like wow you know, 'I met you last week' so you know, swapping details, it's like making good friends; and friends that probably normally wouldn't talk to or something. *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*

## Mission and Values

### Motivation

A number of motivations were evident in Valhalla's work but one overarching dynamic proliferated:

- **Valhalla’s motivation is almost completely focused upon making possible positive and enduring relationships between young people of different faiths. These relationships are more than mere associational connections, valuable though these are, they are in fact personal friendships rooted in mutual respect and appreciation.**

004. ... more than just acquaintances or co-existence together, but real friendships and so we sense that there’s a forming of a movement, ... we want to change the way young people interact, and so that whole sense of change, transformation, a bit of a revolution coming from teenagers. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

045. ... you make good friends. *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*

134. *How would you describe what Valhalla does with young people?*

135. It grows their knowledge. Not only religious-wise but like confidence. It learns how to make friends ... *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*

Several associated motivations were also identified:

- **Developing community was key, underpinning the motivation to build relationships.**

050. One of our young Muslim volunteers wants to help Valhalla set up to be able to rapidly respond to the social action call ... we have to find a way to do that so that we’ve got kids who are signed up and are aware that if a riot happens or if a community clean-up, flood or something that we can send a message out and they all turn up and ... that we can do a community action. So I think leadership development and community action are two areas that we want to work towards. I do think creativity and art, dance, drama ... I think expression and performance is probably another ... We’re doing a lot of workshops, stand up comedy and drama and whatever, but I’d love to work towards performance and showing those kids off. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

084. I think it is about living together isn’t it? It’s about I mean we live in a multicultural society and for us to recognise where we live and everything and that we gonna be here together so let’s build this place up together and everything. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

- **Connected to the relationships and community motivation was a desire to change the way things are regarding young people and inter-faith understandings.**

010. ‘Why isn’t everyone doing this sort of thing?’ *Vicar speaking to Terry*

015. ... when you have young people that walk three times longer to school to avoid a school because they’re a different colour or race and they feel unsafe because they’re a Christian kid of white or Asian descent, but they get bullied mercilessly by a school that’s of another faith, that isn’t good in a community. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

277. It’s very much about ... working with the young people helping to bring about change and then for them to take that change to others so to speak.

278. They’re only small. We can’t, we’re not about targets and you know what I mean, and things like that but it’s about real changes. And they’re also kind of harder to measure and slower to come about, but they’re there. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*



- **A desire for greater community and across-faiths cohesion was paramount.**

012. Najeed, our new Muslim youth worker, a couple of weeks into his job, made a revelation that I made a while ago, that his own community did not have friends that were outside of their community. They had acquaintances, but they didn't have real friends ... So what Valhalla does is goes against that flow. Which in some ways is a very normal cultural flow - cultures should be allowed to mix together. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

016. When you get minorities in a school, either a Muslim school with minority other faiths, or you get a large white school with minority Muslims it's not right for those kids to have their faith as one of the things they're teased for and oppressed for and in fact trying to be converted out of. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

087. For example, the mosque I attend to, I actually sit on the management committee there, we've got a very good relationship with the church in M [place] village and we always doing things together and sort of in and out in each others buildings and everything as well and it's become a sort of natural relationship and together we can apply for funding for stuff and projects and it gives a very good relationship to people. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

145. It's like I've met a few girls here that I don't, normally wouldn't like go up to or associate myself with and now they're like one of my closest friends. *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*

### Values

A number of tangible underpinning values were evident:

- **Acting with respect and integrity towards other faiths without advocating a lowest common denominator approach, sometimes evident in interfaith work, but instead interculturally valuing all faiths.**



020. Respect and honesty. I guess in Christian terms, 'love your neighbour' and 'love even your enemies'; that this overwhelming sense that we need to love people that are around us even if they're different. I think ermm ... a sense of fairness as there's a real desire ... I think it's an integrity a transparency, but there's a real ... we don't want to be accused of trickery or of deceit. You know to say one thing to one audience and another, I think that comes to the honesty thing. It's a really high value for us that we're fair and accountable. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

076. It's not about converting or anything of faith, it's more about recognising each other, recognising that we co-exist. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

247. Ermm, good Youth Work [values are key] ... and acceptance, acceptance is a key thing. I think very much the love aspect of it. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

263. Very early on it was made, actually from day one, what our aims and what our objectives are ... [i.e. re avoiding acting deceitfully in any way] *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

265. Yeah, we had some very good training by R [person] and one of the things he is big on is transparency ... you know. And he's really drummed that into us and it was challenging at first because I think the temptation is there at first sometimes to think, 'ok well I could just slip this comment in or what have you', but then where is the integrity in that? And for me the whole concept of Valhalla and the way that we share faith, the thing that I've been biggest challenged by, because I am quite evangelistic, is you know ... just recognising that God will do what he will do - that kind of thing. It's like I don't need to manipulate and it would be wrong to manipulate or try to manipulate in order to promote God and to promote Christianity. For me it's just about having that quiet confidence and assurance in God and who he is and recognising He will do whatever He sees fit to do whenever He feels it's right to do it. And He may not, you know. I think it's just about recognising that I can't allow my agenda to overtake, yeah ... the core concept of what we do.

- **Having fun was important.**

012. ... what we're doing is through building relationships and trust and creating a fun space in the middle, we exist to bring people together and then when they come together we discuss faith, we see friendships form and we give those kids an opportunity to impact others, so everything revolves around the coming together. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*



056. ... the kids come and they connect with us because they, we know their name and because they have fun at it and because there's a safeness to it ... *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

127. What it's about ... getting to know other people from culture. It's faith, you get to learn about your own faith, but about others as well. And it's fun, so it's like we do nice things. *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*

213. And it's just a chance for them to come, enjoy themselves as young people. Have fun, get involved in the activities, but then also explore whatever that the topic is from a faith perspective. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

- **Valuing community was influential.**

084. So, it's about we're living here this is our country, respect it ... you know what I mean ... and build it as well and the only way that can be done is by building it together with everybody around us. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

101. And even when their parents come along, parents we want them to ... it's not about bringing father and son together to build a relationship between themselves hopefully they should already have that, it's about parents as well. So, sort of goes ... has a wider effect in that way where they'll be able to talk to each other and look at similarities and differences. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

- **Realising change and a positive approach to life.**

053. Now you'll notice that we don't focus a lot on what we do, we focus on the change. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

054. We're never going to be big in terms of youth numbers, but we're going to be big in terms of change. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

### **Aims and Objectives**

Several clear aims and objectives were manifest:

- **Achieving the objectives of the strap line.**

232. I think my main motivation is that I love God and I believe that we, yeah, just really have a duty I suppose to kind of share that love. And I don't just mean in terms of sharing about God, but encouraging other people to recognise what the love of God looks like in practice. And I think coming from the background that I come from the whole world of inter-faith is a scary thing and you don't find like a lot of Black Pentecostals involved in the world of inter-faith and there can be some pretty negative stereotypes as well about people of other faiths.

233. I really love young people; I've been working with young people for the past eight years, ten years probably. And again just being able to be there and to support them, but also to do it from a faith perspective, whereas in other areas of youth work unless you're kind of a church youth worker you don't normally get the chance to incorporate faith and mentoring and all the rest of it. Yeah so that's my main motivations, my passion for them. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

... a simple little equation to celebrate what we have:

*exploring faith + creating friendships + changed lives = a world I want to live in*

I want to live in a world where people of all colours, languages, cultures and faiths get on and enrich life for those around them. I want to live in a world where I am free and able to love my God and share him with all I meet, and to do this knowing that those I meet have the same opportunities. I want to live in a world free of prejudice and fear and hate. And I want to live in a world defined by grace and compassion and love. And maybe, just maybe, Valhalla is playing a part in building this sort of world. *Valhalla web site*

- **Modelling a different way of living.**

232. And for me part of it is just challenging them with God's word to kind of have a look at you know, how they themselves are being, behaving, acting towards others and just really challenging them to think about what God's love looks like in practice with someone who is different to you, with those ... that same group of people that you're condemning you know that you're talking so negatively about. How as a Christian, as a child of God you're supposed to love them. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

- **Engendering trust.**

180. Well this was what I used to think: that Christian people they're like don't like Muslims and they're like terrorisms and ... I don't know I just thought they never liked us so I never put myself to them. Where as, they're actually very loving and caring people. *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*

## Faith Dynamic

As is apparent from the findings above (which are not repeated here), the faith-based nature of Valhalla is very explicit. It is prominent in all project literature, activities and reports. It is very much focused on working with young people who have an acknowledged religious faith. It works inclusively in the way it includes young people of different faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds, but somewhat exclusive in that it tends not to work with young people who might be said to be from a secular-humanist worldview:



059. Najeed is loving Valhalla because it does acknowledge faith ... openly ... We're actually just good youth work but we use faith, we acknowledge that faith is a part of identity. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

212. [The] events, they vary in form and shape but the main core of it, whatever the activity is that we are actually doing, we will have some kind of faith-based discussion. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

237. ... the faith thing is the main thing [difference to statutory work]. So it's not just about being able to talk about, 'yes I'm a Christian and yes this is what I believe.' But then there are times when young people are genuinely stuck and genuinely trying to find themselves and find out who they are and things like that and I think just being able to affirm their faith you know what I mean, is something that you're not really supposed to do, allowed to do, free to do even within secular youth work and to encourage them you know ... But just to affirm to them that faith is a good thing and I think that's left out in a lot of mainstream things. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

I propose describing the faith element of Valhalla as being 'explicit faith' as this reflects the way faith is portrayed in the project.

It was apparent that a culture of equality of opportunity was present within the organisation and that the faith dynamic of the organisation had precedence over any potentially conflicting, individually held and personal faith views:

013. If we can't get one faith, then we cancel the event even if we've got hoards of one faith, so it's not just normal youth group, getting kids off the street. We debriefed another event recently where there wasn't enough faith discussion so were making sure ... that ... it's not about talking about faith, but it's how faith influences what you do. So faith discussions intertwine in everything and we're constantly refining and improving and making sure we keep that in there. But ... the focus is small events, young people coming together where they can look someone in the eye and say this is what I passionately believe about my faith and listen to the other person say the same thing, that ... everything revolves around those encounters. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

149. So I think they welcome people very well and I didn't feel like I was left out or I felt like 'oh they're Christian and I'm Muslim,' I just felt the same and they just share everything equally. *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*

The unique faith positioning of Valhalla needs underlining. Valhalla's work is clearly very different to work undertaken by secular facilitators. Very few, if any, projects have so consistently been able to bridge across faith divides in the way Valhalla has. This has not been without cost and the potential for criticism. In the project's promotional video, Terry talks about it being a 'scary journey' with many external obstacles being apparent to developing bridging and linking social capital.

Coincidentally, Valhalla worked with the same artist as Paradise to present what can only be portrayed as a profound piece of public art on the rear wall of the derelict former local swimming baths. Underlining the explicit place of faith in the project, it was perhaps no surprise that the message of this creation was about 'faith'.



## Relationships and Influences

My study discovered that Valhalla has a variety of significant relationships and influences. These include:

### *Community connections and evidence of partnerships*

Valhalla has a number of community connections and partnership arrangements, most notably with people and places of faith, local schools and local authority bodies and representatives.

095. I do have a very good relationship with bodies and councillors and the City Council and everything as well. It was very nice because ... as soon as I started my role I was getting emails, 'come visit here', 'visit us', 'let's do some work together', 'let's do this' from all over Birmingham and it was some of the universities as well because their sort youth work field is very close networked. ... And that one of the key things I love about my job is the relationships with other key bodies; with Councillors and Head of Services and things like that. Relationship is very key and at least they know who you are and some of the work you're doing and one of the things that I always say ... [is] 'let's share some of the resources that we have' especially in this climate now when resources are very scarce ... *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

100. [I sometimes] say, 'look, we have this going on, if you have or your kids wanna take part just send them our way.' And they don't mind, they don't see it as like, 'this young person in mine' or whatever ... *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

However, these relationships and partnerships are not without challenge. There were isomorphic threats identified, but these appear to have been successfully managed:



031. We started off with some good connections with police and particularly the counter terrorism unit. But we kept at a distance from them because they ... they wanted to jump all over us and we didn't want to be painted with their brush. So we sort of kept a distance from them. Council youth workers I tried to court, but they were so busy and now they're all gone. So the number of them around is ... is, I'm sort of glad I didn't pursue them now because there's not as much youth services provided. I've met people in Council, but once again you know they like you for a time but they don't ... they're not sort of wedded to us. They don't keep coming back and wanting us to include us, they just like us. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*



036. ... we'll stand with the police on some things, but other things we won't go near them.. ... in a way we turned them away and we turned away potential money, we turned away potential events. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

There were also logistical and practical problems:

033. All three of our main schools, we don't know how we sit in them. They're unbelievably difficult to stay connected. We're so on the edge of delivery of normal school services that they don't know where to put us in the school. They don't know how best to utilise us, when really what, we don't want to deliver services in school, we want to be in school to build friendships up, in order to get kids to come and meet outside. So whether the school strategy we continue with it indefinitely I don't know. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

One of the schools Valhalla partnered with had received a poor OFSTED report and was focussing on preparing for a follow-up inspection. This meant that they concentrated on internal dynamics and consequently they didn't promote the partnership work with Valhalla:

267. So everything was, 'we've got more important things to do than to encourage our young people to come.' However, those staff that have seen some of the young people that have come really regularly and have seen the changes have spoken really highly of what they've seen in the young people and again it's trying to get the person who is managing me, who should be the first person to get this, to get it, but unfortunately they haven't. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

For Nina, this highlighted what she conceptually called 'getting it':

253. I think those that get us, they love what we're doing and they're quite positive about what we're doing, but there are quite a few that are still trying to figure out how we can, how we work, what it actually looks like in practice, how do we promote acceptance and love and tolerance and still stay true to who we are as a Christian organisation? That's from Christian side of things. And from the Muslim side of things, again, those who get us love us but then there are those who are suspicious of this Christian charity that wants to talk about faith will be secretly trying to convert their children and that kind of thing. And yeah, so it's quite interesting, you get a good mixture of those two kinds of mentalities. And I don't think there's anyone ... or any community that I'm aware of personally that knows us, gets us and really dislikes us. I don't

think. I think most of the ones who are negative about us are the ones that are still trying to figure us out whole heartedly. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

267. I've got two schools. If I talk about one of the schools, the Head absolutely loves us, loves the fact that we are there. The person who was initially managing us, really got us, was very for us would do whatever she could to support us. She then changed roles. I was then given to someone else to manage and it's been an interesting situation ever since. I'm not quite sure that he gets us, and I'm not quite sure what more to do so that he does get us. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

### **High profile connections**

Valhalla has a number of high profile connections. These include, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams and Professor Mona Siddiqui, a leading British Muslim academic, as Patrons of the charity. They were invited as a group to Lambeth Palace to privately meet with the Archbishop and discuss their work.



Valhalla also works alongside The Tony Blair Faith Foundation, sharing an office with representatives of the Foundation and working with their staff on specific projects.

The project was featured on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 9/11 *Songs of Praise* episode. It was given a high profile because of its work at working towards cohesion and peace.

### **Media influence**

The impact of the association with media outlets such as *Songs of Praise* has provided Valhalla with an opportunity to positively portray its work to a wide audience.

052. And so the reason for creating a promotional video, the reason for doing social media, the reason for not pursuing, but welcoming BBC *Songs of Praise* is it's a way to make this tiny mustard seed of a work share with others. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

053. [we want people to be] saying 'there are people who are doing this it is possible that it can happen. The media to start saying that not all kids who are Muslim are terrorists, not all kids who are Christians sit in their churches and sing hymns. We actually want to have this rumour start. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

However, the media has also had a more negative influence on the work of Valhalla, or perhaps more accurately, a further motivator of it, as it has sought to combat the religious stereotyping so often seen in the media.

The predominantly negative and stereotypical portrayals of both Muslims and Christians have been addressed in the work with young people leading to greater understanding between these faith groups and alleviating many misconceived media-driven perceptions:

016. It's not right that the perception of a faith is based on what the media says and not what you personally know of that person. So for Muslim young people to think that

Christians all sleep around and that they are defined by Lady GaGa and Two and a Half Men, that is what Christians believe, you know we Christians feel grieved that they think that simply because they've never met me, they don't know what I believe.

017. And in the same way with Muslims that they're all terrorists, or you know that the women are all forced to marry and that they're covered up because they're oppressed. Those stereotypes that are perpetrated by media, even if they're mild they actually lead to big consequences. So we believe that prejudice, that misunderstanding, that stereotypes need to be overcome and they can be overcome by healthy faith discussions between friends and then you go back to your own community and you live well in that community, but you don't foster a stereotype or a negative perception about someone else. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

087. ... we should have that [i.e. engagement with Jewish youth], because of all the media and everything that's going on today and negative about all the religions and if we don't get that and work on that, it might cause a problem. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*



125. As I grew up I didn't know a lot about Christianity. So like I had my own image that I just created from loads of different people so it was just stereotype and then that's how I got involved. I got to know a lot of Christian people and like it changed my picture completely and just ... I don't know, it's just amazing and I think a lot of people should get involved in it. It's like very rewarding. *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*

110. *I don't want to put words into your mouth... forgive that question if it's not the case.... Would you say that Islamophobic stereotyping then ... potentially ... might bring a positive, in that the persecution of it has ...?*

111. Exactly, that's exactly what I am saying ... like I said that sort of Islamophobia, sort of people being labelled and all sort of ... young people are sort of thinking, 'hold on, this is my faith so let me learn a bit more about it'. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

## Big Society, Civil Society and Policy

### *The Big Society*

There was no mention of the term 'Big Society' in any of the interviews undertaken until the notion was raised by me. Equally, there was no mention of the term in any project information or publicity.

Two senior members of staff had a clear understanding of the notion (albeit one admitted to not fully exploring it) and had mixed views about it:

063. *I know that from previous conversations you've heard of the Big Society. Does your faith-based youth work have any connections with it? Are you doing anything different because of it?*

064. I don't think so. I constantly, I read the latest ... there's a community cohesion big report that's come out from community department, Fred Pickles and crew that's around the whole being allowed to pray - again. But I'm fascinated how Big Society is a philosophy and ethos that's behind this Government which has some really beautiful elements and ideals to it, but it's constantly used as an excuse for 'we're not going to fund this, you need





185. *No, ok. I mean it's this idea that perhaps Government can't afford to do all the things that it did do and so it's looking to people in the community to do things, to have more volunteers, perhaps like yourself, and to do more things in the community. And for local people to do that work and to fund that work and support that work and if there is work to be done by the Government then it's not necessarily employing people to do it, but it's contracting people to do it. Is there any sense do you think that Valhalla is doing that sort of work or influenced by it do you think?*

186. I don't get the question, sorry. *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*

### **Citizenship and Social Capital**

Evident from the above, and the story below, is that the relational, community and cohesive underpinnings of Valhalla's work make a significant contribution to developing citizenship and social capital, particularly the bridging form of social capital:

277. One of the other girls we've worked with quite a lot that's actually quite a lovely story - well interesting story - because when she first came over ... She has an American accent, but is actually from Bermuda and within the [Muslim dominated] schools there was a lot of suspicion because they thought she was American, they didn't like her automatically and just the backlash that had on her mum because her mum was obviously quite hurt that her daughter was coming to school and was having such a hard time and all the rest of it. And her mum, never really having lived in this kind of community before, actually started to have quite a bit of dislike for them [Muslims] as a community. However as her daughter got more involved in Valhalla and had more positive stories to share about Muslims who were treating her differently and accepting her and all the rest of it, Mum actually came to a mums and daughters day that we had and she actually had a chance to sit down and have a chat with some Muslim mums as well and her view then started to change you know what I mean and she's a lot more positive. And these are the kind of changes that we, we really are here to see. *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

A Muslim visitor to a recent fund-raising event commented:

I found my time spent with Valhalla a rewarding one as the feeling of being welcomed was there from the start. It was refreshing to see that colour, creed or accent was not a showstopper .... It was very evident that the younger participants who helped organise the event were clearly on the right path for social inclusion and becoming better citizens.  
*Valhalla web site*

### **Civil society**

In terms of the overarching definitions used in my investigation, Valhalla is very clearly a 'civil society' organisation. It is 'located between the family, the state and the markets (and) people associate voluntarily to advance common interests' (Anheier 2004: 22).

It also seeks 'associational life – aiming for social, economic and political progress; the good society – providing opportunities for people to act together, developing values and skills; and, (promotes) the public sphere – a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good' (Edwards 2009: viii).

## Community and cohesion

Reference has already been made to the importance of community, relationships and bringing people together to achieve the aims and objectives of Valhalla. It is, however, noteworthy the extent to which these objectives underpin the work of the project and how its work seeks to develop community cohesion:

023. I want Muslim kids to come because they feel safe and because they're not threatened and I want a Christian kid to know that they're gonna be safe and not threatened. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

075. I think the basic is getting young people to actually live, live together ... it's about recognising each other and the similarities and differences. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

078. I think for me [it's ok to work for a Christian organisation] personally because I work with in this kind of work, building relationships up between different faiths, communities, cultures and everything. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

158. I think it does bring people together because like when I go to the park with my siblings and I see other children that came from Valhalla, instead of being like, 'I don't know you I just met you once', they like I get 'oh yeah hey'. Or I get people that I see in town they just say 'hello'. It's just like it brings the community together. *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*



## A Specific Challenge

The geographical location of Valhalla means that the dynamics associated with preventing extremism and terrorist threats are never far away:

035. The police, when they found out that what we were doing they wanted to bring our young people to their drama performances, they wanted to come and talk to our young people about the dangers of extremism, there was they were full of ideas. They wanted our young people to come to their football tournaments, they, but you've got to remember that deep down their motivation is to find the extremists and to weed them out. Amongst young people in general police have a very negative perception they're looking for the baddies, particularly in this area with the cameras. And what we said and what our own young people identified is that 'yeah we know there's bad people in our midst, we'd rather find them and deal with them ourselves' or we'd rather offer them to you rather than you come looking amongst us. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

This dynamic was given added weight as during the course of my study seven men (four under 25 years of age) from the area were arrested and charged with acts of terrorism offences for having a bomb, guns and leaflets in their car which was stopped on the M1, allegedly on their way to commit a terrorist act in south Yorkshire.

036. So we've actually said that ... is that both the police and us want safe and happy and healthy communities and we want the same, but we'll come at that from a different angle. So we'll stand with the police on some things, but other things we won't go near them. Because we're not the ones who are spying out negative people, were not the ones doing this just so that extremism doesn't well up, were doing it because, once again a positive thing, is that we believe young people can be good contributors to society. We want to

promote the positive values of getting on and being ... young people who are community leaders. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

## The Future



### Expansion

There was a strong desire in Valhalla to grow and develop the work. This was evident in their promotional videos, literature and supporter evenings and in the interviews undertaken:

068. We, where we're at the moment is we're forming steering committees in Bradford and London. We're giving them an aim to try and ... by July be ready to recruit to advertise positions through the summer to interview in September and appoint for a start later this year. So by Christmas we could have youth workers in Bradford and London. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

119. I think one the key things I would like see Valhalla grow a lot more, really growing very big and it's also one of the things is we're trying one in London and one in Bradford. I think we need to do a lot more here as well because we're working in primary; four schools, but since I started I've had other school approach me, 6<sup>th</sup> Forms and colleges, saying, 'look why don't you come and do more work for us?' ... So I would love to see Valhalla growing. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

206. I hope that we get more things like Valhalla so that the communities get together and I hope that people learn from each other instead of stereotype and give each other a chance to learn from each other. *Alice, Valhalla young volunteer*

288. One thing I could change ... we'd have a bigger team. We would have someone who could sort out all the admin side of things so that I didn't have to worry about it. (Laughs) But seriously, I do think we need a bigger team. I really believe that we ... 'cos at moment because we're small everyone's doing a bit of everything. I'm doing school's work, but I also do some of the church work. Not really so much involved in mosques so or the other faith communities in that respect outside of school. But if we had a team where we could have someone to just focus on the church work, just really grounding church youth workers in what we're doing, getting them to fully understand what we're doing, whilst someone else just plugs away at the school and someone else plugs away at the mosques and you know what I mean and things like that. Then you just pull together for the events or someone else who was kind of managing events or what have you I think that would be a lot more efficient, would work a lot better. I think. Yeah, that's very far in the future because we just don't have the capacity to do that at the moment, so... *Nina, Valhalla staff member*

### Need of funding

As indicated by many of the references elsewhere, the issue of funding was never far away from many of the discussions held, interviews undertaken and project promotions witnessed.

The unique positioning, space and place the project occupies appears to have helped it secure some funding it might not otherwise have done:

042. ... we're getting professional fundraisers to write our grants. We are in what would be generally termed the 'youth work sector' of fund ... fund writers, fund application writers and initially felt they were going to knock us back because the industry, the grant writing, the grant giving industry was saying we're not going to give to youth workers that's a statutory service and so they were going to reject us, but when we showed them where we'd won funding from they looked closer at us and they realised us that we're, I think they've called us 'quirky', they said that we're an unusual project were not normal youth work and so that's why maybe one of the reasons why we've been securing funds. *Terry, Valhalla staff member*

## Organisation

From my ethnographic observations, the culture of the organisation itself reflects what it endeavours to do with young people, i.e. build relationships, explore faith and change lives. It actively embraces the diversity, tolerance and respect it seeks to promote and this can be witnessed in the staff and volunteers it employs (see below), the creative activities it offers and the culturally sensitive manner in which it goes about its work. For example, it offers separate gender activities, caters for very specific food requirements and has a code of conduct designed to support these approaches:

I recognise that I represent my family, my faith and Valhalla. I agree to:

1. Remain with the group and activity at all times unless I have leaders' permission.
2. Wear modest clothing without offensive messages or symbols.
3. Refrain from inappropriate words or physical contact with other participants.
4. Not use phrases and language that others in the group will not understand.
5. Respect others property.
6. Refrain from the use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco products.
7. Make amends should my conduct become inappropriate.

### *Valhalla Code of Conduct*

Valhalla communicates very clearly to others about the work it does with their communications being engaging and always positive in outlook. They have a developing public profile, but this is perhaps less well developed in some more traditional or theologically narrow faith settings due to anxiety and nervousness about its inter-faith work; this type of work often being criticised by such groupings as being too relativist in orientation.

060. In Christian circles I think we, we're marvelled at, but in a curious sort of way, so SS [high profile evangelical organisation] is really interested in us, but they're never going to put us ... up on SS's main stage because we're far too risky for that setting.

## Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers involved with Valhalla have a faith background. The ones I talked to comprised a white Australian, one black (Caribbean roots) and two Asian (one Pakistani roots, the other Dutch) workers. I also spoke to an American citizen on an internship with the project.

All the people I met appeared to be skilled and well-rounded individuals that exuded a confident and calm persona. They were very committed to the work and believed in what they were trying to do. It seems that working with Valhalla is not just a job, but more a transformational and missional vocation aimed at building what they consider would be a better world. Despite these significant aspirations they appear to go about their work with humility and gentleness.



## Atmosphere

There was a unique atmosphere in the project. Valhalla felt a little bit like the metaphorical swan – calm and serene on the surface, but paddling like mad underneath to keep going, surviving and staying on track.

Three of those interviewed mentioned that the work, rather like the swan appears to be, was slow and often took place with small numbers. This slowness and smallness should not detract from what is a pioneering and radical project.

A conversation in the kitchen area with a local vicar added to this perception. He said that you're 'never sure what is going to happen next', this apt summation seemingly bringing together the excitement and the energy that the project represents.

I now turn to analyse and further reflect upon these findings.

## Discussions, Analysis and Reflections

Following the coding of the data collected, a number of consolidated categories became evident. These were:

- Youth Work Frameworks;
- Social Impact;
- Organisational Behaviour;
- Strategic Approaches;
- Political Context;
- Faith-Based Dynamics.

These are now each discussed in turn, before considering the wider issue of the *space and place* Valhalla occupies.

### Youth Work Frameworks

The data and findings set out above point toward a youth work pedagogy and framework that is:

- Focused on facilitating the making of relationships and friendships;
- Centred on an intercultural approach that enables young people to explore faith;
- Committed to developing community cohesion and bridging social capital across different faith groups young people belong to;
- Promoting fun as a key element of any curricula;
- Looking to bring about change in the lives of young people and the community;
- Concentrated on working in the community (as opposed to from, or in, places of worship);
- Being positive and telling endorsing stories about their work with young people.



The data indicates that everything Valhalla does is focused on building effective relationships and friendships between young people of different faiths. Their work stands and falls on the success of helping achieve these relationships and friendships. There is an argument to be considered that a *person of faith* has more in common with a person of (another) faith, regarding for example, ethics, values, language, worship, prayer and belief in an afterlife, than with a person who might be said to have a *secular humanist* worldview. Consequently, Valhalla perceives that faith should be a common reason for being and living together rather than being and living apart.

The bringing together of young people is not an end in itself. Rather the intention is that the coming together will bring about change in the young people themselves, their view of others and the wider community. In this respect, they take a very long-term view about the impact of their work. They want to help young people get to know and become friends with each other so that both now, and in their later adult lives, the neighbourhoods they live in will not exist in separate faith silos, but cohesive communities that bridge these divides.

At a time when the government agenda has sought to measure levels of well-being and happiness, it is of interest to note that Valhalla is intent on trying to make life better for the young people it works with. It seeks to bring about peace, develop understanding and promote cohesion all within a framework of fun, food and hospitality. Whilst the parameters used to measure happiness by government are broader than those covered by the work of Valhalla, they do encompass considerations regarding relationships and the communities in which people live.

The employed workers of Valhalla very much think about what they do, why they do it and how they do it. They are reflective practitioners in the purest sense of the word resulting in a praxis that is very clearly developing a tightly framed rationale for, and approach to, their work. This is no doubt driven by the reality that getting this type of work wrong in their context is at best damaging to the reputation of Valhalla and at worst, terminal, given the speed at which relationships can be soured within and across faith communities. Bad news travels fast within faith networks and once damaged relationships and trust can take a very long time to put right. This notion is very apparent for Valhalla as they work in such a culturally diverse landscape where the possibility of causing offence to others is a daily reality. Tensions regarding this have been heightened given some negative post-9/11 rhetoric towards certain minority groupings and more general media criticisms of how some people of faith dress, behave and practice their religion.

The youth work framework operated by Valhalla is clearly impacted by the faith perspective it operates from and across. Whilst the broader considerations of this are discussed elsewhere in this case study, it is noted that perceptions of what youth work is and how it is done are influenced in different ways by different faiths and cultures. As (Christian) Terry commented in one of my informal conversations with him:

White Christian approaches to youth work are so different [to those of Muslims] – the priorities are different, the way things are done are different, approaches to health and safety and risk assessment are different.

In a similar informal conversation with (Muslim) Najeed, it was apparent that his understanding of youth work was framed by his secular training and former statutory employment. Consequently, according to his understanding, 'real' youth work was not done in certain faith contexts:

There is no Muslim youth work and there is no Jewish youth work [in Birmingham]. There is one project attached to a mosque and most of the young people who go are Muslim, but I wouldn't call it Muslim youth work. Mosques don't want to do that type of work and they

don't want to employ youth workers. I sit on the management committee of a mosque and we have discussed it, but people say that work should be done voluntarily. I am hoping that this will change in the future.

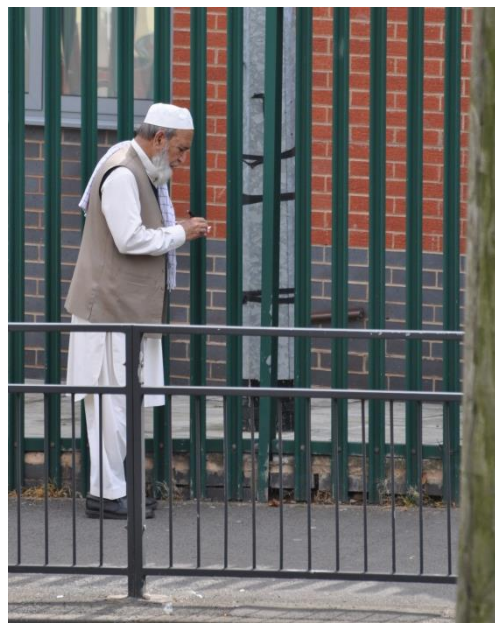
This variety of contested perspectives very much resonates with the multiplicity of meanings identified in my Literature and Contextual Review. This further highlights the challenges of working collectively given a lack of: agreed understandings, common language, mutual perspectives and synthesised expectations across the youth work sector.

### Common Good Social Impact

In order to discuss the findings regarding the common good social impact of Valhalla, I will use the 'p priori specification of constructs' (Eisenhardt 1989: 536) as used by Edwards (2009), as a backdrop.

### Associational Life - aiming for social, economic and political progress

As already highlighted, it is clear from the data that making associational life progress is not only significant, it is of primary operational necessity in the work of Valhalla. It is very much aiming for progress in bringing people from different backgrounds together and making a genuine difference that, from the data to hand, appears to last beyond the time period of any specific youth work intervention. It is perhaps factors such as these that have attracted high profile support for the work of Valhalla and widespread interest in the work it does.



There is little or no evidence suggesting that the work of Valhalla has any significant economic impact on the young people it works with or the economic well-being of the wider community. Whilst young people attending one of their events and/or choosing to subsequently volunteer in one of their initiatives will clearly enhance their curricula vitae and possible future employment prospects, this is more of a consequential by-product of Valhalla's work rather than a motivation of it.

The details are discussed later in this study, but it is apparent that Valhalla has a political dynamic to its work that is positioned against those who seek to promote extremism in any form. It actively campaigns against extremism and invites the young people it works with to participate in such campaigns. The motivation for this is not to promote any one political party or political ideology, but more holistic intentions associated with peace-making, building social capital and developing community cohesion. In so doing, it appeals to elements present in both Christianity and Islam that promote peaceful approaches, welcome inclusion, and the espousing of the values of tolerance and virtue.

Metaphorically speaking, if Valhalla was a piece of seaside rock, then traits of associational life would run right through it. This is not the type of organisational and institutional associational life more often associated with civil society debates where people join a body in order to bring about a strong civil society, but more an associational life that genuinely creates a space that brings people together for on-going cross-cultural relationships and friendships in order to make society stronger and more civil.



### **Good Society** - providing opportunities for people to act together, developing values and skills

The relationships and friendships Valhalla facilitates explicitly endeavour to provide opportunities for young people to act together, develop appreciative values and intercultural skills in order to develop the good society.

From the data collected (most notably from the semi-structured interviews, stories, pictures on Facebook and Valhalla's web site and examination of events and training sessions facilitated) there is a clear sense of community cohesion being grown and developed. Not only does this provide a glimpse of what can be achieved and what a cohesive and respectful society might look like, it also offers a model of being and working that is of interest to policy-makers, funders and those interested in replicating the approach in other geographical locations. Valhalla's work is, therefore, not only impacting the immediate place within which it operates, but also wider spaces and places.

In so doing, it does not mandatorily impose a framework for others to simply copy what Valhalla has done, but instead suggests that what they have learnt is embraced and adapted to new contexts where such work might develop. This enables any sense of associational life to develop organically and evolve uniquely rather than being ubiquitously scaled-up and rolled-out ad verbatim, as suggested by some elements of Big Society policy rhetoric.

The development of both bridging social capital and an inclusive approach to citizenship are very clear expressions that seek to combat the malaise that people simply live 'parallel lives', never connecting with one another and largely remaining in ignorance about other peoples' cultures. For those who aspire to see a truly multi-cultural community that both values the distinctives of each and every individual culture and does so without seeking to impose upon or assimilate anyone into a particular homogenised worldview, Valhalla embodies such a vision. It also teaches young people the skills that enable this to be a distinct possibility.

For those who might not share such a vision or who feel the need to protect and defend their own faith's claims as exclusively proclaiming truth, then Valhalla might be seen as the epitome of what happens when plurality overtakes monism. As such it is prone to being misunderstood and its aims misrepresented. This can lead to criticism of its work and suspicion about what it is actually trying to achieve.

The partnership work of Valhalla will be further considered shortly, but in this 'good society' respect it is important to note that the bringing together in partnership of people from differing faith bodies is challenging work and few successfully achieve it over a sustained period of time. The fact that Valhalla is doing so is testament to the skill and commitment of those involved and evidence of the creative courage that is required in embarking on such a course of action. This is given added significance at a time when relationships in the area are under stress due to threats of extremism, widespread islamophobia, intense media debates about the virtues of religion, continued contentions over the place of faith in the public sphere and, as analysed in my Literature and Context Review, the national propensity to be critical of young people.

### **Public Sphere** - a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good

Whilst Valhalla might not undertake the events it facilitates in an *open-access public* sphere, it is evident that these events are very much a context and space where argument and deliberation can take place to develop a sense of the common good, that is assuming cross-cultural work is enhancing to the common good. In their context this involves young people coming together to discuss and debate their faiths and negotiate a mutually beneficial understanding of one another's perspective.

The objective of developing the common good is paramount – they want change to take place and for relationships, understanding, knowledge and cohesion to be improved. They are seeking to endorse ‘faith’ as a key attribute of human existence and well-being rather than promote any one particular faith.

The notion of bringing people together who come from different backgrounds is very similar to one of the key objectives of the National Citizen Service (NCS); the NCS scheme is available to people from all backgrounds and brings together those who might otherwise not have met.

However, the age range of young people engaged by Valhalla is greater than that of NCS, it is an on-going process rather than a short-term programme and whilst NCS draws on young people from a wider geographical area, it does so outside of the context of an immediate geographical or specific interest community. This means that the potential for on-going relationship that benefits a specific cohort, and thus the common good within that arena, is limited. It is perhaps no surprise that given these facts the early pilot evaluations of NCS show limited community development gains. NCS is discussed in further detail in my Thesis.

Furthermore, one of the key characteristics of the young people Valhalla works with is their faith. NCS appears to have no explicit faith or spirituality component, thus ignoring a key part of what makes these young people tick. This would appear to be a significant shortcoming for the type of young people Valhalla engages with and it is unclear how NCS would facilitate a meaningful argument and negotiation about the types of issues that are important to these young people in the way that Valhalla does.

## Organisational Behaviour

### *Threats of isomorphism*

These threats were very evident but they appear to be being effectively managed and resisted. Of particular note is the agenda of the security forces and how they have attempted to coerce Valhalla into working with them to combat Islamic extremism. Whilst Valhalla is working against extremism, it is doing so in a ‘bottom-up’ way as opposed to a ‘top-down’ manner.

This distinction is important to note as Valhalla embodies an approach to citizenship that is rooted in grass-roots relationships and faith where combatting extremism is a natural by-product of endeavouring to promote peace, justice and cohesion. In contrast, the security services work to a centrally orchestrated and prescriptive agenda that is about controlling behaviour and containing threat. This is not to set one against another, nor diminish the importance of each, but it brings into sharp focus the tensions that can arise when institutional isomorphism is at work. Put simply, Valhalla does not wish to be seen as an extension of, nor associated with, state ‘prevent’ agendas.

### *Partnerships*

Partnerships are very important to the work of Valhalla. Whilst it appears that the partnerships with faith bodies and organisations are mutually orientated and beneficial, the relationships Valhalla has with the local schools are very much geared toward Valhalla getting their message to young people. This can bring some tensions over conflicting agendas between Valhalla and the schools it links with. It might almost be an antithesis of the above type of isomorphism with, in this case, Valhalla trying to coerce the school in serving its purpose and working toward its agenda.



The significance of relationship with individuals within partner bodies, particularly in schools, is also noted. Continuity of purpose is threatened when the individuals involved move on or change. This has brought some tensions and uncertainty and highlighted the fragility of working in this way. The power is very much with the school and they tend to dictate what can and can't take place.

The partnerships held with faith bodies rely upon trust between these and, as been highlighted above, to a large extent require that those working in partnership with Valhalla 'get it'. A scan of national and global commentaries and realities will reveal that the propensity for misunderstanding, conflict, cultural misnomers and/or language and behaviour misinterpretations is endemic when working cross-culturally and heightened further when involving faith and religion. Partnerships that can take years to develop can be threatened in an instance when something goes wrong or is misunderstood. It is to Valhalla's credit that they work hard to avoid these types of problems and endeavour to enable others to 'get it' by their promotions and storytelling work.

### Storytelling

From an organisational behaviour point of view, storytelling is highly important for Valhalla. It is principally how it communicates information about its work, is a focus for how it positions its work in the public domain and is the vehicle by which it seeks to raise support.

Through its high profile connections and media influences, it is able to tell stories about its work. This is augmented by local public relations work, particularly using social media networks and web-based communications, so that both national agendas and local concerns are addressed succinctly with a variety of 'movers and shakers' engaged and influenced by the work. Whilst this approach does not appear to be strategically driven, it seemingly occurs as part of a natural process and desire that wants to tell the positive stories about the work that Valhalla does.

### Strategic Approaches

Several of the considerations relating to this Strategic Approaches category have already been referred to above:

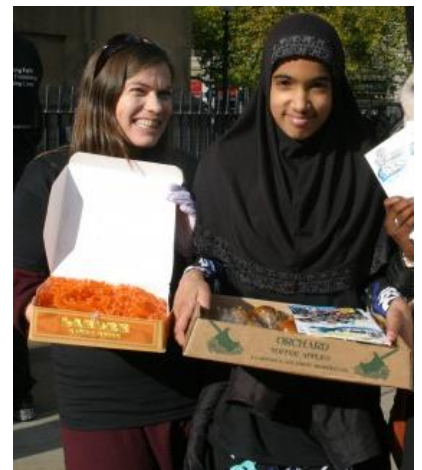
- It's all about relationships;
- And faith;
- With a focus on community development;
- Positioned for the long-term;
- Developing cohesion, citizenship and social capital;
- Making sure the story can be told.

I do not propose analysing them further here other than to note the strategic significance (as well as the context in which previously considered) of working in these ways.

### Creativity

The dynamic of 'fun' has already been considered above, but it should be noted that this goes hand-in-hand with a creative dynamic that operates within Valhalla.

101. While with Valhalla we are more open to try things which ... which are more daring shall I say? And sort of cross new boundaries and things, so I think with Valhalla I think we're very fortunate for us to be able to do a lot more. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*



From their logo, through to their communications, in their fund-raising and in their direct work they are a creative group of people. My contact with them observed their young people giving out Asian sweets outside a cathedral, an entertaining and engaging ‘curry fundraiser’, creative arts events and a quirky promotional video. This creative strategic approach should not be underestimated as it helps in crossing cultural bridges, enables a freedom of expression and resonates with the young people that they work with.

### **Expansion**

All those interviewed as part of my study said that they wanted the work of Valhalla to expand. There are plans to launch it in two other city contexts and declared desires to see it grow more locally. Whilst many projects and organisations might have similar desires, these appear to be rooted, not in any selfish empire-building motivations, but rather in the fact that hardly anyone else is doing this type of work and, therefore, the need is immense.

Whilst there are difficulties in engaging some faith groups and ensuring that there is a balance of faiths represented when the young people attend events, it would seem that there is presently an insatiable demand and a wide range of infinite possibilities regarding how many Valhallas could emerge in the coming years across the country’s multi-cultural areas. Given sufficient funding and local support there is no reason why this expansion cannot become a reality.

### **Political Context**

#### **Campaigning**

The giving out of sweets in centre of Birmingham mentioned above was actually designed as a counter-measure to a planned English Defence League march scheduled for the following day. Valhalla was taking a stand against what they saw as a racist and divisive political event. The sweet-giving was done the day before the actual march as they didn’t wish to directly confront those marching, considering this counter-productive and something that would put the young people at unnecessary risks.

It was as though this one event encapsulated everything Valhalla is about: building bridges, seeking peace and cohesion, involving young people of faith and doing so in a fun and creative manner. It was evident that the young people present at this activity were from different faith groups and were very comfortable in each others company. There was a fun and creative atmosphere that engaged passers-by and attracted media interest.

During the course of my study, Valhalla also took part in an awareness-raising campaign about human trafficking. It would appear campaigning around issues that are local and impact the community within which Valhalla works is a key dynamic.

#### **Big Society**

The absence of any comments about the Big Society that were not solicited by me is a telling indictment of the notion. Whilst, when questioned, senior workers were very aware of it, more junior workers and the volunteer were largely ignorant of the term further indicating that there has been a failure to communicate the vision adequately.

In one of my interviews, volunteer Alice, who said she knew nothing about the Big Society became very positive about the idea when presented with some of the basic tenets. This was despite me initially deciding not to pursue my initial question:



186. I don't get the question, sorry.

187. *Ok, that's fine, that's fine. (decided not to clarify further as clearly Alice was not familiar with any of these notions and her technical language skills and limited awareness of the British political terrain would have made it difficult to pursue further – she was Dutch. However, she started to unpack ...).*

188. As in like there were more people doing the same things that they would do in different communities?

189. *Yeah, let's start with that. Is that a good idea?*

190. I think it's a great idea. If there were loads or similar organisations to Valhalla in different communities.

191. *And do you think ... how do you think they should be resourced? Do you think the Government should pay for that or how do you think ...*

192. I don't think all of it the Government should pay, I think they should pay some of it the things to start off with, but because like ... we can fund-raise and we can do activities where parents can get involved in, but I do think the Government should play a bit of a role in it.

Where the data did relate to Big Society associations and discourses, these focused on the 'micro-embedded' aspects of the notion (for example, being locally rooted, community empowering and volunteering). In the interviews there was general support for Big Society rhetoric and ideals and there were resonant claims that this was what Valhalla was all about. However, these positive perspectives were tempered by the reality of local funding and service cuts.

In a very clear sense, Valhalla outworks on the ground, in a sustained and meaningful way, the very policy agendas that community cohesion (under New Labour) and the Big Society (under the present government) aspire to. Irrespective of the relative merits of state, market and civil society responses to these agendas, projects like Valhalla need supporting and funding if policy rhetoric is to be transferred and become actual reality at grassroots level. It seems unlikely in the current climate that such work will be adequately funded, but Valhalla seems likely to survive in some form and even possibly grow; *in spite of* the Big Society tempered reality of funding cuts *not because of* the aspirational vision behind it. Linking social capital needs to be developed, not curtailed, if it is to help develop, and result in, the type of bridging social capital that policy makers say they crave.

## Faith-Based Dynamics

The explicit nature of Valhalla's faith-based orientation and perspective is beyond dispute. This orientation is one that is evident in every aspect and action of their work. Whilst working from a founding Christian faith-base they manage to maintain allegiance to this positioning, but also engage and work with people from other faiths, most notably those from the Islamic faith.

My analysis regarding the faith element of Valhalla can be summarised by mapping the data against the 'conceptual categories' of Sider and Unruh (2004). The following table, including for comparative purposes, an analysis of my first case study Paradise, assesses the pertinence of the various categories:

	<i>Typology and Characteristics</i>					
<b>Genre</b>	<b>Faith-Permeated</b>	<b>Faith-Centred</b>	<b>Faith-Affiliated - Motivated</b>	<b>Faith-Background</b>	<b>Faith-Secular Partnership</b>	<b>Secular</b>
<b>1. Mission</b> The place of faith in the organisation's identity and purpose	X	X				
<b>2. Founding</b> The connection with faith in the heritage, original and on-going vision of the organisation	X	X				
<b>3. Governance</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment in the selection of board members		X X				
<b>4. Project Leaders</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment	X	X				
<b>5. Other Staff</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment		X			X	
<b>6. Support</b> The extent to which funding is from faith-based sources					X X	
<b>7. Beneficiaries and Users</b> Whether activities are aimed exclusively or not at people of a particular faith	X				X	
<b>8. Practices</b> The integration of faith practices into the organisation		X			X	
<b>9. Environment</b> Whether the activities take place in a space/building associated with the faith					X	X
<b>10. Programme Content</b> Whether the programme content is explicitly religious		X				X
<b>11. Project Outcomes</b> The extent to which religious and spiritual experience is connected to the project's desired outcomes		X			X	



## Key

x Valhalla

x Paradise

## Notes

- 1) Sider and Unruh's (2004) original work had twelve genres: eight characteristics of organisations and four characteristics of projects. For layout and analysis purposes I have merged these together and removed genre '3 – affiliated' from the original as none of my cases studied are affiliated denominationally. My study is not about churches and more inclusive and universal language is required to reflect this.
- 2) The general language and terminology has been adapted to more succinctly be applicable to my cases.
- 3) Of significance wider than semantic changes is the fact that I have changed the typology 'Faith-Affiliated' to 'Faith-Affiliated/Motivated' to reflect the lack of affiliative characteristics in my cases, whilst recognising the motivational place of faith within them.

The table highlights the consistent place of faith within the organisation, classifying it as a faith-permeated or faith-centred organisation. The only two anomalies to this conclusion lie in the fact that funding is received from a variety of sources including those not connected to any faith bodies and the environment that activities take place in is not normally associated with places of faith; this being deliberate as neutral space is sought in order not to alienate anyone particular faith group.

It would perhaps be expected that a Christian organisation positioned thus would employ only Christian staff, but Valhalla employs workers from other faith backgrounds. They have been aware how this might be perceived in some Christian and Muslim circles, but appear to have successfully navigated the complexities of such an approach. It is difficult to imagine how the work could progress in the long-term without the involvement of staff from different faith backgrounds engaging and working with young people of similar backgrounds.

The Muslim worker and volunteer I interviewed appeared at ease with the Christian background and ethos of Valhalla and were effectively working within it. Discovering whether this is simply down to their skills and aptitudes is beyond the capacity of this study. It would be conjecture, but a more negative consequence cannot be ruled out if other less able staff from other faith backgrounds were involved. The same of course would apply should a less than able/effective Christian employee be involved.

The work of Valhalla stands or falls upon maintaining the prominent place of faith within everything it does. It currently appears to successfully negotiate what is a complex and culturally contested faith landscape and operates in a way that avoids it being ostracised by other faith groups. It does so by maintaining high levels of integrity in all that it does, honouring and respecting those who work for it and whom it works with; this is no mean feat.

## Space and Place

The following conclusions can be drawn regarding the space and place Valhalla occupies:

- Valhalla occupies a unique space and place in the work that it undertakes. Whilst this is geographically located within a specific area, the space and place it occupies is more vested in the connection it has with a specific people group, bounded context and unique zeitgeist.

*106. In terms of, and perhaps you are uniquely placed in some ways, do you think the faith type of youth work is taken seriously by wider society or secular, statutory, providers?*

107. The way I see it is that working with some young people faith is very important to them and especially in where we are here, so that needs to be looked at in order for us to progress things like that. So, I mean it has to be done, so there shouldn't be any sort of boundaries

and things like that in terms of somebody saying, 'oh, hold on let's sort of, that's wrong or anything like that'. We've never had that; nobody has actually said that it's wrong that you're looking at faith. One of the things that I always used to say is 'youth work started from the church' so it's actually got a history you know what I mean. So it's ... it's nothing that is being reinvented or something, or something that hasn't and with all the cutbacks with the City Council and everything and I think that it will go back to sort of religious institutions providing service for young people and if we can all work together, all the religious institutions and other bodies, I think that the thing we talked about earlier, about creating that net, when the Government sort of has got holes in it sort of thing, we can actually do that. *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

- In terms of both the work it undertakes and the wider civil society aspirations of aiming for an associational life, developing the good life and promoting the public sphere, Valhalla is a key civil society organisation in the community, with relationships being key;
- Valhalla strongly favours a space and place in civil society. Whilst it works with some government funding bodies and operates in state schools it does not seem to be unduly influenced by either state or market forces;
- It has clear solidarity that looks after those bullied and persecuted for their faith. It operates purposefully in small groups, in clear adherence to the principles of subsidiarity;
- The actuality and reality of the notion of the Big Society (and for that matter 'community cohesion') occupies a broad-based space and place within the work of Valhalla. However, the notion is not given any significant space and place within the organisation, this being predominantly because Valhalla just gets on with its work rather than because of any explicit political contention with the notion;
- Valhalla is well known by local young people and people in faith communities. It occupies a prominent and passionate place in the hearts and minds of those with whom it works for and relates to;
- In terms of social capital, Valhalla helps build vast amounts of bridging social capital across faith communities. It also enhances bonding social capital (probably more by default than design) and has growing linking social capital dynamics. This space and place is contested territory with the impacts associated with extremism and attempts to combat it being prominent;
- Valhalla enjoys a significant space regarding its relationships with other civil society organisations, particularly faith-based ones. Whilst there are clear isomorphic threats, it has not really been influenced by state policies, prerogatives and programmes;
- There are ventures into the space and place of politics – more often than not associated with single issue political matters that transcend traditional party political divides;
- The organisational faith position and the space and place faith occupies in the daily work of Valhalla is clear and explicit. This space and place increases when people 'get it';





121. I've had people [local councillors] approach me and say, 'look, we've got some money, can you put in an application form?'. For someone to say that to you that means they believe in the work you doing, they believe in you. ... It's not just you, and the work you're doing. So if people come actually approach *you* and say, 'we have some money, please apply for it', that is a very good sign that your work is being recognised, being seen, it's made a difference ... *Najeed, Valhalla staff member*

- Valhalla seeks to extend its future space by communicating positive stories about its work and the young people it works with. It is trying to expand its geographical space and place by opening similar projects in similar contexts.

## An Emerging Hypothesis: The Shape of Faith-Based Youth Work

My proposition that four key benchmark ideas of Catholic Social Teaching are particularly relevant to current debates and help shape an emerging hypothesis regarding faith-based youth work is significantly borne out, albeit with a number of shortcomings and additional considerations emerging.

My findings and data indicate that there is a high degree of respect for **Human Dignity** within the work of Valhalla. This is particularly evident with regard to the fact that young people who come from very differing backgrounds are all treated with the same high levels of respect. One of the key focusses is that all young people should be able to practice their faith in safety and security. Peace and justice are promoted and young people are supported as they explore faith within a secure and respectful environment.

There is clear evidence that Valhalla has **Solidarity** with the young people with whom it works. Having solidarity with those young people that are marginalised because of their faith is a key component of its work. It is evident that they are 'loving their neighbours' and wanting young people to live in safety and peace. They are seeking better outcomes for them welcoming young people from all backgrounds, seeking the common good, promoting cohesion and inclusive approaches. Sometimes this is done by individuals setting aside some aspects of personal faith beliefs. On occasions, Valhalla team members set aside their personal beliefs in pursuit of the objectives of defending the rights of others, respecting other faiths and young people from those faiths and seeking the greater cause of the needs of others. During the course of my study, several stories were revealed to me highlighting these issues, but I was asked to keep the specifics of them confidential as they involved incidents and dynamics that were highly sensitive in nature.

Valhalla is very much focused on the local communities it seeks to serve, albeit that these exist in a large and densely populated area. It works with small groups, preferring a raft of smaller events and activities to larger ones. It empowers young people and junior volunteers and leaders to facilitate these and, as such, embeds many of the principles of **Subsidiarity** into how it works. It role-models an approach that creates space and opportunity for others to bring about change at a local level. It does so by investing in young people so that they in turn will continue the work. It has at its heart a nature that helps those it works with take responsibility and accomplish outcomes under their own initiative without orchestrating top-down programmes or curricula.



The elements of human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity combine to help Valhalla work towards achieving the **Common Good**. By bringing people together, fostering friendships, empowering one another and creating space for reflection and discussion, they develop the collective welfare of the community, particularly the faith communities of the area within which they work.

The geographical area where Valhalla works has a number of strong and separate identifiable communities. Individually these have the propensity to encompass high levels of bonding social capital. Whilst this has many advantages it also represents an inherent consequential dilemma that potentially reduces levels of bridging social capital. In short, if individual communities are strong, connected, resilient and resourceful in themselves, they may well not relate to others, perceiving that they have no need. The result is people end up living in silos and the parallel lives previously discussed. As is well now documented (Cantle 2001; Cantle et al 2008) this potentially leads to societal problems and challenges. The result is that the common good is not realised and people miss out by not including all elements of the population. As Hume et al (1996: 17) assert:

If any section of the population is in fact excluded from participation in the life of the community, even at a minimal level, then that is a contradiction to the concept of the common good and calls for rectification.

Valhalla is doing such rectification work and very much achieving the goals of their strap-line – exploring faith, creating friendships, changing lives and doing so in pursuit of building common good and cohesive communities.

However, this representation does not fully portray my findings. Five other notable defining philosophical values also emerged. These are:

1. Life-bringing Relationships;
2. Fun;
3. Telling the Stories;
4. Effective Partnerships;
5. Funding and Resourcing.

### **1. Life-bringing Relationships**

The data points toward to an organisational narrative that seeks to build life-bringing relationships amongst young people in a fun and creative manner.

Valhalla wants young people to have great relationships with other young people in ways that bridge different faith communities. It does so in an affirming and positive manner so that the possibility that strong and vibrant cohesive communities can be developed exists.

By responding to the faith needs of young people and focussing on the positives that can be achieved by bringing young people together in a safe and secure environment, a positive and affirming view of humanity is propagated and achieved.

### **2. Fun**

This positive and faith-filled approach is supported by a fun element and component to the work that appears fundamental to its success. Valhalla wants people to have a good time and enjoy what is on offer.

This sense of fun is attractive to young people, creates a supportive environment in what could otherwise be a tense atmosphere and helps diminish major stressors oft associated with potentially contentious and confrontational multi-faith considerations.

### **3. Telling the Stories**

This positive and life-affirming dynamic is projected across Valhalla as it communicates enthusiastically the stories of the young people it works with and the merits of its approach.

It opts not to focus upon portraying and describing the challenges of working in what is a demanding context, but instead seeks to focus on telling others what a difference it has made in the lives of individual young people. Where possible, it asks the young people themselves to tell their stories so that any gap between the rhetoric of the organisation and the reality of what it does is made as small as possible.

Organisationally, these stories are communicated far and wide via effective use of social media and public relations mechanisms promoting the virtues of faith-based work, championing the causes of developing cohesive approaches, inclusive mandates, peace-making and fun. Organisationally, it very much achieves the objectives of its strap-line.

### **4. Effective Partnerships**

Valhalla enjoys a number of key partnerships that support its work and help it achieve its objectives.

The data indicates that the relationships Valhalla has with faith-based bodies are more than just partnerships or relationships of convenience. They are relationships that embody a sense of interdependence, reciprocity, mutuality, collaboration and accountability, formed to support the common good aspiration. This is most marked regarding the relationship Valhalla has with the community centre it operates out of. They are creative, innovative, energising and productive relationships operating for the benefit of all those involved.

The partnerships that do not resonate with this analysis (most notably some schools and associations with the police) portray a sense of tension being arrangements that are non-reciprocal with no obvious mutuality contained within them. These partnerships appear to be somewhat ineffectual and indeed there is evidence that Valhalla and the organisations concerned are moving in opposite directions in some regards.

### **5. Funding and Resourcing**

The long-term work of Valhalla is dependent upon the work being sustainable.

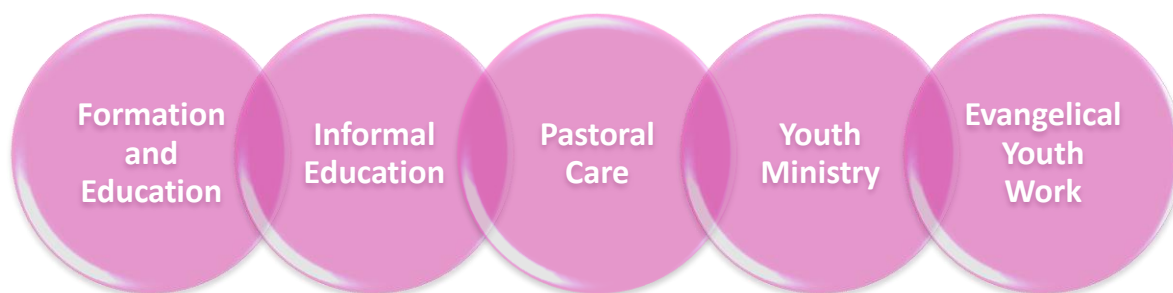
Taking all factors into account, this is an economic, spiritual, social and environmental sustainability. Economic in that the work needs funding and resourcing; spiritual with regard to an on-going requirement that faith communities continue to show goodwill towards the project; social regarding their on-going ability to be a gift of self to others – i.e. they place their own purposes, personal faith and individual objectives into the hands of the greater collective objective of developing cohesion; environmental, not perhaps in the contemporary understanding of the ‘scientific green’ ecological dynamic, but more in the traditional understanding of it being about whole-world housekeeping and homemaking - Valhalla wants to build a ‘home’ that is a friendship-based family made up of diverse groups of young people.

This sustainability demands careful and persistent stewardship to ensure that the work continues in line with the missional objectives of Valhalla.

When these additional emergent themes are combined with the original Catholic Social Teaching dynamics, underpinned by an organisational Christian motivation working across faith boundaries summative conclusions can be drawn about how Valhalla undertakes the work that it does.

## **Towards a Theoretical Framework: The Intention of Faith-Based youth Work**

Using the theoretical framework proposed by Doyle and Smith (2002),



Valhalla has the following pedagogical elements that describe its intentions and functions regarding what it does in its work:

### 1) Present: -

- Formation and Education – through specific exploration and dissemination of identified faith teachings (not just Christian) and understandings, more often than not learner (i.e. young people) led;
- Informal Education – via creative projects, mentoring and relationship building work;
- Pastoral Care – of individuals, especially of those seeking to understand and outwork their faith and those persecuted by others for their faith;
- Youth Ministry – by creating times for study, prayer and reflection.

### 2) Absent: -

- Evangelical Youth Work – this was entirely absent from the work of Valhalla. There was work that was focused upon faith maintenance, exploration and understanding, but none of this was of a proselyting nature.

A number of additional findings emerged from the study. These indicated that Valhalla's faith-based youth work has elements that are about:

- Creating spaces for the voices of young people to be heard, specifically in supporting issues resonating with community cohesion, building social capital and inclusion agendas;
- Facilitating and role-modelling a virtuous way of living relationally and for the good of each other and inspiring young people to do the same;
- Helping support and develop young people and empowering them to live more inclusively in a multi-faith and multi-cultural area;
- Undertaking specific projects that socially benefit both young people and the wider community;
- Developing a better social environment for people to co-exist within;

- Campaigning about local issues and concerns; and
- Bringing about small scale and systemic change and transformation by embracing a worldview that believes in peace, community, interculturalism and inclusion.

It is not suggested that these elements are the exclusive domain of the work of Valhalla, but in their case, they manage to bring them together in what is an almost unique way without, in my view, compromising the originating faith perspective of the project, the faiths of the current workforce and, most importantly, the faiths of the young people they seek to serve.

## Conclusions

The portraiture element of my methodology determines that the tone, gestures, and seeking understanding of those interviewed is analysed in order to capture the ‘texture and cadence’ (Lawrence-Lightfoot in eds. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997: 99) of the study. When combined with a ‘search for goodness’ (ibid 141-146) and an ‘empathetic regard’ within my observations that resonate with my own aspirations for such work (ibid: 146-152), it is clear that Valhalla is very much a civil society organisation. As such it occupies a significant space and place within the area it operates.

It is very much motivated by its founding faith motivation and positioning, managing to emphasise the ‘loving their neighbour’ aspect of that positioning to explicitly work with young people of all faith backgrounds; as reported on their web site, ‘meeting with strangers peacefully together’ and consequently developing the common good.

The work of Valhalla is vulnerable to being unduly influenced by social policy and external funding agendas, but it manages to resist such influences by being clearly focused upon its objectives and achieving the goals of its strap-line. This strength has helped it develop and maintain a unique position and approach that has proved attractive to funders and of interest to media and high profile stakeholders.

Valhalla is a highly motivated, quirky and passionate project that is very committed to the young people and the communities within which it operates. It is the only youth work provider in the area doing this type of work. It has an almost totally consuming focus on helping young people build relationships and talk peacefully and respectfully together. It believes that this will model a cohesive way of living that adults would do well to emulate. This approach seeks to bring about transformation, citizenship and develop community.

Based on the evidence of my Paradise case study and this study, any tentative **emerging hypothesis** about how faith-based youth work is undertaken and the form it comprises has merit in appealing to the stated principles of Human Dignity, Solidarity and Subsidiarity found in Catholic Social Teaching as a foundational starting point from which a model can be developed. Additionally, several new elements help portray how Valhalla goes about its work, namely: promoting life-bringing relationships, engendering fun, telling the stories about its work, developing effective partnerships and providing enough funding and resourcing for the work. These elements enable a hypothesis to be considered that has the aspirational objective of achieving the common good and being a reference point for further investigation in my other case studies.

With regard to this study of Valhalla, any developing **theoretical framework** about what faith-based youth work does and how it functionally operates needs to embrace all but the evangelical youth

work elements from the framework suggested by Doyle and Smith (2002); with a number of additional elements also identified that embrace ideas of supporting young people, living relationally and inclusively, developing and empowering young people, undertaking social action, campaigning and transformation.

# Questions Asked

The interviews undertaken with those involved in the project were of a semi-structured basis explored in full in my Thesis. This meant that a core set of structured questions were asked, supplemented by additional questions that emerged as the interview developed. The structured questions are set out below for reference purposes.

## Introduction

- 1) What 3 words first come to mind when I mention '[organisation] and faith-based youth work'?
- 2) If you were to pick an animal, a car, an image or other metaphor to portray [the organisation's] work with young people what would it be?
- 3) How would you describe [the organisation's] faith-based work with young people?

## Mission and Values

- 4) Why is [the organisation] motivated to work with young people?
- 5) What are the key values of [the organisation]?
- 6) What is [the organisation] trying to do in their work with young people? What stated aims of [the organisation] are you aware of?

## Relationships and Influences

- 7) What relationships do [you/the organisation] have with other faith groups re the youth work you do?
- 8) What relationships do [you/the organisation] have with government bodies, funders, other stakeholders re the youth work you do?
- 9) How is [your work/the organisation] influenced by outside factors? E.g. government, culture, media, funders

## Civil Society and Policy

- 10) How does [your/the organisation] work with young people make a positive contribution to wider society?
- 11) Do you think faith-based work with young people is taken seriously by wider society?
- 12) Do [you/the organisation] want to be valued by wider society? Government? Local community?
- 13) I don't know if you have heard of the Big Society? (Explain if not) – does your faith-based work have any connections with it? Are you doing anything different in your work as a result of the Big Society?

## The Future

- 14) If there was one thing you could change about [your/the organisation's] faith-based youth work, what would it be?
- 15) How do you want [your/the organisation's] faith-based youth work to develop?

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# Nirvana Case Study



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August 2012

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## Case Study Extract

This is a case study of a faith-based youth work project called Nirvana (not its real name). It is the third in a series of four studies. In order to establish a theoretical framework for faith-based youth work and propose a tentative emergent hypothesis regarding the determinants and territorial claims of such work, the studies seek to discover the relationship between the common good, the notion of the Big Society initiative and faith-based youth work; the role of faith; the space and place such projects have in society and the intentions, function, shape and form such work embodies.

Nirvana is based in the south east of England and works with young people in an affluent area of the country. It runs a Supported Lodgings service, helping house young people who find themselves in need of somewhere to live and works in local schools supporting young people at risk of disaffection. It facilitates a number of activities, programmes and services that seek to support such young people and their families.

This study has been undertaken using a mix of research methods that have included: short-term ethnography, semi-structured interviews, collection and analysis of data in the public domain and examination of organisational reports and communications.

Attempts have been made to preserve the anonymity of the project and consequently, all the names quoted in this study have been changed. Where direct quotations from the interviews have been used these are pre-fixed with a coding number. This number is an administrative reference in my system of analysis and has no other bearing or significance.

My investigation revealed that Nirvana is a distinctive, well-respected and compassionate project. Being the only deliverer of this type of youth work in the area it occupies a significant space and place within the community, whilst working at the juncture of state and civil society service provision. It has a very strong focus on meeting the needs of the local young people, supporting and journeying with them over the long-term. It brings a sense of hope and possibility to their situations, thereby working towards the common good, but paying little attention to the notion of the Big Society.

It is aware of, and wrestles with, isomorphic threats and external agendas that seek to steer and impact its work. It appears that it successfully manages to negotiate these, largely owing to the strength of its leadership and clarity of its vision and mission.

Nirvana's faith position is a mix of being very explicit and more veiled or diaphanous as it works inclusively and with integrity in different contexts.

This study indicates that any tentative emerging hypothesis about how faith-based youth work undertakes its work is focused upon the principles of: Human Dignity, Solidarity, Subsidiarity, Providing Life Support, Bringing Hope and Long-Term Change, Communication, Symbiotic Partnerships and adequate Funding underpinned by an organisational Faith Motivation.

The work of Nirvana is focused upon: formation and education, informal education, pastoral care, faith transmission, citizenship, community development, social action, advocacy and transformation.

# Introduction

This is a case study investigation of a youth work project working in an affluent community in the south east of England.

The project works with vulnerable and young people 'at risk' of disaffection and with the wider community to try and bring about individual and collective transformation.



The study is presented with reference to the principles of portraiture as outlined by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997); principles that seek to combine the dimensions and disciplines of rigorous social qualitative research methods and the more artistic, aesthetic, reflective and personal aspects of contemporary social science investigation and inquiry.

The actual name of the project and the names of those involved have been changed in order to provide as much anonymity as feasible for those participating in the study.

This case study sets out:

- How the research was undertaken;
- A portraiture of the area within which the project operates;
- Details of the project – largely based on information in the public domain that the project itself offers;
- The key findings of my investigation;
- Analytical discussions regarding these findings;
- Conclusions and emerging theoretical conceptualisations.

## Research Methodology

### Method and Timing

A full critique of the methodology used is set out in my PhD Thesis and detailed analysis is not considered here. For reference purposes, the study involved:

- A series of four semi-structured interviews - see page 44 for the structured element of the questions asked;
- Ethnographic appraisal
  - Observing staff
  - Observing visitors to the project
  - Walking around the community
  - Driving around the area – photographing, pausing and reflecting;
- Reviewing project literature and public documents;
- Examining artwork and displays in the project building;
- Reviewing project newsletters and publicity materials;
- Evaluating organisation web site;
- Examining government, infrastructure organisation and policy reports and documents;
- Watching, reading and reflecting upon media reports and articles;



- Evaluating relevant blogs, critiques and perspectives of the work and area;
- Reviewing and analysing local leaflets and newsletters;
- Incorporating prior practice and reflexive knowledge of the project's work;
- Taking photographs in the project building and the local community.

The study took place during the period March-August 2012 and involved: site visits, remote electronic research, literature reviews and email communications. This is the third study in a series of four.

## The Area



### Location

This project operates in perhaps one of the most affluent areas of the country. Property prices, Gross Domestic Product and the cost of living are amongst the highest in the UK. The area is juxtaposed to central London and Heathrow airport and its economy is dominated by the success of the service industries found in these places. The project operates across a wide geographical area, working in a variety of social, educational and community settings.

### Physical Environment

With its leafy suburbs, royal castles, internationally famous private schools, mansion housing, impressive transport links and open green spaces, this would rank as one of the most esteemed places to live in modern Britain.

On the surface it comes across as an area that has few, if any, social problems. High-tech businesses intermingle with meandering rivers, hoards of tourists swarm and planes continually fly overhead to destinations near and far.



Heathrow airport and its associated infrastructure dominate the physical landscape and airspace; the continual noise of planes landing and taking off being a constant reminder of its impact.

In the tourist areas, nothing seems to be out of place. The area is clean and pristine with public parks immaculately groomed and maintained. Where you can drive and what you can do is highly orchestrated by a sophisticated regime of signs and controls.

In the town centres of the area, wealth and affluence are evident on the streets. A coffee shop culture permeates throughout, with latte and cappuccino drinkers appearing to be expensively dressed and at ease with their surroundings.

Outside of the town centres a wide variety of housing is in evidence. Exclusive mansions are hidden away in private roads and thoroughfares. Select and serviced apartments, semi-detached houses, historical mews and more modern and densely built housing estates all fetch eye-watering prices. This lack of affordable housing is particularly impacting upon young people, resulting in a major aspect of Nirvana's work - namely helping young people with their housing needs.

## Community Profile

Nirvana works across a wide area (across the counties of Surrey and Berkshire) and generalisations are inevitably hard to make given the breadth and scope of all that is found therein. Whilst there are no doubt areas of need, elements of poverty and significant inequalities, there is a general sense that this is a highly prosperous and affluent area, particularly where the majority of Nirvana's work is centred.

Overall, Berkshire is a prosperous region ... the overall level of deprivation is well below average. (Berkshire Community Foundation 2010: 14)

As I drove around the area with Project Chief Executive, Alan, we passed a farm-shop near to Windsor Castle that he described as 'the most expensive farm shop in the world'. This pointedly seemed to portray the areas level of wealth and financial resourcefulness.

'Nice' is an largely subjective term, but given the highly aspirational and stereotypical portrayal about what a successful place and life in twenty-first century Britain is, then this is a *nice* and desirable place to live. The Index of Multiple Deprivation places the area in the 10% most affluent areas in England. Unemployment rates for the area are approaching half those of the national average, with average earnings nearly 30% above national rates (Office for National Statistics 2011).



One of my interviews was conducted in a Starbucks coffee shop attached to the local Sainsbury's supermarket. The customers here were expensively dressed and extremely well presented. A stop to obtain fuel witnessed a garage forecourt full of BMW and Mercedes cars refuelling. Similarly, following my interview conducted with a Head Teacher at one of the local schools, it took an age to get out of the school car park due to the vast amount of 4x4 vehicles and expensive cars present as people picked up their children. They completely blocked all the entrances and exits. Even visits to the charity shops in the area highlighted the wealth of the area – cheap bargains seemingly impossible to come by!

These communities bring together two contrasting cultural phenomena. There is a sense of a great history in the area. It was here that the Magna Carta was agreed; here that one of the most famous royal houses in the world, Windsor Castle, sits; here that the Thames flows majestically and here that Eton school presides producing a succession of influential leaders, politicians and thinkers. This is a quintessential English context.



Equally, the pinnacle of modernity can be found here in all its guises. Local residents work in the business and financial hub of the City; the M25 motorway and Heathrow airport provide gateways to the nation and the wider world; with Surrey believed to have more millionaires and more company and organisational headquarters than any other county in the UK.

A moment of reflection spent by the riverside saw large expensive boats drifting past even larger



and more expensive houses. I compared this to the river I live near which also has boats and houses present. The ones I am used to are not in this league - thoughts of the north/south divide pervade.

According to CEO, Alan, this sense of sufficiency causes tensions for Nirvana. They encounter real needs amongst the young people they work with, but these are not always recognised by those in authority. He stated that the 'Council Tax has been reduced because there are "no needs"'.

According to the 2001 census figures, the areas are mainly white British in terms of ethnicity (Surrey 95%, Berkshire 89% 2001 census), but there is evidence that the ethnic mix is broadening and growing although this is mainly in the urban areas of Slough and Reading (Berkshire Community Foundation 2010) areas which the project does not work in. According to Alan, the black and minority ethnic population is largely middle class and 'the marginalised group here are the white working class boys'.

According to recent research only 9% of children are in poverty (Child Poverty Action Group 2012). The area is ranked 312th in England regarding having the biggest risk of poverty in the future and 284th for child poverty out of 326 local authorities (Experian 2012).

## Symbols and Metaphors

A number of symbols, metaphorical reflections and portrayals came to mind during the investigation. The following are the ones observed that made a lasting impression along with my interpretation of their meaning:

- The constant noise of the planes flying above – reflecting that this is a high flying and mobile community where people have resources to come and go with ease;
- A large number of private and independent schools – portraying wealth, privilege, an opportunity for people to get a head start in life and a personal sense that this is unfair on those who do not have such opportunities;
- Boats cruising serenely on the Thames – communicating a sense that all is well on the surface, but I am left wondering what life is like under the surface;
- The fact that history is everywhere with numerous landmarks, old buildings, plaques and statues present – conveying a sense of importance, significance, Englishness, royalty and superiority;
- Businesses are everywhere located in modern, shiny, glass-covered and architecturally sophisticated buildings. Many have super-modern names and logos – indicating that this is a cutting-edge place where opportunities exist and dreams can be shaped, this being in sharp contrast to my own sense of experiencing the poorer areas of the North and Midlands.

## Summative Feelings

These were augmented by a number of personal feelings and intuitions, summarised as a:

- Prima facie disbelief that this area has a lot of social problems demanding a significant youth work project for at risk young people;
- Feeling that this is a world a long way away from the one that I am used to;
- Place and land full of opportunities where power and influence are located and movers and shakers proliferate;
- Conviction that this is what is dreamt of by more Conservative politicians regarding an enterprising and modern economy underpinned by the Big Society;
- Sense of there being a buzz here – the buzz of the planes, tourism, business, technology and possibility.
- Busy place where parents are rushing around earning lots money to pay for their big mortgages and rents and/or taking their children from this activity to that. Can't help but wonder what is happening to their children in all of this busyness.



## The Project<sup>1</sup>

Nirvana is a Christian youth work charity bringing hope to over 1,200 vulnerable and 'at risk' young people in Surrey and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead areas each year. Hope is outworked through what Nirvana calls Relational Support Work. Relational Support Work is the long-term commitment to journey with young people and families through the issues that they are addressing.

It operates in schools and community settings and works out of an office base in the middle of a busy town centre.

### Project Strap Line

The project strap line is:

Bringing hope to young lives.

### Vision

The vision is to bring hope to young lives through serving young people, their families and communities and actively pursuing emotional, physical and spiritual wholeness for all. They seek to provide support and activities that develop the skills, capabilities and capacities of young people to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals.

This is achieved by providing opportunities for Christians, churches and the wider community to partner with Nirvana in the delivery of a number of projects. It endeavours to develop a sense of

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<sup>1</sup> Information largely adapted from the organisations web site and internal strategy documents.

community so that its Christian ethos (see below) can be lived out enabling young people and families to encounter and experience hope.

## Aims

Their aim is to develop a community of Christians to model and outwork hope through acts of Christ-like compassion, mercy and justice serving young people, their families and communities.

Nirvana aims to operate according to a number of guiding principles:

1. Clear mission and ethos;
2. Prophetic and equipping outcomes for those they work with and for those who work for them;
3. Relational and communal existence;
4. Space for personal ownership of the work.

## Ethos, Values and Faith

Nirvana is inspired by the message, service and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Nirvana believes that the message of Jesus Christ is nothing short of wholeness and restoration and that their mission is to be a part of that holistic, restorative and redemptive process. They work inclusively with all Christian denominations as well as a number of secular partners.

They attempt to live by their ethos ideals of:

- A commitment to operating with integrity;
- A knowledge that they need to be selfless;
- A desire to be community;
- A response that is compassionate;
- A commitment to be devoted;
- A love of having fun.

These ideals express the type of people they want to be in order for them to bring hope to those they serve. They have a clearly thought out theological and faith basis that seeks to serve the vulnerable, those at risk and the marginalised. This is achieved by Nirvana working to build the Kingdom of God by going to people, expressing acts of service - with and to them - and allowing their transformational work to grow relationally, organically and naturally. They do not appear to force their religious beliefs onto others and they welcome project workers and staff who might not be members of the Christian faith. They do, however, ask those working for them to embrace their ethos, mission and purposes.



Nirvana signs up to the Oasis Faithworks Charter (Faithworks 2002) which communicates clearly their inclusive commitment to the community and their partners.

## Community and Work with Young People Consists of:

- Work in local schools;
- Supported Lodgings: bridging the vulnerable season of transition from homelessness into independence or reconciliation back home by placing a young person into a 'host home' for up to a year;
- Police Community Youth Pastor: Nirvana recognises that very often crime and anti-social behaviour is the response of a young person to adverse circumstances or barriers to personal development;
- One-to-One pastoral care;
- Anger Management Support groups;
- Youth Achievement and Duke of Edinburgh accredited courses;
- Young Carer sessions;
- Relationship and Anti-Bullying workshops;
- Mentoring;
- Employability courses;
- Family Link work;
- Parenting courses;
- Work with families;
- Self-esteem and Behavioural Support groups;
- Summer Camps for young people.

## Staffing

Nirvana has a staff team of thirteen people (a mix of full and part-time roles equivalent to seven full-time roles) and a number of supporting volunteers. In 2010-2011 there were twenty seven supporting volunteers.

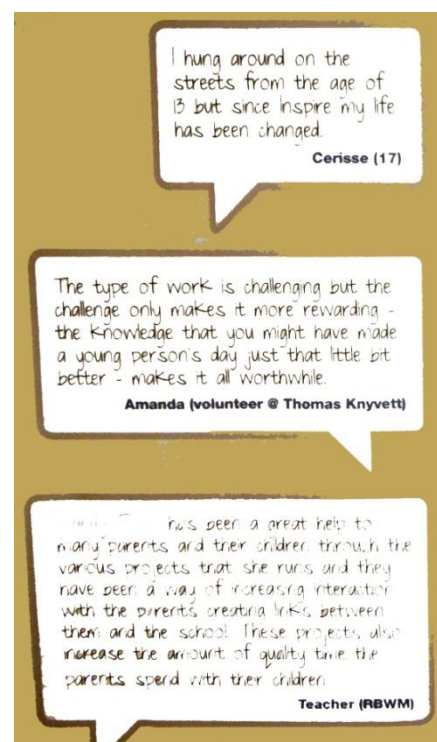
Recent cuts in local authority and national government grants and funding have meant that staffing has been reduced in the last twelve months, although as the time period of my study drew to a close, a number of new posts were being advertised as a result of funding becoming available to develop and expand their work in schools.

## Funding

Nirvana is funded from a number of sources. These include: donations from churches and individuals, income generated from partnership work (mainly schools and the police), grants and money received from Surrey County Council (mainly for their supported lodgings work).

## Findings

This section is broken down into a number of headings that encompass: Firstly, those findings shaped and perceived by a general overview of the case. Secondly, those informed by the answers given to the questions asked of those interviewed. Thirdly, by additional ethnographic observations and, finally those considered supplementary miscellaneous portrayals.



Some of the quotations used to highlight individual findings could equally be applied to highlight other findings. However, where this applies I have opted not to duplicate the quotation for reasons of prudence and efficacy.

## Overview

Nirvana is a distinctive, well-respected and compassionate project that is overwhelmingly centred on meeting the needs of the young people it works with and for. It occupies a significant space and place in the schools and communities within which it operates appearing almost indispensable within the school settings.

It supports a large number of young people and positions itself so that it journeys with them for the long-term, bringing a sense of hope and possibility to situations which are often desperate and marginalising. Whilst a high proportion of its work is undertaken in formal education settings, it stresses that the 'voluntary participation' of young people in its work is very important.

It thrives as a result of the significant and trusting partnerships and relationships that it has invested in and these are the life-blood of its work. It has developed a strong community approach to its work and is committed to outworking 'faith in action'.

It is aware of, and wrestles with, isomorphic threats and external agendas that seek to steer and impact its work. It appears that it successfully manages to negotiate these, largely owing to the strength of its leadership and clarity of its vision and mission.

Nirvana's faith position is a mix of being very explicit and more veiled or diaphanous as it works inclusively and with integrity in different contexts.



## Perspectives and Lenses

Those interviewed were asked what words came to mind when they thought of Nirvana (each person was asked for three words, but some offered more and some less). These were their responses:

Compassionate x 2	Focused	Engaging
Relationship	Expertise	Light at the end of the tunnel
Hope x 2	Strong vision	
Fun	On-going/Long-term	
Integrity		

When account was taken of the tone, emphasis and frequency of the responses made, the following is a summary conclusion of what was being communicated. Nirvana was said to be about:

Compassion, hope and focused long term-work.

A similar exercise had recently been undertaken with local Christian ministers. They described Nirvana as follows:

Hope x 2, Care, Relevant, Brilliant x 2, Befriending, Youth, Active, Outward-looking, Future, Passionate, Transformational x 2 (Newsletter March 2012)



Those interviewed offered the following metaphors and images as portrayals of Nirvana:

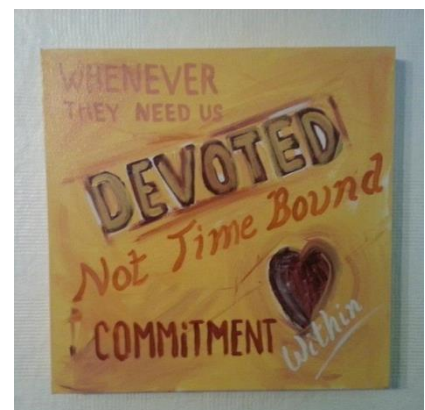
- Bus – journeying with young people, the bus keeps running and people get on and off all the time;
- Big Red T Shirt saying ‘here to help, to give advice, to pass you on’ – about journeying with young people, staying alongside them to help and then empowering them to move on;
- Squid – moving forward with tentacles going off in all directions, but all helping move forward in the same direction.

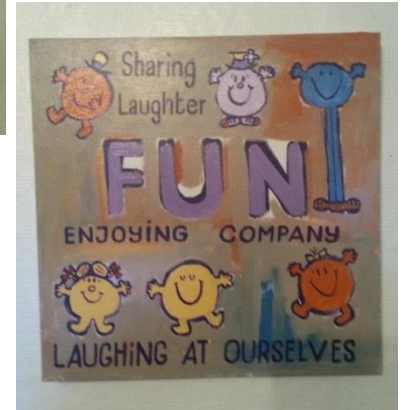
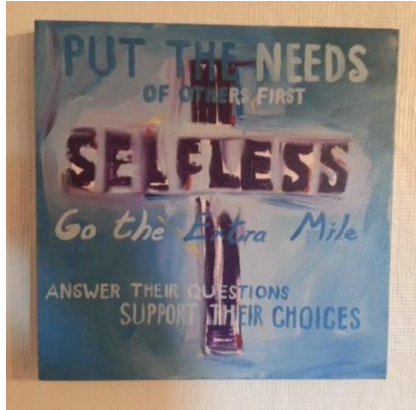
The distinctiveness of Nirvana and the values within which it works are fully summarised by two of the interviewees:

111. Key values, I think it is, we have an ethos about fun and integrity and the idea that actually hope can be borne out practically and actually within ourselves as a team, that’s not about what we go and do, but that’s about us together as a community and how do we support and care for one another in that tension ‘that this is a work place’ but also we want to live out values in our lives that are may be different from secular work places. Erm ... yeah. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

203. How do I perceive the organisation? (I nod). I think very compassionate, very focused and I think they’re leaders in their field as well. I think there’s expertise there. I could go on for ever on that one. There’s a strong set of purpose, strong set of vision, values that permeate that. I mean there are probably other questions to come in, but it’s that value and you’re reminded of that, we’re reminded of that on a regular basis. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

As the period of my study drew to an end, a local artist was invited to produce some pictures that reflected the work of Nirvana. These are set out below as they provide a further helpful portrayal of their work and one that resonates with my findings.





The following are specific findings broken down into a number of sub-headings, reflective of the subject matter and aims of my investigation.

## Mission and Values

### Motivation

A number of focused and clearly defined motivations were apparent that were all related to working with young people who are marginalised or 'at risk', namely:

- **Meeting young people's needs.**

163. ... because ultimately there is always going to be someone or some group of young people where help and support is needed. I guess ultimately what you're trying to do is do yourself out of a job. ... So ultimately that's your goal. But it's also to do with being there as and when the need arises isn't it. So I don't know whether there is actually a, a way that what Nirvana does could ever finish, if that makes sense because there's always, the need is always going to be there. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*



205. [the key values are] the care for the individual, you know, compassion, time, focus on the needs of the young person. And I think it reminds us of the journey that we take as a school that, ... in there very strongly is about the needs of the individual. As well as raising achievement and raising attainment we're working with communities and it's very much about the needs of the individual. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

Through putting ... young people's needs first and not our own personal gain, we will be able to more accurately meet their needs, answer their questions and support them in their choices ... *Nirvana Core Document*

- **Providing support for young people.**

127. ... [working with others] can be frustrating sometimes it can be that, 'sorry you are in the wrong area, wrong day, so therefore I can't see you'. So sometimes it's about, 'ok, so if it's not you then who is it?' And actually in the RB [area] it's particularly confusing there's lots of different areas, and ... but kind of advocating for a young person until the right services says, 'actually they do fall into the remit that we will work with them, we will work with that family'. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

172. It's about supporting and working with young people. It's... I suppose from a very Christian point of view, it's 'being Jesus to young people' ... *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

217. Now I've never seen anybody from Nirvana talk to a young person in a way that I would think was, you know, I would disapprove of, it's you know, it's, nothing could be further from the truth. How quite, how they achieve that, that unending patience I'm not sure. I'm sure there are times when that's difficult to maintain and that's where the faith comes in. That's where the faith comes in but if you really want an honest ... I think it's about support and supporting Heads. It's about supporting me as a Head Teacher and I think it's about supporting our staff as well. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

- **Journeying with young people for the long-term.**

097. 'Relational Support Work' is the official title, but I suppose it's about journeying with young people ... The idea is about coming alongside of the young person and journeying with them for a period of time. And you know supporting them and empowering them, so it's not doing it all for them but actually, 'what can we do to support you and help you .... you know, make good choices?' ... I suppose it's a bit more about helping them think reflect and make good choices themselves as well as when things are very bad just stepping in and saying, 'ok when everything else fails we'll be the support that's still there'. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

Not looking for approaches that do 'check – fix, check – fix'. We want to see young people have a quality of life. *Alan (in informal conversation)*

### Values

Similarly, a number of clearly identifiable values were evident. Again, these relate to meeting the needs of marginalised and 'at risk' young people and are motivated by the Christian ethos of the project:

- **On-going commitment to young people.**

157. [we are about work that is] 'on-going' so it's stuff that doesn't end and end at six sessions or two sessions ... so it's as long as the student needs it. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

241. I make the link with the sort of endearing vision idea that, 'you're not going to give up on people' ... *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*



- **Voluntary participation in the work.**

It was of interest to note that whilst Nirvana undertakes a lot of its work in formal education settings, the participation by young people in the work they undertake was still voluntary.

099. ... you can never convince a child to do, stop doing something so our work is always voluntary basis. You do get kids who are sent to you by their Head of Year, but it's always very much; 'Why are you here? Do you want to be here?'. And if its 'no' then ok, 'off you go back to ...' because there isn't a lot a point, their gonna sit there and I'll talk to them for a bit and they're gonna be like, 'I don't wanna be here I'm gonna go' ...

100. *So how, just to tease that out a bit – how voluntary is that, is that a kind of up-front choice you give them?*

101. So when we have referrals that are made for us from Heads of Years and students come along, in that initial conversation it will be, 'This is who I am and what I do'. 'Why do you think you are here?' 'Do you want to be here?' and I do send them back to Heads of Year saying, 'chatted to xyz and at this point they don't want to access our services but I've explained that we are here and our support is there and ...' *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

In response to a clarifying question Amanda explained further:

104. *I'm just curious as it's one of the tensions around informal youth work and formal expectations, which is a 'deficit fixing' model ...*

105. ... and it is worth asking that question because sometimes you're under the impression that they come here voluntary when they go, 'I don't know why I am here, I've been sent by the head' and you're like 'oh' this is voluntary! Quite often what I will do is have an initial session if they say 'it's fine', then I say, 'Would you like to meet in a couple of weeks?' 'Yeah ok'. We've got an email system, 'why don't you drop me an email and then we'll arrange a date?', because if I put something in for them it can very easily become 'I am being polite and I have to go and I have to attend'. Whereas, if they email and say 'yes, I would quite like that', then it's them saying ... And other students I have kind of said to them, 'go away and think about it and come back to me' and it's taken a term and they've come and said, 'actually I would quite like that now'.

- **Working in partnership with others.**

This aspect of Nirvana's work is considered more fully in due course, but it is noted here that it appears to be a key value in their work as well as an operational actuality. They actively seek to work in partnership with others. It is more than a means to an end, but more something of underpinning significance; their Core Document stating explicitly that they 'seek to grow relationally'.

203. There's a nice symbiotic link between the school and the organisation. Yeah, it's [the partnership] very important in that regard. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

- **Developing a sense of community.**

We want to be clear what we believe and what is the hub of us being community .... Our desire to be in relationship will mean we journey with people and communities for the long-term, seeking to invest not simply through good practice, but also sharing our lives ... Core Document



14. ... that sense of community and belonging is so important. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

113. ... we will go the extra mile for a young person and for the community. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

- **Faith in action.**

Nirvana's Core Document states that they want their Christian motivation to result in a distinctive that can be seen in the reality of their daily work. Additionally, CEO, Alan, said that he 'wanted the faith of the staff to be real in the sense that it is what it is rather than portraying a particular line.' It would appear that they are successful in achieving these objectives.

151. ... there is a bit about it's all very well to say to somebody, 'Right, God bless you, you take care and eat well tonight' and not actually do anything about it and so I think if I would rather, if it had to come down to a choice, I would rather help somebody practically and them know that I'm a Christian and that stay with them and be very upfront and say, 'Hi I'm a Christian and do you need to know Jesus?' and then walk away and still not have ... helped in any way. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

241. I think it [faith] is there and I've certainly seen the strength of that faith carried out in actions. I've seen it driving things and that can only be the case ... it can only be the case and I've seen that at gatherings, meetings but you don't see it quite so much in school. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

### **Aims and objectives**

Several clear aims and objectives were manifest:

- **Along with journeying with young people is a desire to develop hope and transformation.**

By 'hope', Nirvana means 'hope of restoration, reconciliation and transformation' *Nirvana Annual Report 2011.*

008. ... journeying in relationship with young people helping them realise that there is hope for them. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

018. But to reach out, and that's where I think the strap line is accurate, to help people realise hope, help people realise there is ... there can be more for their lives. And just a journey with them as well. Be with them where they are at. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

107. ... you know people, people have value in and of themselves and we want to see that transformation, we want to see that hope, we want to see that life brought into other peoples world in a very practical way and me personally, yes I would love it if at some point they discover Jesus and had a relationship with him, but I see my role as very much practically showing that and having answers if they ask and sometimes they do. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

157. And I suppose the other one would be, I know the tagline is hope, but it's about giving the young people I work with a light at the end of the tunnel. So that actually there is more to this all encompassing situation than is what they can see at the moment. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

Nirvana's Police Community Youth Pastor, works in partnership with the Police in the ... area to provide support to young people. His role is not about simply seeking to curb poor behaviour; it is about enabling young people to unpack the reasons why they behave in such a way and to bring an alternative perspective into the mix. *Prayer Letter April 2012*

- **Being successful in broad, but perhaps difficult to define, ways.**

The concept of what defines success is often an intangible dynamic within the work of Nirvana:

109. I think success is really difficult in this kind of industry because normally you are doing preventative work, so you're stepping in to stop it get any worse and how do you measure that? I suppose a young person being 'happy' which is again a very broad term and having options for career and job and those kind of things. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*



165. What's the definition of success? You know, it's, 'how long's a piece of string?' It's... I would say that success can be anything from somebody comes in crying their eyes out to leaving with a smile on their face. That's, you know, that can be seen as success. Somebody who is, you know, TN (school) would classify them as 'RHINO', so they're Registered Here In Name Only. So, you know, a measure of success might be that you have a student who is deemed 'RHINO' and yet they start to attend school and their attendance increases or whatever. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

231. ... it's just the nature of things that's possible where the funding for those particular projects is easier, not easy but easier to get hold of in terms of actually supporting. Because they're doing a role that was previously done by other people, well perhaps by other people, but I'm not sure. But it's that sort of relational youth work where it's harder to get the funding for and national bodies and others do actually say, 'well I'm going to put some money into that'. So something like Supported Lodgings, for example, I could see why a governing body or Local Authority would put money into that, but relational youth work? Well it's a softer, you know it's the targets, you know the outcomes aren't as clear, you know yes you've had two thousand conversations whatever and you may have kept children in school, your attendance rates, you've got children taking part in school plays that would hitherto not done that, but it's not as strong evidence, it's not something that is linked to funding in quite the same way. Having said that the two are of equal importance and you know we're passionate about all those elements. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

## Faith Dynamic

The faith-based nature of Nirvana is made up of a complex mix of elements.

At organisational level it is well defined and coherently established:

034. I think we are very explicit on who we are as an organisation and who we believe in and what we believe in. In terms of the young people I work with I'm not sure that ... I, that that is as explicitly known to them as it is to our funders and supporters and other organisations that we work with. They know that we are a Christian organisation, but ... that's about it until I start to meet with them and have conversations with them and then they know that I'm a Christian. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

137. I was able to do an INSET day training for staff recently, in which I took some time out to explain what 'Christian' meant and how that motivates us and why that's important. ... I think that's what's brilliant about the fact that Nirvana have been in C (school) so long and have that reputation is that they're not scared by the Christian label. I think a lot of schools, rightly or wrongly, may have been burnt before when Christians turn up on the door and say, 'hey we want to come and work in your schools', they get a little bit like, 'hang on a second, what are you going to do?'. Where as I think Nirvana has a proven track record of 'yes they're Christian and very overt and that's where they are at, and they also support and care for our young people in a way that means they are cared for and in a way that we can't always do as school'. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

There is an organisational paper about General Occupational Requirement (GOR) statuses across every component level of the organisation. This clearly states which roles/posts have a GOR and which do not, with reasons stated for each component.

At operational level in their schools work, there are two distinct positions in operation.

242-4. I guess that's been a question [about the faith dynamic] we internally have asked. When we first started coming in the school it was blatantly obvious because we were out doing lessons and assemblies, you couldn't get away from it. You knew you were people of faith because I would stand up in assembly and pick a bible up, right 'there you go'. It's a bit too obvious I might as well have put down I'm a God botherer to be that blatant, but then when you start to hone down to pastoral care then the concern for a charity like us is are we just like anybody else? ... Because ... when you're doing an anger management group you don't pick the bible up and say by the way this is just to remind you we're Christians. So it's encouraging and affirming to hear ... for a charity that seeks not to be overtly in your face, seeks to be pastoral in nature, there is still something about us that says they have a faith motivation within them. *Alan, Nirvana CEO (as part of interview with Ted)*

In school assemblies and lessons the positioning is clear and unambiguous:

241... I've seen it [evidence of Nirvana's faith] in assemblies. You know Nirvana you know delivering assemblies. But if you're seeing Nicola talking to a young person then she may be living by that... it's there but it's not too overt is it? It's guiding her possibly but it's not ... All I can say is me as the Head of this school I find that the faith element and that coming in driving that really helpful indeed. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

In their support and pastoral work it is less explicit and more thickly veiled. There is an 'as and when considered' incarnationally appropriate approach:

030. I think some people might want to see that every young person, the aim, the ultimate aim might be that every young person gets saved. For me it's kind of being Jesus to them as much as it is wanting them to know Jesus. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*



038. I don't think we, I personally and from what I've seen of other people, we don't try and push our faith on people but we are very open about who we are. We don't hide who we are from the start so I think most of us get that balance right. It is a tension and it is a struggle but I think we say who we are so, therefore if people come to us for help and they know who we are then they're choosing to engage with us in that way and they're allowing us to engage with them, but we don't ... yeah we don't shove it down their throats. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

077. ... the motivation is faith-based but were not purely doing, we're not doing just faith-based activities. We're not running a church youth group here, that's not what Nirvana is doing. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

These various elements combine to present a rational and distinct theological underpinning of their work.

133. I think I have a strong sense that what God starts he finishes, and by working with a young person by praying for them regularly, by being open and honest about our faith and what we do, I think that starts the work that God's doing in them and I am sure He's aware of them before we pray about them, but I do think there's something in that in terms of knocking on God's door a bit and going, 'actually things need to change for this young person'. And it may not be that come Year 11 that they confess Jesus and they're going to be a missionary. But, if they have had a positive experience with Christians, if they have had support and love and care then actually that, on a very basic level, enables them to access or speak to or if they have a Christian colleague they, 'oh there were some people in our school that were ...' and what's really nice about it is that everybody knows that it's a Christian charity, it's not like to have to drop into conversation. People know it's a Christian charity and that's well known within the school and the students, so they know what we do is part of that, and in one-to-ones and groups and stuff if does come up in conversation. You know, like I say, yes it would be great and I would love them all to find Jesus 'cos ultimately for a lot of them that's really the only answer to lots of what's going on with them if they need God. But I just trust ... I do the job that I have been given to do for this period of time with the love of Jesus and God will do the rest of it. And actually if life is better, if by working with them things have improved then I kind of see that as my job done. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

215. I don't believe that the faith side of it is that, is necessarily that overt. I think I'm right, I don't know if this is a discussion but I don't necessarily perceive it to be that. But it's, it's and I don't know if this makes sense, but it's as overt as it needs to be. You know it can be quite, the side of it can be quite quiet, but if you actually, you know fully participate, you can, and if you go to an event like that you might see more evidence of it. But I think within school you know, I think it's about carrying the message into the school. And that's about



being with the children, walking with the children, listening to the children and the amount of time I've heard people say, 'I need to speak to Nicola, can I speak to Alison, can I speak to Dermot ...' and all those sorts of things I've lost count. ... So it's about taking the message and taking that message into the school and that doesn't necessarily mean that that has to be overtly, overt about faith. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

245. And I think it [the faith positioning] is done in such a way clearly, and I think this is the skill, it's done in such a way as not to alienate people. You know it's put across in such a way as, I don't mean to say 'trendy' but it's done in such a way as to actually get people on board but it's just very relevant. It's very relevant and appropriate. And I think the children whether it's in assemblies or wherever actually enjoy, enjoy that. Because I think a lot of thought goes into, well I know it does, planning what's going to be said and you know the conversations. It doesn't, it isn't just off the cuff a lot of planning and thought goes into it. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*



## Relationships and Influences

My study discovered that the project experienced a variety of significant relationships and external influences. Most notably:

### *Strong community connections and evidence of partnerships*

Nirvana's success is very dependent upon the effectiveness of the partnerships it is involved in. It would appear that Nirvana has some very strong partnerships, especially with local schools.

125. I work with the school nurse and the drugs and alcohol agency, TT and another local charity called the GR. So they would participate and may make referrals, and Connexions - or what was Connexions, it's now Directions - they will make referrals and they will discuss students and again we would say to them, 'could you please chat with this young person be great if they had some careers advice', so we kind of work together in that and kind of seek to get input where it's helpful. There's also local youth counselling, that goes on. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

169. I think it's, I'm in a probably unique position at Nirvana in the fact that I work out of two different schools and what happens in one school is very different to what happens in another. At M (school) it's very formulaic, very laid out: These are the students who you need to be working with, 'this is how you're going to do it'. 'These are the time-frames that you can work within'. Whilst at TN (school) it's got to the stage where I could, you know, within reason, I could suggest, 'ok we're going to set up a group for kids who eat too many donuts, 'cos actually this is the need, this is the benefits, this is where the support will come and this is hopefully what you as a school will see out of it'. And the school would go, 'brilliant, go for it'. So, for example, I'm in the process of working on two projects. One was a boxing anger management project at TN (school) where I went to the school and said, 'This is an option. We're looking at doing anger management in a completely different way. Have you thought about this?' And they went, 'Oh ok, well explore it'. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

205. I don't think that as a school we could do that [helping young people] without their support. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

213. ... your [asking] ... how does a school find time to work in that kind of partnership when there's so many other things going on. Well the answer to that is fundamentally you make it an absolute priority. If you make it an absolute priority, then it's not actually forgotten, it's there as an absolute priority. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

216. ... I don't like that term 'outside agencies' because I think it's actually a partnership it's not an outside agency, it's just a technical phrase that we use that I think is a bit, it doesn't exactly achieve what you want to say sometimes, almost contradicts. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

Commenting on the effective working relationship regarding work undertaken in one school, Dermot said:

176. ... And that's down to the fact that I have a relationship with her that allows us both to have the confidence to say, 'ok there's no preconceived ideas, we're not coming in thinking that one of us is better than the other. We're simply working at the same goal.' *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

182. And such is the relationship that Nirvana have with the school and I have with the churches that the school were like, 'yeah, the more help the better'. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

The effectiveness of these partnerships is clearly underpinned by close relationships and friendships between key individuals with the various agencies involved. There is some risk that if these individuals were to move on or be absent for a long period of time, then this might threaten the partnership.

### Externally driven influences

The nature of the partnerships Nirvana has and the funding it receives often combine to bring an external influence on the nature of the work undertaken:

054. Yes, well my role is funded by Supporting People which is a Government ... yeah so it shapes it like that because if they stop that then there's no money for Supporting Lodgings. It also shapes it by referrals. Young people come from Children's Services or Housing. So if a church or a college or a school rings me up and says, 'we've got a young person that's homeless' then we have to send them via those channels to come to us. So their efficiency affects my role, or none – not efficiency! (sarcastically laughs). *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

103. This is the pressure and the difficulty in schools, they want you to fix so they go 'here you go, here are some difficult children that are making trouble in our classes make it all better', but you know I have explained and they do understand that actually I can't make a young person do anything actually if they don't want our help right now and so they do accept that. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*



### *The threat of isomorphism*

These influences, alongside the need to sustain the organisation, bring an isomorphic threat:

050. And then other people in the team are working in schools. There's close relationships there. In fact some of them ... say they feel more attached to the school sometimes because they spend four days in the school so they're very much part of that community. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

143. I think the problem with charity work is funding is so very key and I think the reality is that lots of charities have suffered with the recent cuts so Big Society offers opportunities but it also, it also can and push in terms of where your mission is. So actually, 'yes there's lots of opportunities for X,Y and Z, but does that still fit with your mission? ... who becomes your master then?' Actually what's quite nice about being funded by grants and churches is that you are able to stay true to that - that ethos and mission a bit more. Where as some charities do, you go for the money you go for the job, you carry what you do into that, but then you can then find yourself doing something completely different from what you set out to do. Now, I think that missions can change and God can say, 'well this is for a season and that is for another', and that's fine if that's the way it happens as long as it's not we were chasing the funding and ... if you're chasing the funding then that's a shame because you may end up in a place you didn't want to be. So I think there is a bit of cynicism from there in terms of, 'if I get in bed with these people what's it going to mean, what's it going to put on us as a charity, how's that going to be worked out?' *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

It would appear that Nirvana is very aware of these threats and endeavours to balance its operations with the current contextual reality of needing to be sustainable. Ted explained that the need to do this was a pragmatic one given the fact that the organisation needed to be adequately maintained:

233. I think, Alan and I have talked about preserving the organisation, about something that I, you know working with Alan over the years, you know which has been sort of amazing to see quite frankly and I've really been impressed by that, is the extent to which you know, understanding that there are certain things that need to be done in order to protect and preserve the organisation. So in terms of actually ... There are certain steps you have to go through whether you like it or not sometimes and whether you're comfortable with all the activities, people you have to talk to, wherever possible. I'm not suggesting you'd get funding from someone you weren't comfortable with, you wouldn't, but there are processes in terms of accountability, in dealing with the team, you know looking at the viability of certain roles, potential redundancies, all those sorts of things. Because, you know, none of the good work can be done if the organisation starts to falter. ... I think you know, in order to be successful and actually do the role and have the impact you've got to be fairly prescriptive in how you go about running the organisation. That doesn't mean you're not caring but you know, there's been a change and I'm sure other charities are equally focused on making sure that the charity survives and flourishes because it's quite difficult out there to say the least. And I think you're owing it, so if you don't do that you're letting the children down and you going to let colleagues down. You have to do that. *Ted, Nirvana external stakeholder*

### *Engagement with other faith groups*

Nirvana has extensive relationships with a large number of Christian churches. Their 2010-11 Annual Report said the number of partnerships ran to twenty four. It has few, if any, relationships with groups from faith backgrounds other than Christian.



040. I've really had my eyes opened since working here because I see that Nirvana almost links all the other churches together. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

042. When people talk about Nirvana or have heard of us they've only got good things to say. Well the ones that I've heard have only had good things to say! (laughs) I think Nirvana kind of drives a lot of the churches to act when they haven't ... If they are looking too inward it kind of makes them realise. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

044. ... when we are working together we can achieve more. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

## Big Society, Civil Society and Policy Factors

### *The Big Society*

There was no mention of the term 'Big Society' in any of the interviews undertaken until the notion was raised by me. Equally, there was no mention of the term in any project information or publicity.

Sarah did not know much about it:

065. *I've also been looking at the Big Society. I don't know if you've heard of that idea?*

066. Yeah (Sniggers)

067. *Is there any sense that Nirvana's work has any connections with what the Big Society is all about?*

068. Tell me what the Big Society is supposed to be about. Remind me. (laughs, clearly not knowing what it is) *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

073. Yeah, in that we're taking the place of, we're realising the dream really but finding it very hard because everything's been cut left right and centre. So we're picking up where government is not. The cut in things like Connexions and other youth work provision in the area means that we're picking up more. Also it means we're not picking up more in, particularly my area of work. Before, Connexions was one of our main referrers for homeless young people and now the homeless young people don't really have, unless they know to go to housing or happen to be under the radar of Children's Services, they're not really getting picked up. They haven't really got the same drop in place to go to ... to tell them about ... so in another sense I'm not getting as many referrals because of that. So yeah ... definitely. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

Whilst Amanda and Dermot were well informed, but suspicious of the notion:

141. I'm a bit cynical about the Big Society (laughs) as I'm not sure how much of it is a great opportunity and how much of it is a lot of risk for charities. I think the concept of people as a community, faith or not, stepping-up and being involved I really like that idea, I just wonder whether it's a polite face for lots of cuts and lots of risks for charities ... So ... I do think, ultimately what we need is people from the communities gathering together, as I think that is what we have lost, as towns have got bigger and as lives have got more separate and people kind of coming together and thinking well this is an issue in our community that we are going to tackle this or that would be ideal. I don't know whether Big Society is going to actually do that. I think that's what it's hoping to do, but I think it's a difficult question in how you motivate communities to work together on a positive - not just 'let's picket the local sex offender' but how we do actually work together for positive and good. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

188. I think the Big Society is a pile of crap! It's ... For me it's, ultimately it boils down to the government wanting people to do things for free. Without giving them the options of support that previously were in place. I'm not ... it's not the fact that it's people volunteering, it's the fact that any support that was in place for them to do that volunteering has now been curtailed. And for me I think those are two very distinctive differences. How, my question is - of the Big Society - how can you ask somebody to go and support a project or set up a project without giving them the options of training, safeguarding? You know. ... So from that point, I get the idea, I understand the concept, I just don't think it's branded very well. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

### **Civil society**

In terms of the overarching definitions used in my investigation, Nirvana is very clearly a 'civil society' organisation. It is 'located between the family, the state and the markets (and) people associate voluntarily to advance common interests' (Anheier 2004: 22), albeit that many of its operations are located in arenas funded and orchestrated by the state.

It also seeks 'associational life – aiming for social, economic and political progress; the good society – providing opportunities for people to act together, developing values and skills; and, (promotes) the public sphere – a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good' (Edwards 2009: viii).

You can't put right sixteen years of crap with a thirty minute chat and cup of coffee. *Alan in informal conversation*

Nirvana's key charitable objective is to 'advance life and relieve the needs of young people through: Providing support and activities which develop the skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals. The provision of recreational and leisure time activities provided in the interest of social welfare, designed to improve their conditions of life.'

058. It has an impact on the wider society because the young people, say we're working with young people with anti-social behaviour, or with the homeless young people, or anger management with young people - that has an impact when they're in society, you know if they've worked through an Anger Management class through a Relational Support worker and they're less angry, then that's gonna impact their wider community and society they're living and working in. Homeless wise, a lot of our young people aren't physically on the streets, they're sofa surfing at other people's houses. But if we're helping them get a stable place to live, they're more able ... easily... able to study get some qualifications get into the workplace, so it definitely impacts wider society. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

### **Community**

Reference has already been made to the importance of community, relationships and working together to achieve the aims and objectives of Nirvana. These relationships exist across all aspects of the work undertaken and this is reflected in many of the quotations already referenced, examination of news and prayer letters, the organisation's web site, Core Document and work undertaken.

Welcoming her [the young person] into our home was like having a new daughter. It was like she became part of the family, not just a lodger. *Supported Lodgings Host*

### A sense of citizenship

Nirvana's work and meeting the needs of the young people they work with is very much orientated around helping those young people be connected to, and have a stake in, society and take their place as citizens.

129. I think young people have a bad name haven't they - especially with the recent riots and those kind of things - and I think society and young people's lives are very different from when I was a young person. Even the way they talk about relationships is very different and the expectations they have. I think if a young person is ... is happy, has achieved as well as they can with GCSEs and A levels and has options for where they want to go for work or college, then you actually have a productive member of society that's going to be a good citizen and contribute well and all those kind of things the government would like us to be and I think that has a positive effect. I think that young people who feel they have no options that there is no hope, 'I don't know where I am gonna go, I've messed up my GCSE's, I don't care', you know, or feel so kind of lacking in self-esteem they're not willing to try things. Then I think that's not great for them, but also you have somebody that's not necessarily partaking in society. There are a few guys that kind of pop in and see us that have left us now that were looking at working with Directions to get some work with, but they do spend a lot of time hanging about on the streets and they're a bit bored and they race their motorbikes a bit and you just think it just has the potential for them to either hurt themselves or somebody else. That's a very specific example, people who don't, who are discontented and it seems a little bit like that with the riots and the kind of sense of not being discontented and - whether rightly or wrongly they were entitled to XYZ is a different discussion - but I think that kind of sense that, 'I'm not happy with life and I really don't know how I'm gonna get out of it', I think leads to generally to a bit of a unhappiness in society. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

Helping young people become good citizens is perhaps more of a by-product of their significant personal and social development work rather than a specific planned outcome:

129. ... I don't think young people being a good citizen is our own aim as such, I think that's one of the benefits ... *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

184. I don't think it can do anything but [benefit wider society] ... Not necessarily in the, 'we're going to create world changers' or ... But ... it's those little things, it's the people, it's those students who are kicking off at home and therefore mum and dad are ranting and raving and everything disintegrates. Through to, which impacts directly on that family, through to giving students choices which, sort of kind of positive choices to say to themselves, 'you know what, I'm still going to go out on Friday night but actually I value myself enough to not get ... bladdered and sleep around with X, Y and Z and potentially get pregnant or catch an STI or whatever.' So actually there's a positive impact not just on them as individuals but also on a wider range, on family, school, society. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*



### Turn around pedagogy

As illustrated by the above findings and quotations, the work Nirvana undertakes has both a preventative ideal and also one that seeks to get to the roots of problems encountered by young people. Both these objectives seek to improve the life chances of the young people and endeavour to stop things happening in the first place or deteriorating further.

Being homeless made me feel like I was nothing to no one. I just didn't feel right anywhere I went. I didn't like who I was because I blamed myself. I was tooing and froing, doing drugs and felt worthless.

[Now, after being in a host family] ...

I go to college, I don't do drugs. If it wasn't for their [hosts] help and support I would probably have been in prison or something ... or in real trouble.

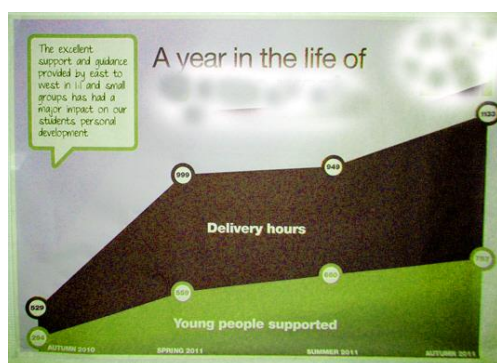
*Young Person on Nirvana promotional video*

Whilst the responding to needs approach has elements of deficit thinking attached to it, the essence of the work actually appears to be about combatting cultural deficit models of thinking and more akin to a turn around pedagogy that seeks to respond positively to young people and bring about change with, and for them, rather than blame or be critical of them.

## The Future

### *More, and more stable, funding desired*

During discussions about work in the future one subject dominated proceedings, namely that of funding.



085. It would be great if there was funding for a full-time Supported Lodgings post or two part-time. At the moment I'm quite quiet, but there's always been that tension of how many young people you can effectively help in the hours given and then trying to, you know ... the fall out of hosts, will often host once or twice and then have a long break and then I need to recruit more hosts, but you know there's that kind of chasing your tail a little bit, well a lot at times. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

145. I think I would give it a good four or five years of no funding worries to free up people's time and energy to do more ... more kind of exciting things, more innovative things, more 'where do we want to be going?' As opposed to having to spend time worrying about the funding and how it's going to work and redundancies and those kind of things. I think that's what I would do. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

191. *Just a couple of quick ones to end: If there was one thing you could change about Nirvana what would that be?*

192. What other than the money? (laughs) (I nod)

193. ...The nature of the way that Nirvana is financed through grants and stuff means that there is no overwhelming sense of ... the next two or three years. In terms of you don't really know if the W (town) work will still be here in six months time or the Supported Lodgings will still be here in six months time. And while some people say that that is what makes Nirvana exciting coming from someone who's slightly OCD and needs to know what's happening it can be a struggle. Not knowing what next. Ermm.

194. *Have you got a solution for that? Not trying to catch you out; I am genuinely interested.*

195. I suppose part of it is having secure funding streams. But it's also about finding ... I don't know if there is, unless you kind of find some rich oligarch to kind of slip us ten per cent of Chelsea's latest transfer budget or whatever. I don't know if there will ever be that solution. 'Cos unless people are committed to, organisations are committed to giving three years worth of funding for certain projects, you're always getting to May, June, July time and

you're not being sure. So ... But, you know, that'd be a challenge. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

The current culture surrounding funding of the type of youth work undertaken by Nirvana was starkly illustrated in one of the informal conversations I had with CEO, Alan.

As a voluntary sector representative, Alan is involved in youth work commissioning panels for the local authority. After one such panel, he was advised by a Council colleague that using the information gleaned in the panel meeting, he 'could beat them (those currently seeking work) by undercutting them in future years'. When Alan said that these were his friends and that he wouldn't want to do it, he was informed by the colleague, 'that's the way the markets have done it for years'.

Alan went on to say that he had 'lost friends' as a result of the commissioning process as they have now become competitors rather than colleagues who used to work toward realising the same objectives. He ended the conversation by saying that he feared that he could end up being something he didn't want to be if he became like them.

Alan explicitly said that he could be quoted regarding this story.

### **Expansion of the work**

There was also a desire for the work to expand, this being focused around the work undertaken in schools:

147. I think what Nirvana has done well is establish kind of long, deep relationships so I don't know whether taking over the whole of S (area) or the whole of MH (area) is necessarily something it wants to do. I think actually it's about the long-term relationships, so getting entrenched in the way of life in school. I'd want to see it deepen its relationships with schools and maybe grow into other schools areas or kind of develop the sheltered accommodation stuff but I don't think, for me anyway, that success is gonna be, 'wow we're a national charity, global, across the world', but doing what we do well and having that kind of long-term reputation. *Amanda, Nirvana staff member*

198. I think, it's ... the challenge is I would love to see the schools work increase. I would love to see other schools look at what's happening in M (school) or C (school) or TN (school) or MA (school) and go, 'you know what? We want that, we need that'. But part of, I think, the strength of Nirvana is the team that's there. It's the community that is, and having lived at the A (place) for two and half years I've got good experience of when community works and when community doesn't work and how kind of ... to kind of work the line between those two. *Dermot, Nirvana staff member*

As this study was drawing to a close, plans were being unveiled to franchise the Supported Lodgings work out to other interested communities.

## **Organisation**

The organisation has a strong public profile locally and is developing a growing national profile and significance as it enters into professional and practice networks and partnerships regarding conferences, publications and policy debates. It delivers excellent public communications with one of their Trustees being a communications expert.

Despite the strong profile and branding established by Nirvana, it was interesting to note that one interviewee, saw 'PR' as a negative concept and not something that Nirvana was aspiring to:

048. They don't actively link it. I think through relationship it links. What you just described I don't feel like that about here. And I don't think I'm just saying that because they're in earshot. I genuinely don't see it as a PR. It's not about building up Nirvana at all. It is about ... It is ... The whole ethos is about relationships, whether it's within our team, the young people we're working with or you know, working with local organisations and local churches. We have relationships with local churches through where we attend. Alan and Bern will have relationships through their level management and working in partnership. And I ... But I do think it's a genuine relationship let's see how we can help one another to achieve the mission of Nirvana. It's not about ... Yeah, Nirvana becoming famous in the area kind of thing. (laughs) *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

The actual real name of Nirvana is somewhat vacuous, neither describing what work is undertaken, where it is undertaken, what it seeks to do nor reflecting the aspirations it has. This was discussed with Alan who advised that they were in the process of discussing a new name for the organisation with a marketing consultant. The employment of such an expert, further illustrates how seriously such a relatively small organisation considers its branding and PR.

Nirvana seems to have an excellent reputation and there is a belief that the work undertaken is of a high standard:

056. ... from my relationship with [Housing certainly and Children Services] it seems they do have a lot of respect for Nirvana who we are and our procedures and everything are quite ... are sometimes better than some of theirs or as good as at least. *Sarah, Nirvana staff member*

Notice has already been made about the recent financial challenges Nirvana has faced and how subsequent new funding has now led to an expansion of its work. The need for flexibility and fluidity and the resultant uncertainty of this type of work being thus illustrated.

## Staff and Volunteers

The staff and volunteers appear to be highly motivated, committed and professional people. They clearly want to make a difference and do so motivated by their Christian faith by working with those young people who are at risk of disaffection in the local area.

The school environment has clearly had an impact upon some of them as they talk the language of the school they work in and largely reflect upon this aspect of their role rather than any wider impact Nirvana may have.

One of the volunteers I met in the office was doing the highly responsible job of writing grant applications. This is demanding and time-consuming work and aptly illustrates the level of generosity and commitment afforded to Nirvana by the people who volunteer and work for it.

Amongst the paid staff interviewed, there was a degree of nervousness about the reality of the financial situation facing Nirvana. Having made some people redundant, there was some uncertainty about what might happen in the future, although, as already mentioned, new funding has been found by some of the schools and, at the time of writing, new workers are being recruited

The Nirvana strap-line is very important to everybody. It was mentioned repeatedly and is reflected in the work I observed and is embedded across the project.



## Atmosphere

The project has a welcoming atmosphere that is warm and embracing. There is a fun and jovial dynamic that speaks well of a strong team spirit and positive organisational culture. This is evident in the day-to-day activities of Nirvana, its approach to fundraising activities (that have included fancy dress Pancake Day races, firework displays and supporter events), the banter between staff members and stakeholders evident in my interviews and my prior knowledge of the work and personnel of Nirvana.

This joviality should not hide what is a hard working and fast moving group of people who are constantly on the go, responding to the needs of young people across a wide geographical area.

The offices of Nirvana are somewhat hidden away with entry through a single doorway in the middle of the High Street. Once through the door a corridor leads to a small complex of rooms that are stylishly furnished, pleasingly presented and very hospitable. This all adds up to convey a feeling of welcome and quality reflecting the aspirations of the project.

I now turn to analyse and further reflect upon these findings.

## Discussions, Analysis and Reflections

Following the coding of the data collected, a number of consolidated categories became evident. These were:

- Youth Work Frameworks;
- Social Impact;
- Organisational Behaviour;
- Strategic Approaches;
- Political Context;
- Faith-Based Dynamics.

These are now each discussed in turn, before considering the wider issue of the space and place Nirvana occupies.

### Youth Work Frameworks

The data and findings set out above point toward a youth work pedagogy and framework that is:

- Focused on meeting the needs of at risk young people;
- Committed to long-term journeying with young people;
- Providing support and practical help;
- Brining a sense of hope for the young people;
- Bridging formal and informal educational contexts;
- Being part of the community.



Nirvana is all about meeting the needs of young people who are in need of specific help, enabling their personal and social development. In this regard it does not facilitate generic youth work, but rather works in a targeted way with a defined and explicit brief.

Although their work is very specific, it is undertaken as part of a long-term journeying with the young people concerned. There is no suggestion that Nirvana seeks unsustainable quick fixes for meeting

young people's needs, but instead it works to offer support and bring about change over a sustained period of time by addressing both the immediate need and the root causes of those needs. This requires an embedded approach that demands a significant commitment on both the part of Nirvana and those it works in partnership with. This relational 'journeying together' approach (eds. Rogers and Smith 2010) that develops a 'rich tapestry of practice' (ibid 143) casts further doubt on the separatist professional worker/client orientated pedagogy and language of Sercombe (2010) identified in my Literature Review.

Working in this long-term way with young people who often have complex needs and challenging situations means that changes in their lives are often small and incremental in nature. Simultaneously, immediate needs are responded to, preventative work is undertaken and hope for the future is embraced to reflect a positive and progressive pedagogy.

Central to meeting the needs of the young people are the relationships Nirvana has where it works face-to-face and the wider relationships it has with local Christians and churches who provide the means and resources to help meet those needs. Most notable in this latter regard is the role played by Christian host families who provide accommodation to young people with immediate and pressing housing needs. In effect, Nirvana acts as an intermediary and matches an actual need with an ability to meet that need. Whilst the broader considerations of Nirvana's faith positioning are discussed elsewhere in this case study, it is noted here that it is the compassionate, hospitable and generous faith of Nirvana and its supporting hosts that enable its Supported Lodgings work to be sustained, thus fully embracing the notion of enabling practical 'faith-in-action'.

Nirvana operates with an informal educational pedagogy often within formal education contexts. This enables them to keep the integrity of their youth work positioning, developing educational encounters beyond the classroom and bringing holistic and integrated solutions to what are often complex situations that need addressing across the wider community, not just within the school. They appear to do this in a way that keeps the 'informal education' needs and sanctity of the young person centre-stage, despite occasional pressures to deliver a quick 'formal education' resolution. In so doing they come to represent the type of joined-up, cross-discipline approach and thinking that has been advocated by policy makers in recent times.

## Common Good Social Impact

Nirvana aptly illustrates that civil society organisations, just like nation-states and private enterprises, are not sealed entities that operate in only one sphere or domain. As Edwards (ibid: 24) notes, 'boundaries are always fluid'. This is discussed further shortly, but at this juncture it is noted that it is difficult to differentiate between the civil society impact of Nirvana's work and the more state orientated context impact of their work; these two containments being interdependent.

Notwithstanding these complexities and in order to discuss the findings regarding the common good social impact of Nirvana, I will use the theoretical civil society concepts as used by Edwards (2009), as a backdrop.

### *Associational Life* - aiming for social, economic and political progress

It is clear from the data that making associational life progress is significant in the work of Nirvana. They make social progress in how they work with young people and the wider community meeting the critical needs of young people, supporting them in their life journeys and enabling them to have a sense of hope and possibility for the future. They also seek to work preventively so that progress for other young people is not hindered or interrupted more than it might otherwise be if Nirvana was not to be involved.



Socially they help young people progress in their relationships, confidence, self-esteem, and aspirations and achievements. Some of these young people are welcomed into host families for up to a year when they have been rejected by all other sources of possible hope. Their promotional and training literature encourages host families to 'nurture skills such as cooking, cleaning and budgeting' as well as help them into or remain in education or employment.

It is these factors, along with a commitment to long-term working and relationship building that have helped Nirvana establish a positive reputation and profile.

Economically they are helping young people develop skills and levels of employability and their Supported Lodgings work makes a very significant economic contribution. This is not only for the individual, who is given the chance of a stable living environment, compassionate care, practical help and a supported transition toward adult independence, thus improving their future life chances, but also for society as a whole. Such significant interventions ultimately save money in the long run, by avoiding the many long-term problems associated with homelessness, unemployment and disaffection.

Having a clear solidarity with those young people who are at risk of disaffection or being marginalised is very evident in the work of Nirvana. At a time of an acute funding shortage for this type of work, the recent securing of new funding from some of the local schools has highlighted both the regard that Nirvana is held in, and also the fact that the schools can see a need for the type of work Nirvana does and the social benefits it brings.

### **Good Society** - providing opportunities for people to act together, developing values and skills

As already noted, Nirvana brings people together to help young people. It brings together churches and individual people, mainly from Christian faith backgrounds, to support young people in need. This is illustrated by one young couple I met who were acting as a host family for a teenage girl who sadly had lost both her parents.



They had taken her in when her mum died and provided somewhere for her to live. During this time she took her GCSE exams and they supported her when she ultimately moved on to secure her own flat. They helped her fund-raise for a visit to see the remaining family she had in the Far East and maintained a close relationship as she developed the values and skills associated with becoming an adult. If they had not acted so the girl would have been taken into foster care.

The remark made above that Nirvana acts as a catalyst in raising the issue of at risk young people in churches and bringing together churches and Christians together, illustrates how they practically create the possibility of people acting together for the common good. This coming together is augmented by the training they offer to potential host families regarding care and transitional work.

A similar observance can be made about their work in schools as they are able to bring together professionals, families and the young people themselves in order to facilitate acting collectively. This approach appears to have been witnessed by other schools and agencies in the area with the rationale now being extended into other local schools.

These two examples illustrate that not only does Nirvana do the work, but they advocate more generally for the work they do, thus seeking to draw others into the field. Additionally, they have managed to open out their work and involve people who might not have a Christian faith

motivation, but value the praxis of providing compassionate care and offering hope to at risk young people.

### **Public Sphere**

In what is generally a very wealthy area, they are working with and on behalf of those young people who are not so adequately financially provided for. As already mentioned, it is evident that representatives of Nirvana have to continually advocate on behalf of such young people to secure adequate provision for them, as there is a general perception that the area has few needs and thus does not need many resources.

Some of the young people Nirvana works with have some of society's most pressing problems. Nirvana works with them and others to develop solutions. They are the very essence of a civil society organisation where people and organisations come together to try and bring reconciliation. In the context of this investigation, what is worthy of note is that any proposed solutions give a strong voice and space to young people so that they have as much influence as possible on the decisions taken that affect their lives.

## **Organisational Behaviour**

### **Threats of isomorphism**

One of the specific isomorphic threats witnessed is that of being coerced into working in certain ways with young people in schools in order to achieve institutional legitimacy; particularly that threat associated with working to more formal educational processes. However, the reciprocal and mutuality evident in the partnerships of Nirvana enables them to successfully resist these threats because they appear to be a stakeholder of equal standing within the school contexts they operate in rather than a weak stakeholder at the mercy of a powerful master/mistress.

Despite the current context being one of significant uncertainty, Nirvana appears to have resisted mimetic pressures and invitations to imitate current market-dominated approaches. This has already been highlighted above, being most aptly illustrated by the story offered by Alan in the *Findings* section regarding *The Future* above.

It remains to be seen what future isomorphic threats the current funding crisis and the subsequent somewhat ironic developing expansion of Nirvana's work will have.

### **Partnerships**

Reference has already been made to the significance of partnerships within the work of Nirvana and this significance should not be underestimated regarding the behaviour of the organisation. Their collaborative working appears key to all that they do and this works on two distinct levels.

Firstly, they have strong partnerships with schools and referral bodies. This, in simple terms, helps create their work, identify the needs of young people and enables Nirvana to work towards meeting those needs. In effect they are co-authors with their partners in seeking better outcomes for the young people they engage with. Consequently, organisational energy is invested into these partnerships.

Secondly, they have strong partnerships with churches and local Christians. Again, in simple terms, these are relationships that support the work of Nirvana, seeing funding and human resource flow into the organisation, whilst enabling mission and social action to flow out of the churches. Equally, a sense of co-authorship manifests itself, in this case a collective achieving of the broad Christian objective of loving their neighbours. Correspondingly, organisational energy is invested into these partnerships.

The use of the word 'symbiotic' by Ted (above) helpfully describes these partnerships – that living together, mutual, interdependent and beneficial type of on-going relationship. It is more than just working together, but more a genuine mutuality in all that it encompasses.

## Strategic Approaches

Several of the considerations relating to this Strategic Approaches category have already been referred to above:

- Focused and specific responses to young people within local communities;
- Working for the long-term;
- Working in partnership.

I do not propose analysing them further here other than to note the strategic significance (as well as the context in which previously considered) of working in these ways.

### Expansion

The desire to expand the work of Nirvana has been noted in the *Findings* section of this study. The recent Government cuts have directly impacted Nirvana resulting in it recently having to make two members of staff redundant. They have also impacted them indirectly. Ironically, it appears that these cuts have actually now caused Nirvana to expand.

The cuts have impacted the schools they work in. Specialist support services from local authorities have had to be trimmed, but the internal pastoral, development and social work needs of the young people in the schools have not gone away. This means that schools have had to find other ways of resourcing that support for their pupils. It would appear that the schools Nirvana are in contact with have contracted them to provide this type of support.

Nirvana's reputation for quality work and their strategic approaches have ideally positioned them to rise to these new challenges and opportunities.

### Communication

The significance and quality of this has already been noted, but it demands further comment regarding Nirvana's strategic approach to communicating who they are and what they do.

Much of their communications are story-based, highlighting the type of work they do and illustrating how this impacts young people and wider society. They make extensive use of social network media and small video clips to do this. Rather than trying to tell young people's stories per se and giving them a voice, it appears that the stories are told in order to raise awareness of their work, seek supporters of it and develop participants in it. In short, this appears to be a broad communications and marketing strategy as well as a convenient way of illustrating their values and motivations.

Whilst perhaps subtle in nature, this approach is markedly different to that noted in some of the other cases studied in that here, there does not seem to be a specific objective of giving young people a voice in order to increase their presence and standing in the community. Whilst there is nothing to suggest that this would not be valued by Nirvana, the stories told on their web site, Facebook page and in news and prayer letters appear to highlight young people's needs and support requirements not facilitate their views, opinions and protestations.

## Political Context

### *The hand that feeds ...*

Whilst Nirvana has significant involvement and influence at a local strategic level regarding various policy and service aspects, it does not appear to be involved in wider political discourses, apart from a general sense of anger and dismay about Government cuts and the impact these have had on the young people the project works with.

Whilst there is this evidence of vocal resistance and positioning against current policy directions this dissent does not appear to be high on their strategic agenda or explicitly evident in the public communications of Nirvana. Perhaps this is because they are so dependent upon state funding for so much of their work.

As already noted, Nirvana receives funding from churches and charitable donations, but is dependent upon funding from the state sector. In 2010/11 over 50% of its funding came from the state sector. Although it operates as a critical friend toward its state backed partners, reliance upon them for funding potentially tempers the level of critique offered. It seems unlikely that organisations such as Nirvana would 'bite the hand that feeds them'.

### *Big Society*

The lack of voluntary reference to the Big Society during my investigation appears to confirm a lack of significance of the notion at operational level. When it was discussed, there were a range of perspectives covering positive appreciation of its core components, cynicism about its motives through to a lack of awareness of what it was about. These perspectives almost seemingly reflect national debates and perspectives as outlined in my Thesis Literature Review and Contextual Analysis.



Paradoxically, however, Nirvana embraces both the micro and macro aspects of the notion identified in my wider investigation and Thesis.

Most markedly it desires and works at the micro level for long-term social action and change, effective community engagement and localism, volunteering, empowering and involving people and developing civic action. At a more macro level it is engaged in delivering some former public services, enterprising work and endeavouring to achieve social investment.

## Faith-Based Dynamics

The finding above that the faith dynamic of Nirvana is a made up of a mix of elements that are perceived differently in different contexts conveys a sense that any simple categorisation and typology is problematic. More accurately, the faith dynamic of Nirvana is more succinctly portrayed by describing it as covering a spectrum of expressions ranging from the very explicit conveyance of their beliefs to a more veiled consideration.

As previously described, in missional, organisational and governance terms and the more formal elements of its work in schools, Nirvana is very explicit regarding its faith declarations. However, in more informal and pastoral settings the faith content and practices are somewhat insubstantial. This is not to say that there are any attempts to hide their faith or deceive anyone about it, more that it is there in the background, but not oft referred to unless someone or something causes there to be reference to it.

There is a sense that this latter part of their faith dynamic is metaphorically akin to something that is combustible in that if a button is pressed then it ignites and comes into being. It is always there, but not always easy to see and identify it. Words such as 'latent' and 'translucent' come to mind conveying the idea that the faith dynamic is permanently present, but covered by a thin membrane. After due consideration I consider that the word 'diaphanous' best portrays this reality.

To be diaphanous in nature is to be:

Light, delicate and translucent (Oxford Dictionary);

So fine in texture or nature as to be almost transparent, delicately hazy (Collins Dictionary);

So fine and sheer as to let light pass through (Ultimate Words Dictionary).

Whilst there are some interpretations of this word that are negative in sentiment, this is not the sense that is intended to be portrayed here; it is more the delicate and translucent meaning that is proposed.

Thus, the faith element can clearly be seen if people look through or past the various veils that might cover the faith element of their work. So for example, the professional pastoral work, educational and formation work and practical help offered might act as veils covering the faith-based heart and motivation behind these works.

My analysis regarding the faith element of Nirvana can be summarised by mapping the data against the 'conceptual categories' of Sider and Unruh (2004). The following table assesses the pertinence of the various categories:

Genre	Typology and Characteristics					
	Faith-Permeated	Faith-Centred	Faith-Affiliated - Motivated	Faith-Background	Faith-Secular Partnership	Secular
<b>1. Mission</b> The place of faith in the organisation's identity and purpose	X	X				
<b>2. Founding</b> The connection with faith in the heritage, original and on-going vision of the organisation	X	X				
<b>3. Governance</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment in the selection of board members		X				
<b>4. Project Leaders</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment	X	X				
<b>5. Other Staff</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment		X			X	
<b>6. Support</b> The extent to which funding is from faith-based sources					X	
<b>7. Beneficiaries and Users</b> Whether activities are aimed exclusively or not at people of a particular faith	X				X	X
<b>8. Practices</b> The integration of faith practices into the organisation		X			X	
<b>9. Environment</b> Whether the activities take place in a space/building associated with the faith					X	X
<b>10. Programme Content</b> Whether the programme content is explicitly religious		X			X	X
<b>11. Project Outcomes</b> The extent to which religious and spiritual experience is connected to the project's desired outcomes		X			X	X

## Key

x Valhalla

x Paradise

x Nirvana

## Notes

- 1) Sider and Unruh's (2004) original work had twelve genres: eight characteristics of organisations and four characteristics of projects. For layout and analysis purposes I have merged these together and removed genre '3 – affiliated' from the original as none of my cases studied are affiliated denominationally. My study is not about churches and more inclusive and universal language is required to reflect this.
- 2) The general language and terminology has been adapted to more succinctly be applicable to my cases.
- 3) Of significance wider than semantic changes is the fact that I have changed the typology 'Faith-Affiliated' to 'Faith-Affiliated/Motivated' to reflect the lack of affiliative characteristics in my cases, whilst recognising the motivational place of faith within them.

The table confirms the difference between the foundational faith basis of the work, its missional prerogatives and how it is governed and managed with the day-to-day operations, activities and perceived presence. Critics might conclude that this is dualistic organisation that says different things to different people about its faith stance. A more nuanced understanding might conclude that they are just being pragmatic, speaking of their faith when asked and preferring their actions to speak for them in other contexts.

Despite possible contention over the place of faith within the work of Nirvana, there is a sense right across the organisation and in the relationships/partnerships that they enjoy, that they have a secure set of beliefs that they don't need to defend or justify. Any spectral dynamics and dichotomies described do not appear to be problematic in any way.

## Space and Place

The following conclusions can be drawn regarding the space and place Nirvana occupies:

- Nirvana occupies a significant space geographically in the work that it undertakes in the community and a unique place regarding the type of work it undertakes. The space is broad covering a wide geographical area. It is the only provider of such work in the area;
- In terms of both the work it undertakes and the wider civil society aspirations of aiming for an associational life, developing the good life and promoting the public sphere, Nirvana is a key civil society organisation in the community;
- Embracing the idea of solidarity, Nirvana strongly favours a space and place in civil society, whilst supporting and helping deliver work more oft associated with state-backed policies and initiatives. Whilst it works with government agencies, it largely does so on its own terms in order to bring about change and transformation.
- It has inspired, instigated and helped shape the broader space and place of civil society as occupied by local churches and Christians. It endeavours to similarly impact youth work, local work in schools and policies at work in the area that relate to young people's housing needs;





- It has a significant space and place in the community, straddling formal and more informal education setting, forming effective cross-sector coalitions;
- The actuality and reality of the notion of the Big Society occupies a broad-based space and place within the work of Nirvana. However, the rhetoric of the notion is largely denied any space and place within the project; with any related outcomes more likely to occur by chance rather than strategic intention;
- Nirvana is well known and highly regarded by young people, the wider community and a broad range of stakeholders. It occupies a very significant place in the hearts and minds of those with whom it works and relates to;
- There is evidence that Nirvana embraces, and facilitates for others, bonding, bridging and linking social capital components;
- Nirvana enjoys a significant space regarding its relationships with other civil society organisations and state bodies. It does not appear to be unduly influenced by state policies, prerogatives and programmes although these represent an ever present isomorphic threat to its work and consequential space and place;
- The organisational faith position of Nirvana is clear, but the space and place faith occupies in its daily work varies from being very explicit to being more diaphanous;
- Nirvana seeks to extend its future space and place by telling positive stories about its work and the young people it seeks to work with, and engaging additional schools and stakeholders within its broad catchment area.

## An Emerging Hypothesis: The Shape of Faith-Based Youth Work

My ‘*priori* specification of constructs’ (Eisenhardt 1989: 536) proposition that four key benchmark ideas of Catholic Social Teaching are particularly relevant to current debates and help shape an emerging hypothesis regarding faith-based youth work is significantly borne out, albeit with a number of shortcomings and additional considerations emerging.

My findings and data indicate that there is a high degree of respect for **Human Dignity** within the work of Nirvana. There is an underpinning rationale that every young person is important and valuable and should be given every chance to reach their full potential. Due to the circumstances many of the young people they work with find themselves in, this means providing help and support in a compassionate and caring way so that they can ‘bring hope to young lives’ and help them succeed in life.

There is overwhelming evidence that Nirvana has **Solidarity** with the young people with whom it works. Having solidarity with those young people that are marginalised and working with those who find themselves in difficult life circumstances is what Nirvana is focused upon. They express their faith by undertaking positive actions to produce better outcomes for such young people, irrespective of their background.

Nirvana is very much focused on the local communities it seeks to serve, albeit that these exist across a broad geographical area. The schools work particularly incorporates many of the principles of **Subsidiarity** into how it operates. Workers concentrate upon individuals and groups of young people in individual schools and focus their work at a highly nuanced level. This work seeks to



empower the young people rather than dictate a course of action to them and represents an on-going commitment and positioning rather than a quick fix rationale.

This high level of nuance is further illustrated by the Supported Lodgings work where individual young people are given care, housing and support at a very local level by a host family. This truly represents the subsidiarity principle that 'Christian community should be exercised at the lowest and most local level compatible with the common good' (Caldecott 2003: 22).

The elements of human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity combine to help Nirvana work towards achieving the **Common Good**. By meeting needs, supporting, empowering and giving confidence to young people they help develop the collective welfare of the local communities they work in. Furthermore, the significant preventative element of their work potentially saves society large amounts of social, economic and common good resources. Without further extensive research, any accurate cost-benefit analysis of this aspect of their work would be very difficult to determine.

However, this representation does not fully portray my findings. Five other notable defining attributes also emerged. These are:

1. Providing Life Support;
2. Bringing Hope and Long-Term Change;
3. Communication;
4. Symbiotic Partnerships;
5. Funding.

### **1. Providing Life Support**

The findings of this study point toward to an organisational process that delivers life support for young people.

This is evident on two levels: Firstly, it is support for life that gives young people a better chance to thrive and reach their potential. Whether meeting specific personal, social or housing needs, Nirvana is there. Secondly, it is clear that at times it really is 'life support' in the emergency sense of the meaning of the phrase; potentially saving young people from, or at least preventing further, disaster, trauma, adversity and disaffection. They do what their Core Document states - they really do, 'build life transforming relationships'.

### **2. Bringing Hope and Long-Term Change**

Nirvana is committed to working with young people, schools, churches, host families and the wider community for the long term. They believe that this is what works best for everyone.

In the last three years they have housed twenty-two young people who would otherwise have been homeless. They state that these supported re-housing placements have achieved an astonishing 95% success rate. This has given those young people involved very real hope that things can be different and positive. This has only been achieved by positioning and assessing their work over the long-term.

### **3. Communication**

Organisationally, Nirvana is very effective in promoting its brand and communicating what it is about. Stories are communicated that promote the need for the work of Nirvana and the virtues of the approaches it takes. These stories reflect the nature of their strap-line and all that this aspires to.

This positive and life-affirming dynamic is projected across Nirvana as it communicates enthusiastically the stories of the young people it works with and the merits of its approach.

It focuses upon portraying and describing the challenges of working in what is a demanding context, and focuses on telling others what a difference it has made in the lives of individual young people. Where possible, it asks the young people themselves to tell their stories so that the reality of what they do and the effectiveness of their approach is portrayed.

#### **4. Symbiotic Partnerships**

Nirvana enjoys a growing number of key partnerships that both support and enable its work. The comment discussed previously that these are 'symbiotic' in nature aptly sums up what they are and how they work.

In some of the partnership work observed, the relationships involved went beyond the normal professional associations to a deeper level of relationship. It is very clear that many of the people involved have become close friends through the partnership work undertaken. They are working from the same value bases, with the same objectives in mind and whilst this has no doubt helped bring them together in the first place, these partnerships now represent something else at work that is greater than simple professional functionality.

#### **5. Funding**

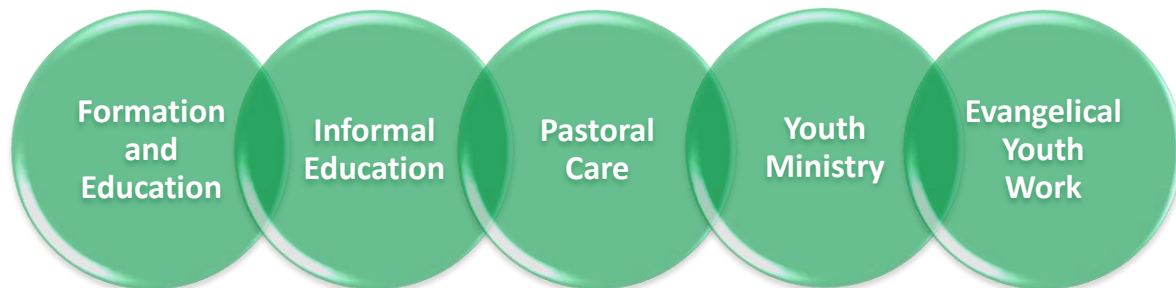
The long-term work of Nirvana is dependent upon the work being externally funded. It seems extremely unlikely that it could ever generate enough donations/income to be self-sustaining without entering into contracted work paid for by one of its partners.

Whilst Nirvana needs others to sustain it economically, the other people it works with are in turn sustained socially, spiritually and environmentally by Nirvana. Environmentally, not perhaps in the contemporary understanding of the 'scientific green' ecological dynamic, but more in the traditional understanding of it being about whole-world housekeeping and homemaking - Nirvana wants to build a 'home' that is akin to a family.

When these five additional emergent themes are combined with the original Catholic Social Teaching dynamics, underpinned by an organisational Christian motivation working across faith boundaries summative conclusions can be drawn about how Nirvana undertakes the work that it does.

## Towards a Theoretical Framework: The Intention of Faith-Based Youth Work

Using the theoretical framework proposed by Doyle and Smith (2002),



Nirvana has the following pedagogical elements that describe its intentions and functions regarding what it does in its work:

1) Present: -

- Formation and Education – through its work in schools and formal intervention courses and programmes. Sometimes these are rooted or located within an explicit Christian faith paradigm or pedagogy and sometimes more secularly positioned;
- Informal Education – via mentoring and relationship building work and one-to-one inputs;
- Pastoral Care – of individuals over a sustained and long time period was very evident and the most prominent element.

2) Absent: -

- Youth Ministry – any possible evidence indicating that this took place was limited to occurrences when a young person raised the issue of faith or spirituality or when a member of Nirvana led an Act of Collective Worship or Religious Education lesson in a school;
- Evangelical Youth work – this element was not generally present although there was evidence in formal presentation type work in school settings and across its community activities that communicating and transmitting the teachings and mission of the Christian faith was a factor.

A number of additional findings emerged from the study. These indicated that Nirvana's faith-based youth work has elements that are about:

- Meeting young people's needs;
- Offering young people long-term support and development opportunities so they feel that they have a stake in society and consequently take their place as citizens;
- Seeking better outcomes (shalom) for the community as a whole;
- Acting and promoting *faith-in-action* to prevent situations deteriorating and creating a better environment and outcomes for both the young people and the wider community;
- Building a sense of community that seeks to bring people together;

- Bringing about change and transformation by journeying with young people for the long-term, recognising that being successful is sometimes difficult to define and assess; and
- Organisational campaigning and advocacy.

It is not suggested that these elements have exclusive association with faith-based work, but in this case, the motivation, positioning and intended outcomes are rooted in and motivated by the faith beliefs of the project and those workers facilitating and implementing them.

## Conclusions

The portraiture element of my methodology determines that the tone, gestures, and seeking understanding of those interviewed is analysed in order to capture the ‘texture and cadence’ (Lawrence-Lightfoot in eds. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997: 99) of the study. When combined with a ‘search for goodness’ (ibid 141-146) and an ‘empathetic regard’ within my observations that resonate with my own aspirations for such work (ibid: 146-152), it is clear that Nirvana is a civil society organisation, but one that works very closely with state bodies. As such it occupies a significant space and place within the areas it operates working towards the common good, but paying little attention to the notion of the Big Society.

It is very much driven by its founding faith motivation and positioning, and the extent to which this faith is evident in its day-to-day work is a blend of being quite explicit at times and more a ‘faith in action’ narrative at other times; this latter dynamic being described as diaphanous.

In recent times, its work has been significantly impacted by funding cuts and Government austerity measures. These initially led to a reduction in staffing levels, but ironically these levels have now begun to increase markedly. As services previously catered for by local authority bodies have been cut or removed, the people Nirvana works with have taken steps to make local provision for these service short-falls, contracting Nirvana to deliver them.

Nirvana is a distinctive, well-respected and compassionate project. Being the only deliverer of this type of youth work in the area it occupies a significant space and place within the community, whilst working at the juncture of state and civil society service provision. Working with others underpins everything what Nirvana does. It has a very strong focus on meeting the needs of the local young people, supporting and journeying with them over the long-term and bringing a sense of hope and possibility to their situations.

Based on the evidence of this case study, any tentative **emerging hypothesis** about how faith-based youth work is undertaken and the form it comprises has merit in appealing to the stated principles of Human Dignity, Solidarity and Subsidiarity found in Catholic Social Teaching as a foundational starting point from which a model can be developed. Additionally, several new elements help portray how Nirvana goes about its work, namely: providing on-going life support, bringing hope and long-term change, delivering effective communications, working symbiotically in partnership and securing adequate funding. These elements enable a hypothesis to be considered that has the aspirational objective of achieving the common good and being a reference point for further investigation in my final case study.

With regard to this study of Nirvana, any developing **theoretical framework** about what faith-based youth work does and how it functionally operates needs to embrace elements from the framework suggested by Doyle and Smith (2002), namely: formation and education, informal education and pastoral care. With a number of additional elements also identified, namely: citizenship, community development, social action, advocacy and transformation.

# Questions Asked

The interviews undertaken with those involved in the project were of a semi-structured basis explored in full in my Thesis. This meant that a core set of structured questions were asked, supplemented by additional questions that emerged as the interview developed. The structured questions are set out below for reference purposes.

## Introduction

- 1) What 3 words first come to mind when I mention '[organisation] and faith-based youth work'?
- 2) If you were to pick an animal, a car, an image or other metaphor to portray [the organisation's] work with young people what would it be?
- 3) How would you describe [the organisation's] faith-based work with young people?

## Mission and Values

- 4) Why is [the organisation] motivated to work with young people?
- 5) What are the key values of [the organisation]?
- 6) What is [the organisation] trying to do in their work with young people? What stated aims of [the organisation] are you aware of?

## Relationships and Influences

- 7) What relationships do [you/the organisation] have with other faith groups re the youth work you do?
- 8) What relationships do [you/the organisation] have with government bodies, funders, other stakeholders re the youth work you do?
- 9) How is [your work/the organisation] influenced by outside factors? E.g. government, culture, media, funders

## Civil Society and Policy

- 10) How does [your/the organisation] work with young people make a positive contribution to wider society?
- 11) Do you think faith-based work with young people is taken seriously by wider society?
- 12) Do [you/the organisation] want to be valued by wider society? Government? Local community?
- 13) I don't know if you have heard of the Big Society? (Explain if not) – does your faith-based work have any connections with it? Are you doing anything different in your work as a result of the Big Society?

## The Future

- 14) If there was one thing you could change about [your/the organisation's] faith-based youth work, what would it be?
- 15) How do you want [your/the organisation's] faith-based youth work to develop?

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Project Newsletters  
Project Core Document  
Project Annual Reports  
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# Shangri-La Case Study



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September 2012

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## Case Study Extract

This is a case study of a faith-based youth work project called Shangri-La (not its real name). It is the last in a series of four studies. In order to establish a theoretical framework for faith-based youth work and propose a tentative emergent hypothesis regarding the determinants and territorial claims of such work, the studies seek to discover the relationship between the common good, the notion of the Big Society initiative and faith-based youth work; the role of faith; the space and place such projects have in society and the intentions, function, shape and form such work embodies.

Shangri-La is based in Derbyshire and works with young people in a former coal mining community and market town. It primarily operates a youth centre out of a shop located in a row of shops just off the main shopping streets. It facilitates a number of activities, programmes and services that seek to respond to local young people and benefit the wider community.

This study has been undertaken using a mix of research methods that have included: short-term ethnography, semi-structured interviews, collection and analysis of data in the public domain and examination of project and organisational reports and communications.

Attempts have been made to preserve the anonymity of the project and consequently, all the names quoted in this study have been changed. Where direct quotations from the interviews have been used these are pre-fixed with a coding number. This number is an administrative reference in my system of analysis and has no other bearing or significance.

My investigation revealed that Shangri-La is a locally rooted and passionate project that is very committed to the young people and the community within which it operates. It occupies a significant space and place within the community being the key youth work provider in the area and works closely with others in the area. It has a strong focus on meeting the needs of the local young people, being positive role-models for them, being positive about them and building relationships. The overarching objective of the project is to bring about the raising of aspirations and the realising of potential.

Shangri-La is a resilient and creative project that maintains a focused approach to its work. Subconscious secular agendas and a possible move to a commissioning model of youth service delivery in the area potentially threaten its original missional objectives. Partnerships are important in its work and it has a strong public profile.

Shangri-La exhibits a 'latent underpinning' approach to the faith dynamic of its work, more associated with a 'faith in action' narrative than any explicit attempt to convey a set of beliefs on, or to, others.

This study indicates that any tentative emerging hypothesis about how faith-based youth work undertakes its work is focused upon the principles of: Human Dignity, Solidarity, Subsidiarity, Seeing Young People Positively, Making a Difference, Portraying the Work Publically, Mutually Beneficial Partnerships, Funding and Expanding the Work, underpinned by an organisational Faith Motivation.

The work of Shangri-La is focused upon: formation and education, informal education, pastoral care, political campaigning, building positive identity amongst young people, nurturing and celebrating young people's lives, developing community, undertaking social action and making a difference.

# Introduction

This is a case study investigation of a youth work project in Derbyshire.

The project works with young people and the wider community to make a difference in their lives by raising their aspirations and helping them realise their potential.

The study is presented with reference to the principles of portraiture as outlined by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997); principles that seek to combine the dimensions and disciplines of rigorous social qualitative research methods and the more artistic, aesthetic, reflective and personal aspects of contemporary social science investigation and inquiry.

The actual name of the project and the names of those involved have been changed in order to provide as much anonymity as feasible for those participating in the study.

This case study sets out:

- How the research was undertaken;
- A portraiture of the area within which the project operates;
- Details of the project - based on information in the public domain that the project itself offers;
- The key findings of my investigation;
- Analytical discussions regarding these findings;
- Conclusions and emerging theoretical conceptualisations.

## Research Methodology

### Method and Timing

A full critique of the methodology used is set out in my PhD Thesis and detailed analysis is not considered here. For reference purposes, the study involved:

- A series of six semi-structured interviews – see page 47 for the structured element of the questions asked;
- Ethnographic appraisal
  - Observing staff
  - Observing visitors to the project
  - Walking around the community
  - Driving around the area – photographing, pausing and reflecting;
- Reviewing project literature and public documents;
- Examining artwork and displays in the project building;
- Reviewing project newsletters and publicity materials;
- Evaluating the project's web site;
- Examining government, infrastructure organisation and policy reports and documents;
- Watching, reading and reflecting upon media reports and articles;
- Evaluating relevant blogs, critiques and perspectives of the work and area;
- Reviewing and analysing local leaflets and newsletters;
- Incorporating prior practice and reflexive knowledge of the project's work;
- Taking photographs of the project building, the work of the project and the local community.

The data for the study was gathered during the period April - July 2012 and involved: site visits, remote electronic research, literature reviews and email communications. This is the last study in a series of four.

## The Area

### Location

The project is located in a market town and former coal mining community. The town is situated in a semi-rural environment close to the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire border. It has a population of approximately 15000 people.

The Shangri-La project operates out of a shop in a row of similar shops located just off the main shopping area.

### Physical Environment

The physicality of the town centre area is that of a bustling, if somewhat run-down, collection of what might be termed lower-class shops, with cafés, take-aways, charity shops, traditional independent shops, bookmakers, cheaper high street chain stores, empty shops, tattoo and nail parlours proliferating.

The central area of the town is dominated by a one-way traffic system that appears very confusing for the outsider. This traffic system links to a network of major roads that lead to larger places such as Nottingham and Derby and other major arterial routes. There is a sense that this is a place people wouldn't stop at unless they had specific business to undertake. The description of the town as a 'gateway', that appears common in Local Authority literature and Estate Agent briefings, adds to this perception as does a personal anecdotal reflection that I only visited the town three times in twelve years despite living less than ten miles from it and two of those visits were for professional reasons.

Owner-occupied terraced houses flank many of the main traffic routes into the central business area, with more expensive housing and newer developments being in evidence toward the outskirts of the town.

The area might be described as one that is steeped in the history of the coal and iron mining industries, but which has struggled in more recent times following the decline of these industries. There is widespread evidence of the town's industrial past with evidence of former mine workings and old factories. Some factories have been recently knocked down whilst others are currently up for sale.

There are a number of historically significant buildings in the town and also some more modern developments including three supermarkets and an out of town McDonald's restaurant.

## Community Profile

In common with many similar former mining areas in the region, the community has enjoyed better days in the past and now wrestles with a variety of social problems, unemployment and a lack of activities and for young people to do.

As mentioned, the town had close associations with the coal and iron mining industries for many centuries, coming to greater prosperity in the 18th century when the local ironworks supplied cast iron rails to replace wooden tramways throughout the area. The ironworks also supplied St Pancras station with its cast iron roof.

As this industrial heritage has faded, so have many of the fortunes of the area. Whilst reasonable infrastructure and transport links remain, the Local Authority Plan to raise the aspirations of local people and promote an agenda for change; raising productivity, employment, enterprise and innovation, ensuring sustainability and achieving equality (AV [area] 2009) highlights the present needs of the area.

Local and national reports indicate below average health and low life-expectancy levels compared to national averages. Anti-social behaviour and crime by young people is identified as a problem by the community (Space survey 2010 in AV [town] 2011) with just under 50% of people saying more needed to be done for young people. 2001 Census data (Derbyshire County Council) states that over 36% of people over the age of 17 have no formal qualifications (England 29%), with just over 6% having A-Levels (8.3%) and 11.5% a degree (20%).



The evidence of these challenges can clearly be seen on the streets with lots of young men hanging around the town centre during the middle of the day. At the risk of being condemnatory, the people appear poorly dressed and badly nourished. People with disabilities and mental health issues congregate at local gathering points and very young mums push buggies up and down the streets. The intention here is not to be judgemental or stereotypical, but these types of images are ones commonly experienced in this type of area. My extensive practice experience over many years in this Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire area has sadly confirmed that these scenarios are all too common in communities that have never really come to terms with the post-Thatcherite decline of their core industries.

However, this community appears better off than some of the neighbouring ones of which I have first hand experience. AV [town] (2011) describes the town as 'still a fairly thriving location with functional retail and light industry sectors'. This resonates with my assessment and portrayal.

The reality of this portraiture from the streets is confirmed by official statistics that, relative to national perspectives, place the town at the lower end of socio-economic indices, but not right at the bottom. The Index of Multiple Deprivation places the area in the bottom 30% in England, with the Child Poverty Action Group report (2012) indicating that 19% of children were in poverty as at 2011. The area is ranked 98th in England regarding having the biggest risk of poverty in the future and 107th for child poverty out of 326 local authorities (Experian 2012).



In common with many former coal mining areas the population is mainly 'white British' in ethnicity with official data indicating 99% of people as such. 2001 Census data (ibid) indicates that only 0.3% of people say they are from Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish or Sikh backgrounds compared to a national average of around 6%.

## Symbols and Metaphors

A number of symbols, metaphorical reflections and portrayals came to mind during the investigation. The following are the ones observed that made a lasting impression along with my interpretation of their meaning:

- Young unemployed people hanging around – at an individual level highlighting a waste of potential and possibility and at a community level highlighting the socio-economic challenges faced by this type of area;
- Teenage mums very prevalent on the streets – a reminder of my own previous work in this type of area accompanied by a reflection that (based on my previous work) for many of these young girls being a young mum is a fantastic joy, not the social ill that it is often portrayed as;
- Prevalence of shops targeted at the lower end of the consumer market alongside large and imposing historical buildings – portraying a sense and sign of economically prosperous halcyon days and *what used to be*, compared with *what is now*;
- Many people wearing sports clothes, old football tops and the types of hoodies that were probably more popular a few years ago – perhaps somewhat typical of the sub-culture found in ex-mining type of areas where, in recent times, fashions and events have passed many people by.



## Summative Feelings

These were augmented by a number of personal feelings and intuitions. These are summarised as a:

- Feeling that the area is facing a number of challenges, but no worse than other similar communities in the area;
- Reconnection with the anger, sadness and sense of injustice that I felt when I lived and worked for so many years in a similar community;
- Reminder that in amongst the struggles of life are golden nuggets of community, humour, strong family bonds and a determination to survive;
- Acute frustration that long-term and youth unemployment can so easily result in wasted lives and lost potential;
- Sense of disbelief that even though the data for this study was collected at a similar time to that of Nirvana, the two areas are so far apart in just about every conceivable way – apart from the unmet needs of young people.





# The Project<sup>1</sup>

The project is part of a larger charity that operates across the wider Derbyshire area. The charity as a whole works with young people and children and innovatively operates a number of charity shops to fund as much of its work as possible.

Launched five years ago, the project facilitates a number of youth work activities and programmes and works out of a shop which comprises of a long thin space over two floors. The shop is divided into a number of zones that comprise: a drop in area, a coffee bar, computer and media suite, counselling room and a large, open flexible space that can be adapted according to need.

## Project Strap Line

The project strap line is:

Raising aspirations, releasing potential.

## Vision

The vision of the charity as a whole is to reach out with God's love into local schools and communities supporting and encouraging children and young people to raise their aspirations and release their full potential.

At Shangri-La, they are committed to raising the aspirations and releasing the potential of the young people they work with through their programmes and projects which contribute to:

- Improving well-being and promoting informed choices and positive decision-making;
- Providing crime diversionary activities;
- Raising aspirations through participation and active citizenship;
- Facilitating personal, social, educational and spiritual development;
- Raising self-esteem and achievement through creative challenges.



## Aims

Shangri-La aims to provide a space where young people feel safe, valued and supported and where they can enjoy activities and programmes designed to improve their leisure time opportunities and capture and release their potential.

They hope young people will have the opportunity to try new activities and will develop self-confidence, improve their self-esteem and gain new practical skills. They also hope young people will be more positively recognised and involved in their community, will become less likely to engage in criminal and anti-social behaviour and that the young people themselves will be more aware of the risks of drug and alcohol misuse. Consequently, they hope they will be better equipped to lead healthy lifestyles. They also desire that young people will have better awareness of advice, welfare benefits and other support that is available.

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<sup>1</sup> Information largely compiled from project leaflets and their web site.

## Ethos, Values and Faith

It is clear from these 'vision' and 'aims' ideals that at the heart of Shangri-La is a commitment to raising the aspirations and releasing the potential of the young people they work with. This ethos underpins all their work.

Shangri-La is committed to delivering quality youth work and involving young people at every level of the project and its development. It endeavours to celebrate the lives of young people and work for their empowerment as valued members of society. It also seeks to work in partnership with others.

As previously mentioned, the project is part of a larger Christian registered charity. Whilst the faith positioning and profile of the charity is very clear and explicit, the faith dynamic in Shangri-La is somewhat harder to see and determine. This is discussed further in due course.

## Community and Work with Young People Consists of:

- Open drop-in centre;
- Dance and music workshops;
- Healthy living work;
- Heritage project;
- Sexual health and well-being work;
- Residential trips;
- Social trips;
- Counselling;
- Mentoring;
- Personal and social development programmes;
- Holiday programmes;
- Volunteering and accreditation opportunities;
- Schools work;
- Football project;
- Access to information, advice and guidance.



## Staffing

Shangri-La currently has the following staff:

Five full-time and five part-time employees

Twelve volunteers

## Funding



Shangri-La is funded from two main sources. Firstly there is the income from the aforementioned charity shops (which had a turnover of £1.5m last year) and secondly, they have been in receipt of a significant Big Lottery grant which was match-funded by the income from the shops.

They have also received money from the Local Authority, Primary Care Trust, Derbyshire Constabulary and two other smaller government grant schemes. They are not currently doing any contracted or commissioned work, but at the time of writing it is anticipated this may begin in the current

year.

The recent austerity cuts have had an impact upon Shangri-La as Local Authority money has not been as available as it was. Rather than make any staff redundant, all the staff voluntarily agreed to take a pay cut for the entire year in order to save money.

## Findings

This section is broken down into a number of headings that are informed by: Firstly, those findings shaped and perceived by a general overview of the case; Secondly, those informed by the answers given to the questions asked of those interviewed; Thirdly, by additional ethnographic observations; and finally by supplementary miscellaneous portrayals and evidence.

Some of the quotations used to highlight individual findings could equally be applied to highlight other findings. However, where this applies I have opted not to duplicate the quotation for reasons of prudence and efficacy.

### Overview

Shangri-La is a high quality project that works effectively with the young people that it seeks to serve. There was a high degree of unanimity amongst those observed and interviewed that this a great place to be for both young people and those who work at Shangri-La. There is a homely, almost family, feel to the project that engenders a fun, exciting and safe space and place for the young people of the area.

It is the only major deliverer of civil society orientated youth work in the area and consequently occupies a significant space and place. It works alongside other smaller civil society organisations, state-backed enterprises and (increasingly) market orientated service providers. The changing cultural landscape about how youth services are provided in the area is having a significant effect and this will potentially bring significant isomorphic challenges in the future.

Shangri-La manifests a complex and diverse approach to the faith-based dynamic of its work. It might be more accurately said to be *faith-motivated* rather than *faith-based* and consequently, the faith component has 'a latent underpinning' to their work, rather than any explicit representation.

The project is skilfully, thoughtfully and influentially directed by Ivor, the youth work development manager.

### Perspectives and Lenses

Those interviewed were asked what words came to mind when they thought of Shangri-La (each person was asked for three words, but some offered more and some less). These were their responses:

Exciting	Important (about	Enjoyable
Busy	making a	Homely (feels like a
Motivating of young	difference)	second home,
people and youth	Rewarding	comfortable with a
workers	Friendly	good team
Fun x 2	Youth-focused	dynamic)
	Passionate	Hope

Refuge  
Inclusiveness  
Responsiveness  
Accessible

Quality and  
excellence  
Longevity  
Safe environment

Young people can  
express themselves  
Never Dull

When account was taken of the tone, emphasis and frequency of the responses made, the following is a summary conclusion of what was being communicated. Shangri-La was said to be about:

Fun, friendliness and focused on young people.

Those interviewed offered the following metaphors and images as portrayals of Shangri-La:

- Smiley face – it is what they are seeking to portray and what happens when the young people achieve well;
- All-singing and all-dancing youth shelters – where young people can shelter, but over time their appearance changes;
- Cheese toastie – warm, easy, not too strange, affordable, familiar, fills a gap (especially right now);
- Warm jumper – nice warm environment, cosy. I love it!



## Mission and Values

### Motivation

A number of clear, strong and well-evidenced motivations were apparent, namely:

- **Realising personal and social development and change.**

004. As soon as you think you can't make a difference with young people any more, as soon as you come across that young person that you think 'I can't make a difference' with them, it's time to stop. You know and I think with that kind of background to it in mind it can't help but, make, you know aiming to make a difference in people's lives you have to see it as important otherwise it kind of trivialises someone else's life. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

- **Promoting aspirations and realising potential.**

232. I think really serving the young people as best we can so whether it's ... you know, supporting them, finding a job or with things that are happening at home. I always go back to our tag line as well you know like raising aspirations and releasing potential. Encouraging them to get out of R (town) and out of their comfort zones and maybe out of the cycle that they think they have to go through because that's what everybody else does. *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

293. And that's you know I guess within our ethos of raising aspirations, releasing potential is integral to what we're about. We're saying that young people given the right support and context they are aspirational, they are packed full of potential. It's not trying to put that stuff in, it's simply trying to create that fertile ground to allow it to come out. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*



- **Doing things well and with quality.**

The entire project conveys a sense of quality with the project building finished and equipped to a very good standard.

291. We value quality youth work and that's, and I suppose for us that's youth work that makes a difference. That makes best use of the resources we've got, that seeks to be excellent in its delivery, and seeks to you know measure and capture the outcomes. Do things better than others. ... we're more interested in quality as defined by 'does this work matter?', 'is it making a difference to young people's lives?' *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

313. My feeling is certainly from the feedback that we do get, which a lot is anecdotal or I guess chance conversations, that we are well thought of and there is a credibility and a good reputation there. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

355. The people that I know all have positive things to say about it because it's somewhere for young people to go. And it gives them something to do and there's activities. *Esther, Shangri-La volunteer*

381. I think as an organisation for young people I don't see that there's a lot that could be changed to make it better because I think it's doing a really good job. *Esther, Shangri-La volunteer*

- **Blending informal education pedagogy and more prescriptive interventionisms.**

087. We cover lots of bases, we do issue-based stuff you know: the drugs, sexual health, alcohol and as well as you know such as the Star Wars day on Friday, we do cooking, we celebrated Roald Dahl, throw a bit of literature in there. It's fun. It's informal education in't it that's what it is. It's fun and they're learning you know. We also do things on careers, and if they come in and they've got an interest in something we can try and expand on that, go on the computer, find out information for 'em and just try and help and support them in their choices. *Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

- **Creating opportunities for young people.**

In one of my field visits, I was talking about football with Shangri-La staff and they spoke about how some of the young people were going to Derby County Football Club as part of a special community deal. They were doing this because, even though Derby is their local team, most of the young people couldn't normally afford to go because of the high cost.

024. [It] could be as simple as a young man who while we're painting some big boards turned around and just said, 'I know my brother's just gone to jail and if I didn't have this place I don't know what would be happening to me right now.' *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

367. I do actually because I think when people can see that things are making a difference I think that's a big part of it and I think the thing with Shangri-La is they do involve the community. It's like with the Easter egg hunts and going litter picking and things like that. I think because it involves the community, and let's face it if there wasn't Shangri-La, then a lot of the young people would just be hanging around the streets because there's nowhere else to go which creates problems. *Esther, Shangri-La volunteer*



## Values

Similarly, a number of clearly identifiable values were evident:



- **Being positive about young people.**

030. Again as far as I see it the values I think are ... A belief in all young people ... I guess akin to the youth work values generally really kind of ... The unconditional positive regard for young people, the idea that they might mess up on one session, but if they come in next time it's done its dusted its afresh ... it's treating them like young adults, not children, not teenagers, not second class citizens ... *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

049. The difference we make I think, again 'cos it focuses on those more kind of fundamental youth work principles of promoting young people and what they bring to a society. But I guess we try very hard to do that by celebrating the other aspect of that community. So we've worked with a borough council and celebrated young people's skills by doing big huge art work pieces that are then taken and displayed ... So I think it's very much through celebrating their skills and abilities. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

089. I don't really know. I think if we're motivated as a youth worker and we can show them a positive, get them motivated in something you get that feedback don't you, you get that positive feedback. And if the young people you know ... young people vote with their feet, so if they like what we're doing they'll bring more people in won't they? So our numbers reflect on what good work we are actually doing there. *Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

248. We are able to do projects that the community sees and they're actually able to see young people in a positive light. You know, we've done art work for the Council which is up by the library. *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

293. Advocating for and probably the stronger word celebrating the lives of young people. I think we want to be celebratory about youth and about young people and countering a lot of the, you know the negativity and stereotypes that we all know exist and do in these communities as well. So we try to you know push the good news stories 'cos there are good news stories and push the contributions that young people do and are making to their communities. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

- **Focusing the work on and enabling it to be shaped by young people.**

180. Flipping heck it works bloody well here!' It works well here because young people choose to come here. They haven't been 'referred in' to a service, a statutory service ... Young people are choosing to come here. It's a community environment, they walk in, they have a game of pool, or they walk in and see a counsellor. And we cannot, we cannot lose that. It is a really good venue. *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

292. Participation and involvement of young people is probably something we don't always get right but it's there. We want to create avenues any which way we can, not tokenistic ways, but ways in which they're involved and they have been involved in the, you know the pre-consultation phase, the design and development of these projects, and we try to

continue that you know through to volunteering roles and youth management teams, recruitment. So we try and take that really seriously, that young people are at the heart of this place. You know without them there's no reason to be here. So that participation and involvement of young people. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

341. ... there's no judgement, they can talk very freely and I think that's and there's a lot of guidance but it's not forced upon them. It's just like throwing ideas to them, it's open for discussion. If they agree they agree, but if they don't it's a very free place for people to talk which I think it's great. *Esther, Shangri-La volunteer*

- **Promoting inclusive approaches.**

On one of my field visits I saw a most striking piece of artwork about a LGBT awareness week they were running. This is something I have never seen before in a Christian project. People normally shy away from the subject given its polemic nature in the church. It is very encouraging that they are brave enough to highlight it and address the subject with the young people along with the issues (and homophobic bullying) that often surround it. Clearly there is an acceptance and inclusive approach at work in Shangri-La:



172. What I have witnessed is them [staff and volunteers] supporting young people to be gay ... and that has blown me away. ... I have witnessed gay young people ... being affectionate with a partner and that being acceptable in there and that is gobsmacking! That is just fantastic! And for ... Clearly it [the faith element] isn't an issue for the young people. Really deep respect for that. *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

313. I was at a meeting just a couple of weeks ago in one of the local secondary schools speaking to predominantly parents of young people who had predominantly autism as a learning need and young people who weren't really engaging in out of school social environments and projects and the staff within the school were recommending Shangri-La as somewhere that, you know, they could make that transition. Which felt really humbling 'cos you know I came along and they were singing our, you know they did more talking about Shangri-La than I did which was you know verging on embarrassing but was also interesting to hear that perception and that feedback that they felt well this has worked for these young people 'we know we know you'll be OK sending your son or your daughter there'. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

- **Enabling a sense of family and community.**

It is evident that Shangri-La is a place where both staff and young people find a sense of belonging and community.

206. I just think that it is a fabulous project. You know ... it has a place in my heart, it really does ... it definitely has a place in my heart and I feel quite ... I feel loyal to the project; which is why I have fought really hard to keep the service here. And I have a great belief in the people who are behind the door and the logo and things like that. It's a place where I feel very at home actually. And I haven't worked many places as a counsellor where I have felt so

at home, so ... I am an adjunct to the team, but they ... it's an incredible warmth. I love coming here ... *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

When asked how she would describe Shangri-La, Eve said:

212. I suppose I want to say home but homely and ... it's never dull. *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

337. I do think it's a very nice, warm environment and it's quite a cosy place.

338. *Is that good?*

339. Yeah. I've found nothing but positive from my experience of it. I love the place and I think it's great. *Esther, Shangri-La volunteer*

- **Working in partnership.**

181. And I think that shared understanding of what young people want, and also the shared value that Shangri-La and [her organisation] hold of ... actually some of the best work is when a young person refers themselves. That's ... that's what we are after, when a young person recognises they need some support or extra help and I can go here and ask for it. We have to keep that door open. *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

242. I think we've got really good relationships with ermm ... well we do partnership work with the Council; At the minute anyway. I think if their shake-up still continues, I don't know whether that will still continue, but I do detached work with someone who's employed by the council once a week. And they, they've stopped doing it but they put a member of their team here in one of our sessions. And we've ... yeah, over the past few years we've kind of always had a good working relationship and they support the work that we do and wherever we could we support them. So like holiday programmes or providing specific activities, that kind of thing. *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

294. ... one of our values is in setting the projects up in writing the business plans - we deliberately geared it in such a way that the projects can't maximise their potential and their full capacity without partnership working. That's in the design brief and the DNA of what we're about. We're always seeking, you know, the strategic partnerships, delivery partnerships, skills that we don't have within our team and you know etc. and we're quite relaxed about that. It's not that we it just you know we'll work with anybody and everybody, but you know there's no sort of hard and fast criteria we're simply looking for that commonality of wanting to you know make a positive difference to young people. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

308. I think as well I mean we invite people into team meetings as well to kind of present the work and part of that is thinking about you know ... I think for us it's a really proactive thing you know rather than just sitting waiting for people to come to us thinking 'well we're great come and us, come and join us we're seeking partners as well'; so we're kind of making a space say yeah 'come in and tell us about what you do' and let's not leave it there, let's look at how we can you know work together. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*





- **Having strong branding and marketing.**

051. Always looking for newspaper opportunities, we've used local radio stations, we've had the opportunity to feature in one of the sort of bigger journals, I think it was 'Children And Young People Now' I think. But yeah, it really is about taking every promotional opportunity that we can. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

053. ... motivation is always two-fold. It's always ... I guess it's always primarily to promote ourselves because I think that is the main point of promotion and public relations. But it's also very much you know if we can get young people in the pictures, if we can get young people's quotes, we always, always will. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

188. ... it gives a very strong brand and a very strong focus that I think works really well. And I don't think it's at odds with the work they do. Because it is a very local ... it is a very local brand ... to this particular area. *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

289. ... we did deliberately go out to sort of seek a branding that resonated with young people ... But in terms of the branding, in terms of that ethos, in terms of that values in terms of that quality of work we want to retain that so we've sort of tried to replicate the model of what we do and the methods that we use and reflect some of the open youth structures as well. So yeah it has been important for us. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

308. I suppose part of my remit is to sort of strategic representation, so there's lots of steering groups and so on that you sit on at a strategic level and sometimes if I'm honest that's deliberately for the bi-product of networking and profile raising. But that obviously yields influence and raises profile for the project and you know people become more aware of what we do, what we can do, what they do, what we could do together. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*



- **Working with integrity.**

030. Again as far as I see it the values I think are ... honesty, full honesty, because that's the only way we can work with any integrity. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

173. *You have already referred to some, but are there any other values which you would identify as being important to the organisation?*

174. Integrity ... humour (laughs) ... There is also a directness I think. *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

### **Aims and objectives**

Several clear aims and objectives were manifest:

- **Creating fun, safe spaces for young people.**

093. We just want to engage with young people, provide somewhere safe where they can come and be themselves you know away from other pressures of life, school life, home life.

Somewhere where they can sit and do their homework it's just providing that space in't it?  
*Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

329. I think it gives young people a safe environment, I think they can express themselves there and I think it's fun, it's a fun place to be. *Esther, Shangri-La volunteer*

359. Because you know, it is, it's a safe place and for young people, some of them they need somewhere to go where they can talk so. And you've got the counselling. I think it's great.  
*Esther, Shangri-La volunteer*

- **Meeting the needs of young people.**

125. Well, I mean any youth work provision cuts down on antisocial behaviour, keeps young people off the street, gives them somewhere to go, which is also ... you know, that's always good. If you ever sit in on any Council meetings the residents are always complaining aren't they about gangs of youths congregating somewhere, creating a noise, just being a nuisance, general antisocial behaviour. By having youth clubs open, Shangri-La and other places like that, that it cuts down on that, it takes them off the street, yeah it's only 'til 9 o'clock at night but hopefully you know just 'til 9 o'clock prevents something happening somewhere.  
*Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

168. It is trying to meet the needs of young people. I think there is two strands actually and, my guess is, it is trying to meet the needs of young people as they walk through the door as much as possible, but I think it's also providing young people with the opportunity to have relationships that are with adults who ... have ... there's ethics ... there's ... I guess what it is that sits at the back of it is the faith. You know, it's about valuing relationships. I hear the youth workers saying to the young people, 'that's not a nice thing to say' or 'we don't use that language here' or ... and I don't hear that picked up in the way that they pick it up anywhere else. *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

- **Being supportive of young people.**

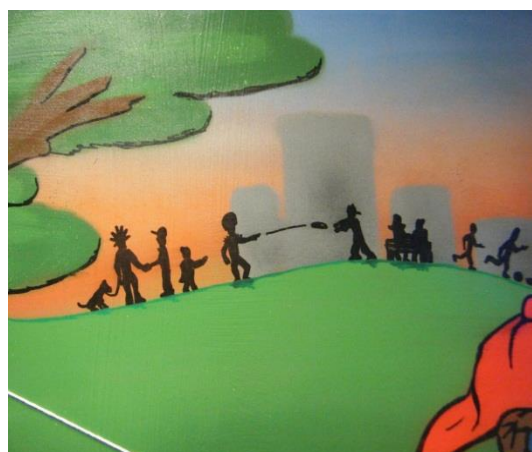
176. I think the youth workers are really direct with the young people. You know, 'what they mean they say and what they say they mean' sort of thing. I see a real honesty ... honesty, but I also see an acceptance of young people and care. *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

### **Faith Dynamic**

The faith-based nature of the project was somewhat open to conjecture with a number of contrasting and diverse views present:

296. I'd prefer to talk about being a 'faith-motivated' project as opposed to being a 'faith-based' project. Simply because faith-based has probably become, it's come to mean something that we're not. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

055. I think they [the young people] recognise that we don't hide our faith, but we also don't push it on them and I think that's something that almost



allows them to, to take it seriously. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

170. Well, it's interesting because I think the reason it [the faith element] works is that it's not worn on the sleeve. *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

Eve portrays a somewhat contradictory understanding. At one point she indicates that most people know they are faith-based:

220. I always describe it [faith dynamic] as kind of 'faith in action'. You know we're all Christians but we really show the love of Jesus through our work that we do with the young people. The majority of them know that we're Christians so we have a lot of discussion that comes through that so a lot of everyday talking about you know, what did you do over the weekend? Oh I went to church. They do come and ask us a lot of questions because they know that we are a Christian charity and they do actually see a difference in us and the way we work. So yeah, that's how I always think of it anyway. *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

But later she says the faith-based element is:

250. ... not something that's really evident unless they actually know the charity and the organisation (laughs). *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

Any reference to the faith dynamic of Shangri-La is entirely missing from the project's leaflets and web site. There is no mention that it is a Christian-based project. It would seem that the youth work aspect of the project is as, if not more, important than the faith side of it:

055. I think we're held much more highly for our youth work abilities, skills, reputation than we are for our Christian charity. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

296. So we do subscribe more to the sort of community development model of youth work we are seeking to combine a professional youth work framework with a faith motivation and ethos. So for us it's the stuff of ethos and drive and values and you know commitment as opposed to the stuff of content. Which is you know has been sort of quite a deliberate distinction for us to make. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

Gavin goes further and doesn't want to promote the faith side of the project:

013. I think I personally am very ... very careful not to see the centre as a centre that promotes ... in a sense, Christianity. I think I'm quite keen, I'm quite keen not to have a centre that does that. But I won't, and you know none of the others will, but I can only really speak for myself, I certainly won't shy away if the topic is brought up. But it must be brought up by young people. You know, if they ask me what I've done over the weekend and I tell them and that includes going to church or being part of something else that's faith-based I'll still use that but I won't dwell on it, but if they want to explore it, if they want to take it further... *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

The faith understanding, personal positioning and functional role of the individual seems to influence how the organisation operates, rather than organisational values creating a unified universal faith-based culture:

009. *From your point of view how would you describe the faith-based element of it, how does that work?*

010. It's actually, it's how I enjoy working in a faith-based thing. It's very much ... it takes a back seat without being less important. It kind of, it sits behind, whereas we're there to support all the young people and that faith-based element is there to support us. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

041. I think we have a relatively unified understanding at the full-time worker level. I think that understanding is ... not there, or is not the same once we get to the part-time workers. But certainly as a whole charity ... there is definitely not a corporate understanding. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*



Gavin thinks there is a degree of symmetry of understanding with full-time staff:

010. I guess there's a little, particularly between the full-time staff, I guess there is something common and a bit of a bond between us and also that links us to the wider charity. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

045. ... for the full-time team, we have that kind of unified understanding of the role faith plays. We're all very comfortable and happy with that. The culture of young people only dictates the work we do as it would any other youth work agency by responding to current trends, issues, needs. I think we're set up well enough to not have to be concerned about hiding our faith. But we also need to protect it and support it. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

A position not entirely endorsed by Ivor:

302. And I'm not sure even if we're to be honest even as staff, that those who prefer more evangelistic models probably don't always get why we're doing things in the way we're doing. So that's, I know that goes on. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

Gavin believes the faith motivation of the charity saved it from closure in the recent economic crisis.

011. I certainly think that without that faith-based backing and element to it in terms of just, you know, simple staying or going, I think the charity would have - in particular the centre - would have certainly struggled a lot more, if not folded through the last financial year. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

A sentiment supported by Sue (not a Christian):

192. The difference [faith makes] I think is that there is something that ties this together ... and it is pretty invisible ... the example I would give is sometime ago last year, we [her own organisation] were all facing massive cuts and we had massive cuts and we were also trying to make some changes in our organisation, so that we would survive the cuts and we had a huge amount of opposition. This is a Third Sector organisation, not just statutory or anything. We had a lot of opposition to the changes we were making. And it was about changing contracts and .... Now I remember coming here and they had a staff meeting and the entire staff had agreed to take a pay cut ... across the board they had all agreed to take a pay cut! ... to try and keep everybody in work and to try and keep the project going. And I

think it was Ivor who said that they had prayed together ... and I just kind of ... There's obviously a community sense or a sense of community, and I think only in a faith organisation would you get that. *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

However, for part-time staff member, Mandy (not a Christian) she considers the faith dynamic irrelevant:

094. *Where does for you the faith bit come into it?*

095. Well it doesn't, it doesn't and it's never been an issue. It's never been ermmm ... it's not anything that is ever talked about. And I don't actually know if some of the young people know our origins, know that, you know ... *Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

126. *One of the things I am trying to look at is whether this type of faith-based youth work is taken seriously. Do you have any reflections either from yourself or from colleagues and the wider statutory sector as to how they perceive Shangri-La as a faith-based body?*

127. It's never mentioned, no the faith bits never mentioned. *Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

And that it makes no difference to the work undertaken:

099. I mean I'm not a religious person ... It's never been anything that's been pushed down my neck or spoke about highly, you know. It's never been, 'well if you went to church, Mandy', you know, there's nothing. ... And neither is it spoke about to the young people. If they ask, then the other staff will put their point of view or talk about it, but it's nothing that's ever forced upon anyone. Because coming from ... cos I work for the Council as well, coming from that to and I was a bit 'well you know it's Christian youth based, I really don't know, I've not had any experience of working there what is the difference?'. There was lots of differences, but the faith one wasn't one. *Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

It was reported in informal conversation that a former member of staff, who was not a Christian, said in her exit interview that her view about Christianity changed so much for the positive as a result of working at Shangri-La and that she had been 'blown away' by her time with the project.

Despite these somewhat diverse and mixed understandings and the difficulty in describing them, Ivor asserted that faith is central to all that Shangri-La does and is:

296. ... I think often it's hard to articulate why it's so important but we know it is, we know it has been you know financially for us in terms of, you know, believing that faith and prayer make a difference to our work. I'd hope that it ... and I believe it does come out in terms of how young people feel in these projects or how staff relate to young people. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

I propose describing the faith dynamic of Shangri-La as something that is 'a latent underpinning' to their work. Latent with regard the psychological emphasis and definition of the word in that it is present and capable of emerging, but is more often than not in dormant form having the potential to achieve expression. Underpinning in that it is clearly a foundational element of their work, but not always evident on the surface.

297. As you know not all our staff are Christians and again that you know we're relaxed about that as well, but many are and I suppose it's that sort of subversive I suppose you know to kind of get biblical it's that 'fragrance' that surrounds that hopefully is escaping into



the atmosphere and the work. And we know that young people pick up on. We know that ... they don't necessarily frame it that way but we know that they're trying to find words to say something that for me, I feel what you're trying to say is you know it's 'something in the air', it's 'something in the atmosphere', it's 'something about how you do your work' and for me I, that's faith that's the ingredient. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

343. I think it's there but it's certainly not pushed down anybody's throats that ... I feel because I mean, I'm a Christian but I don't go to church and I'm not, I don't, you know what I mean, I'm not, I wouldn't say I'm a practicing Christian in that it plays a big part of my life, but I just think it's more of a family kind of environment than anything and yeah I think faith does come into it and it plays a part. I don't think anything is forced upon anybody. *Esther, Shangri-La volunteer*

## Relationships and Influences

My study revealed that the project had a number of significant relationships and external influences. Not only were these influences on-going and incremental, but the impact of national and local austerity measures was also beginning to potentially more dramatically shape the future work of Shangri-La. The context regarding the specifics associated with working in Derbyshire is discussed further below. See 'The Future: Politics'.



032. I would imagine it will increase with commissioning routes and all those paths lying ahead, I think it [partnerships with other groups, especially faith groups] will have to increase and I think they'll be testing times in the fact of keeping our, keeping what makes us distinct at the moment. I think it'll be hard to form alliances with different people and not sort of succumb to the ... making something work by being the group that give their values over easier. But yeah, so not so much at the moment but certainly I can see it developing. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

047. I guess until we enter a partnership or partner a piece of work then the beauty of our charity is that we raise the money, with the exception of somewhere like, you know, in the infancy of projects, so H (town) still obviously in its match funding time is influenced by the stakeholders which are the funding agencies, and at the same point the communities who you know have been a part of setting that up. Um ... I think we're influenced by the communities we're part of because we have a responsibility to be. We plant both charity shops and youth centres in a community. It would be wrong of us to think we can come in and do things our way, be completely autonomous of the community. So we encourage as much as we can community members, businesses within the community, to be part of, bring suggestions, ideas, report issues that they think... *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

243. *Do they [Local Authority] influence what you do or do they make any call on agendas, stuff like that?*

244. Working with the Youth Service, yes! (laughs loudly) Yeah, we're often told that we have to cover certain topics within the sessions that we do whether it's relevant or not. And yeah, it does annoy me slightly. And having to get young people filling in their personal information forms, all that kind of thing. Yeah.

245. *Do they say 'why' they do that?*

246. No. Or I've never been given a definite answer. We always assume it's just because they have to meet certain criteria. *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

309. I think this last year yeah it has been challenging because of structural changes that have taken place within Derbyshire moving from you know one model of having District youth managers, and then district managers for 11-19 and your, you know, your family resource workers, your education welfare, you know, your sort of remit of professionals that we knew really well and it was all fairly well oiled and that was replaced with the locality map team structure some new faces, lack of clarity really around how that structure was gonna work, what young people were gonna work with, who they were gonna work with. And I think we have had a difficult year not in terms of being ignored, but I think the folks within the map structures have needed time to make sense of function and role that it's been insular for a good period of time whilst they sort that out and then once that's sort of crystallised they can be more outward looking again as to who they seek out as partnerships. So that's one, that's I guess one factor that's made it a challenging year in that we lost some folks that we had known for years. Youth service is completely remodelled in terms of Local Authority youth service and will be remodelled further it would seem in the next you know 6, 8 months. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

## Big Society, Civil Society and Policy Factors

### The Big Society

There was no mention of the term 'Big Society' in any of the interviews undertaken until the notion was raised by me. Equally, there was no mention of the term in any project information or publicity.

The more senior members of staff were aware of the Big Society vision, but more junior members were not, typically saying:

130. *Just kind of broadening still further, I'm exploring the Big Society. I don't know whether you have come across this idea or not?*

131. No. *Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

257. *What do you think of the idea [of the Big Society]?*

258. I don't know if I actually know enough about it to really comment on it. .... Sorry (Laughs embarrassed). *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

368. *Have you heard of Big Society?*

369. Big Society? No.

370. *The Government's idea.*

371. No. *Esther, Shangri-La volunteer*



The notion was interpreted both positively and a negatively by those more widely informed:

061. (Laughs) I think that... I think the Big Society is ... very positive in some ways, in that, but it's also very negative in other ways. I think if I start with the negative reason which is basically it's a window dressing for something that has always existed. So it's nothing new if you like but I think the positive side to that is it's free promotion of what already exists in the sense of promoting community volunteering, promoting services for local people by local

people. I think it's got, it will impact with us quite significantly purely because it's obviously fuelled a lot of the reasons for cutting where the budgets have been cut leading to the need for the commissioning of services. And presents us with a great opportunity to put a bigger foothold in not only the delivery of service but I think also kind of the training of (xxx) services, missing gaps in training of the workers, continuing professional development. And I know kind of it sounds like we're putting ourselves on a bit of a pedestal to other providers, but you know I think that's a good thing. I think if we sit there and say, yeah, this Big Society provides us with the chance to stand on a soap box and shout 'we are a great youth work service then listen to us and we will help you', then it shows that we believe in what we're doing is right and that it can encourage more people locally to get involved in their communities and especially in this instance with the young people in their communities.

*Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

315. [The Big Society is] very relevant to you know, to Derbyshire is a Conservative run Local Authority, Big Society is really ... Big Society and ... economic downturn and deficits are heavily driving forward changes within how activities and services are delivered for young people so it's really high on the agenda within you know this County. I don't think that it makes it any more grounded as a concept. I think it, you know, the Big Society agenda is just that, it's big its so varied that its, I wouldn't say that its really been grounded within the County yet, but it is driving forward this idea of we'll decentralise youth services to both a) save money and b) create context in which the local communities and what's called in this county the VCI - Voluntary Community Independent Sector -can rise up and fill those voids. And I think the perception is that the sector, the VCI sector, is sort of pregnant with this potential but not been allowed to birth it because the opportunities not been given. And therefore Big Society is kind of the answer to that. So it is really shaping the strategy of how they want to move things forward within the County. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

For Ivor, there were two main issues. Firstly, the need for adequate provision of services for young people:

316. In terms of influence on that, I do have some concerns about it as much as I want to champion the sector I want to see, you know, one of the consultation papers Positive for Youth one was about growing the role of voluntary sector. I'm supportive of that – absolutely. And I think we do need that opportunity to grow and we do need more recognition for the work that we do. But I do worry about, and I'm just speaking within this County, as to how they manage that transition and what happens to young people who can be quite acutely affected by loss of service, loss of workers that they've known, you know we're talking about 157 part time County Council employees being made redundant. Closure of I think 27, 29 buildings. So you know how's that gonna be managed in terms of retaining delivery, support to those young people?

And secondly, ensuring that any such provision is of high quality and safe for young people:

316. And also, I suppose some concerns around, 'cos I think often within communities there's always, you'll always find people who will have the passion and the enthusiasm and the intent to do something good - whether that's young people or not, but to take young people as an example - to do something good for young people in their village or their town, cos they see that they need something or sometimes they perceive that there's a need because there's four that hang out outside their house and well there must be another, you know, it must be the same everywhere therefore 'we need to do something'. And I think it's trying to counterbalance that passion and good intention with the necessary skill set as well.



So I do worry a little bit that ... that's not being fully thought through 'cos passion and good intention quickly unravels if it's not counterbalanced by, you know, the necessary knowledge and skills to run the work effectively, safely, sustainably, so. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

### Civil Society

In terms of the overarching definitions used in my investigation, Shangri-La is very clearly a 'civil society' organisation. It is 'located between the family, the state and the markets (and) people associate voluntarily to advance common interests' (Anheier 2004: 22).

It also seeks 'associational life – aiming for social, economic and political progress; the good society – providing opportunities for people to act together, developing values and skills; and, (promotes) the public sphere – a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good' (Edwards 2009: viii).

379. Because up until now the only contact I ever had with young people were my nieces and nephews. If I saw young people hanging around on the streets or ... I would be a little bit wary and a little bit intimidated. But because I see them on a Monday, I see young people on a Friday and now if I see some young people on the street I'm you know, I'm more open to talking to them and I think if people actually worked with young ... or in any voluntary thing ... If you actually put yourself out there a little bit it does empower you. And I mean, I think my own experience of volunteering has been nothing but positive ... *Esther, Shangri-La volunteer*

### Community

As has already been noted, the family/community dynamic and atmosphere that Shangri-La creates appears to make it a place of refuge for the young people it works with and also for some of the staff. They see it as their second home, bringing belonging, identity, ontological vocation and sanctuary.

213. When you say 'homely' what do you mean by homely?

214. I mean that we try very hard to make it feel like that but I know that when I come to work it does, I suppose because I spend so much time here, sometimes it does feel like a second home if you like. But very comfortable as a staff team we get on very well as well so yeah. *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

### Social capital and citizenship

Several references above have been made to helping young people connect with the wider community, get on appropriate training courses, develop skills and confidence and obtain guidance assistance about their possible future careers. Mention has also been made of how Shangri-La promotes volunteering and hopes young people make a journey from service-user to project volunteer.

They also work hard to connect with the wider community always having a stall at local fairs, events and festivals. Equally, they seek people who will act as 'community champions', promoting their work and linking with others in the community.

The longevity of approach has witnessed a succession of young people access the work and services of Shangri-La:



287. I suppose you know we've come to a point where we've sort of seen a generation come through. Some are still linked to project 'cos they still need some of the support we offer. Others they're off and they're at work, college, uni wherever they happen to be and they've decided that their time here is you know is through. But it's nice seeing some of the siblings you know start to come through. So, I think as long as we can retain our relevance and make sure that we're sort of scanning the environment if you like ensuring the work that we do is ... is you know needs responsive. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

Furthermore, there is evidence from project literature, in-house displays and the interviews undertaken of mutual approaches, inclusion of minority groups and intergenerational social action projects:

139. Yeah, yeah I can. I mean we did a project in K (town) a couple of years ago with young people alongside AV (area) Housing, where we did a litter pick for them. AV (area) Housing provided ten skips for us, we did a litter pick, we went round door-to-door and took rubbish away for elderly residents, put them in these skips. They provided chips for lunch and then they took us to the theatre at Christmas to a pantomime. That was a definite, we worked in rain for hours, you know you do something for us ... that was good! Yeah. *Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

Collectively, this evidence points to a broad and holistic sense of citizenship that endeavours to build both bonding and building approaches to social capital.

This is most definitely needed in their work with unemployed young people. On my first field visit, there were many young unemployed people in the shop taking sanctuary in the coffee bar. They had that ashen look found on so many faces of people in so many areas of deprivation. I first experienced this look many years ago when I was visiting young people in prisons. It took me a while to identify it exactly, but it has since become synonymous in my mind with people being trapped, living without hope, motivation, a sense of purpose and without any sense of release from the monotony of life. I have subsequently witnessed it in many ex-mining towns in the north of the country. It is as if the life has been drained out of them and they become ghostly figures, standing on street corners, hanging around youth friendly buildings, games arcades, bus shelters and the like waiting for something to happen.

It is not my intention to over-generalise here, or portray and promote stereotypification. What is intended is to portray a picture of the type of young people and the type of work Shangri-La undertakes so that a context can be perceived regarding the challenges encountered of trying to develop social capital and citizenship amongst young people with low levels of resilience and restricted life opportunities. It is in this regard that Shangri-La manages to build bonding and bridging social capital and connect that with linking social capital aspirations.



The findings regarding the project's partnership work, strategic influences and links and their political concerns point to a strong sense of seeking to develop such linking social capital, being both advocates for their own work and the wider voluntary sector civil society organisations in the area. Consequently, they appear to be a significant voice and be major players at a strategic level.

## The Future

The issues of local politics, funding the work of Shangri-La, discussions about how it might expand in the future and what role it might play in the new cultures and landscapes of youth welfare provision dominated interview comments regarding the future.

### *The impact of local politic developments*

Throughout the time period of this case study, what was happening in the local political context was significantly engaging, influencing and potentially changing Shangri-La and the way it operated. Many of the comments from those interviewed about funding, expansion, commissioning and the delivery of work reflect and refer to what was happening politically during this time.

As quote '315' above states, Derbyshire County Council is a Conservative Party controlled Local Authority and seemingly a microcosm of national Conservative Party ideology and policy; namely in the way, as discussed in my Thesis, it seeks to implement cuts to state funding, deploy market mechanisms to deliver services and is embracing of Big Society conceptualisations. These notions are most evident in what it proposed doing regarding local services for young people in the county.

The Council proposed closing Local Authority operated services for young people and instead move to outsource these to the voluntary and community sector via a commissioned strategic model. This would have meant large scale redundancies, the closure of youth centres and curtailment of services and activities. A widespread campaign against this proposal was led by a local youth campaigner who collected more than 16,000 signatures for a petition to save directly-provided youth services. This attracted significant local media interest. As a consequence, the Council was forced to re-appraise its plans.

Consequently, during my investigation, local politics was very important to the Shangri-La project. What was happening politically was directly impacting them. One member of their staff, who also worked for the Council, was given notice of redundancy by the Council. Shangri-La representatives were in continual meetings about the proposed developments and they were positioning themselves for what was anticipated.

111. It's been quite awkward actually. Yeah the past 6 months has been quite awkward. I mean I, you know, I will actually lose my job in a couple of months time with DCC. Well it's looking that way. Yeah, I mean ... it's just really, really awkward. *Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

As my study drew to a close the Council announced new plans which substantially pulled back from their original proposals. Whilst this will enable a degree of future planning to take place, the long-term future of local state-funded work with young people remains uncertain. What role Shangri-La will play in any new policy arena remains unclear.

What is clear is that the future provision of services for young people is seen as bleak:

162. I think that young people don't have somewhere fixed and regular to go. I think that the future for youth provision in this area is dire. *Sue, Shangri-La external stakeholder*

But Shangri-La plays a key part in facilitating a space and a place for young people:

166. One of the things I was thinking of is: a) young people can come in here and see me. It's easier for them to get into a service than having to go via a multi-agency team, because they can just come up to a youth worker who they have built that relationship with and they can



actually be great to be able to do a lot more without that restriction. I suppose that's the same for everybody, but that just seems to be the key at the minute. And to be able to continue expanding and to be able to cover more areas. *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

269. I think we've got. We've got a lot of projects that we do that are referral based so like the E project and the football project so I think it would be great to be able to expand those and make them available to the local schools so they can actually buy them in or we could go in and deliver them within a school setting. Yeah, just to kind of continue expanding and doing loads of things. *Eve, Shangri-La staff member*

However, Ivor, whilst seeing growth as positive, was cautious about simply taking the place of the Youth Service in the county:

318. I don't think it [youth service] is to take it on wholesale, no. I think we could get it to that point. So, maybe yeah maybe the potential is there but we got to, I think the perception with the powers that be is it can be just remove 'that' and 'put that in' (again uses hands to illustrate), I think no. I mean obviously we're around and we feel that we do have the a strong enough infrastructure and capacity to grow and if there's added resource you know to expand we've kind of worked out some ways of working, some models that work for us. We know what we're looking for we know what we're about. I think we could replicate what we do and we'd be very happy to do that. But neither are we seeking to kind of to take over the world but if the opportunities there then yeah we'll take it, but that's very different to ... I think some great things start of course they do, lots of great things start with you know a group of local parents who see a need and want to do something and that's a fantastic starting point, but and I've sat with quite a few different individuals and groups who want to come and look at what we do and they say, 'ah, it's great but you know we're not youth workers and we don't know where to start'. So you can get those folks to that point, but you need to invest time and energy into facilitating that journey so that it is set up and its safe, its effective, its sustainable and not just financially sustainable... *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

This concern was particularly focused on long-term sustainability issues:

318. I mean that you're not gonna sort of close things down at the first, you know, bad incident at the first incident of challenging behaviour, everyone's had enough 'cos it was difficult that night. You know when we were doing the research for H (town) there was a real legacy of short-term projects; predominantly they were voluntary sector projects. Predominantly they were church projects. They'd come and they'd blossomed really quickly because they had rightly perceived a need and were driven to respond to it, but they'd died out because volunteers, either there weren't enough, they'd become disillusioned, there was damage to the building whatever it happened to be, and there was no sustainability. So going back to one of those points earlier about the longevity I think yeah we don't wanna be part of that trend we want to still be around. So I think there is massive opportunity in it but there are some pitfalls as well. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

325. I mean in terms of development ... we've tried to kind of sort of keep our heads down and do what we do in terms of the changes happening around us with the Youth Service. But at the same time in terms of strategic positioning we have made it clear that, 'well we are around and we are keen to expand'. So on one level replicating what we do in other areas where it's needed is always on the agenda, we're always aspirational to expand. Not just to pedal a branding, the branding is just to engage the trust of those who know what we



do. So that on one level. And then I guess within what we do, I've always wanted to develop more of the training and consultancy side of what we're about. You know, I feel that we have harnessed enough expertise and knowledge along the way to be able to give some of that away. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

### Commissioning

The imminent possibility that Local Authority Youth Service provision would soon be moving to a commissioning model was discussed by several people interviewed:

062. *Do you think commissioning is a good idea?*

063. (Laughs) I think it could be a good idea ... if it works (laughs again).

064. *What's the hesitancy here?*

065. I think ... it has potential to ... I think with commissioning being bought up through the need for cuts rather than for commissioning being in because it's a good idea, there's a danger that the people who receive the contracts could be because they are, or willing to do it for the cheapest. They're not necessarily the most trained, qualified, best, gonna add the best value for their service, but they're gonna do it the cheapest. I think there's also potential for, I think we're well placed cos we're quite a big charity, but there's potential for some of these smaller groups to be wiped out, a little bit. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

116. *If I was the [County] councillor at the heart of all this [commissioning proposal] and said 'actually I can do a better job if I give this all to Shangri-La', what would your response be?*

117. Ermm ...

118. *So I say to Shangri-La, 'here's the money, this is broadly what we want to do, get on with it'*

119. O dear ... I'd say, go for it. I mean, you know, there's gonna be that pot of money available anyway and Ivor would be a fool not to dip into it, we've got to dip into it, it's there for us. I'm hoping I'm going to benefit out of that. And I'm hoping that we can pick up some of the youth work around AV (area) 'cos it needs somebody to pick it up. I would rather, obviously working for Shangri-La and knowing how good we were that we could pick it up and do a good job with it and I think that we could. I don't think the answer is for Shangri-La or any voluntary organisation to conquer the youth world. I think there's a place for youth service and you know voluntary sector side-by-side and I think we both need each other.

*Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

### Organisation

The organisation has a good local profile and is considering expanding across the immediate area. As already discussed, it has a very strong brand and a clear marketing and public relationships profile. This is underpinned by a belief that what is provided is done so in a quality way that is better than other local providers:

067. I think so, personally, yes. I think it's better than a lot of other faith-based providers because of the way we use our faith as I mentioned earlier, that we're not out for conversions. And I think it's better than some of the, what was the Youth Service idea, because ermm ... we just have that opportunity to be a little bit more creative, less tied into specific targets. Obviously that's likely to change with commissioning and you know and performance indices will be there. But ermm yeah ... I also think if you aren't prepared to stand up and say 'we are the best' then no one else is going to do it. I think of the big four financial companies with particular reference to Deloitte, KPMG, those companies that stand up and say 'use us because we are the best.' Well it could become the big five if someone decides to stand up and start doing that, selling themselves. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

## Staff and Volunteers

The staff and volunteers appear to be highly committed to the work of Shangri-La. The fact that they all took a pay cut of 5% last year in order to avoid anyone being made redundant speaks volumes about their sense of team and community.

They are all very warm, friendly and welcoming people and it is easy to understand why their work with young people is successful. Equally, they all passionately believe in the work they do and they all want it to expand to other places and areas of interest.

The Shangri-La strap-line is a reality in their daily work and its aspirations are embedded in the individual members of the team and across the work undertaken.

The team is a mix of Christians and those who are not. It is not totally clear from the interviews how the place of faith operates in the organisation and, whilst requiring further investigation, it must be considered if this mix of diverse faith perspectives is contributing to any lack of clarity.

## Atmosphere



The project reflects the warm and friendly persona referred to by several of those interviewed. It is very welcoming and there is an air of quality and energy portrayed.

My first field visit was their Celebration Open Day. There was a real buzz around the place, with lots of leaflets, banners and displays on view with videos and music equipment set up to exhibit the work of the project. This all came together to convey a sense of purpose and collectiveness that contributed to a very positive atmosphere.

The branding, artwork and murals exuded life and seem to reflect the lives, challenges and aspirations of the young people who helped produce them. The venue is a great facility for youth work. It is also presented to a very high standard with an extremely strong branding. Evidence of their creativity and what they cover in their work/curriculum can clearly be seen on the walls, displays, artwork and literature to hand.

The Project leader and his main assistant bring a calm and authoritative presence to the overall atmosphere of the venue and this is modelled to the other staff and volunteers.

I now turn to analyse and further reflect upon these findings.

## Discussions, Analysis and Reflections

Following the coding of the data collected, a number of consolidated categories became evident. These were:

- Youth Work Frameworks;
- Social Impact;

- Organisational Behaviour;
- Strategic Approaches;
- Political Context;
- Faith-Based Dynamics.

These are now each discussed in turn, before considering the wider issue of the *space and place* Shangri-La occupies.

## Youth Work Frameworks

The data and findings set out above point toward a youth work pedagogy and framework that is:

- Focused around being positive about, and helping young people develop;
- Centred on making a difference in the lives of local young people;
- Meeting their needs and providing support for them;
- Offering safe spaces, places and forms for young people that are fun to participate in;
- Creating opportunities, developing aspirations and realising potential;
- Concentrated on the local community.

Gavin used the phrase, ‘the unconditional positive regard for young people’ (quote 30) and the extensive evidence in the field visits, observations and interviews indicated that this is fundamental in helping the young people develop both socially and personally. It is clear that there is a very specific positivity about how the project perceives young people. In contrast to many of the narratives analysed in my Literature Review and Contextual chapter of my Thesis, this regard seeks to discover, appreciate and build upon all that the young people are and aspire to be and do, rather than ‘fix’, control or socialise them. One of their programmes designed to do this is called, ‘Essence’ and it would seem that this positivity is the very pedagogical essence of what Shangri-La is about. All the other dynamics discussed here are subservient to this positive discourse.

Second only to this positivity, is the desire to make a difference and model a different way of being and living. In fact, one follows the other. Having a positive pedagogy creates the space and enables a platform to be established that meets young people’s needs and releases the energy and possibility for change and transformation. I would argue that this is what is wrong with much contemporary policy rhetoric; it seeks the transformation without the positivity. Consequently, national problems (such as youth unemployment, substance abuse and low self-esteem) are often addressed in isolation, in short-term bursts and often without considering any sense of injustice, inequality or lack of contextual resilience. Shangri-La endeavours to address all of these issues over the long-term and is aptly summed up by Ivor who connects this pedagogical rationale with his faith-motivation:

299. For me, that’s [in this example responding to a victim of domestic violence] Kingdom work that’s about justice and righteousness ... for that young person ... in terms of actually getting involved in the grit and the dirt of life driven by a desire for peace, for justice, for righteousness, I’m really comfortable with that as a mission and as Kingdom work.

Tied to these two (positiveness and making a difference) most significant pedagogical domains is the contextual consideration that work is done in safety and is fun. Whilst there can be no question that safety is important in working with young people, it is somewhat unfortunate that recent policy frameworks, from Every Child Matters (Great Britain 2004) onward, have focused in unprecedented ways about safety, often at the expense of remembering that it is supposed to be (Belton 2010: 69) about fun as well. Shangri-La helpfully brings these contextual narratives together to ensure a rounded and more balanced pedagogical framework.



Collectively the combination of these pedagogical considerations, along with working in a clearly defined local geographic area, seemingly ideally position Shangri-La to help it achieve its strap line. Whilst anecdotal and literature review evidence indicates that this is happening, interviews with young people were not conducted to formally confirm this. However, the project received repeat funding from the Big Lottery and it seems unlikely this would have occurred had it not been achieving its prime objectives and outcomes of raising aspirations and releasing potential.

### **Common Good Social Impact**

In order to discuss the findings regarding the common good social impact of Paradise, I will use the 'priori specification of constructs' (Eisenhardt 1989: 536) as used by Edwards (2009), as a backdrop.

#### *Associational Life - aiming for social, economic and political progress*

It is clear from the data that making associational life progress is significant in the work of Shangri-La. They make social progress in how they work with young people meeting their needs and giving them support. They help them develop, have a sense of aspiration, make better life choices and reach their potential within a cultural value base that views them positively and caringly so that they can have full involvement in the community.

Economically they are helping young people develop their confidence, self-esteem and gain new practical and social skills to grow as people and increase their levels of employability. They are offering young people help in gaining qualifications, running a number of courses, providing mentoring opportunities and working closely with advice and guidance agencies to signpost them to other suitable sources of help and support.



As mentioned elsewhere and discussed further below, Shangri-La is also politically seeking a better deal for young people in the work it does strategically. This political expression does not have any obvious party political association, but is seemingly simply concerned with helping young people by providing more and better youth work opportunities. This is achieved by working alongside, lobbying and being active in local strategic contexts.

#### *Good Society - providing opportunities for people to act together, developing values and skills*

Strong partnerships are very important in the work of Shangri-La. The quote by Ivor (294) above that indicates that the Business Plans for Shangri-La were deliberately designed so that the project had to work in partnership with others in order to reach its full potential and capacity, communicates the full extent to which this is true. The project is all about bringing people together in order to develop better outcomes for young people. There is a self-imposed mutuality in this approach that cannot seemingly be compromised if Shangri-La is to maintain its integrity and fulfil its aspirations.

The physical space of the shop frontage alongside the virtual space of social networking platforms facilitates an exchange of ideas and interactions where 'free and equal citizens come together to share information, to debate, to discuss or to deliberate on common concerns' (Odugbemi in eds. Odugbemi and Jacobson 2008: 17). This space not only allows young people to come together to develop their values and skills, but also acts as a hub out of which many of the programmes previously referred to can operate. These include opportunities for people to act as volunteers for

the project with the on-going possibilities of gaining further training and accreditation to help support their volunteering work.

### *Public Sphere - a space for argument and deliberation that negotiates a sense of the common good*

There is little doubt that Shangri-La provides a space for young people to deliberate issues that affect them, their community and their future. Whilst this space might initially be devoted to addressing individual issues and concerns it ultimately endeavours to work toward a negotiation of a community-wide and beneficial common good that the project describes as ‘young people becoming more positively recognised and involved in their community’ (project leaflet). This two-fold dynamic of ‘recognition’ and ‘involvement’ can only help develop young people’s participation in civil and civic life.

The findings above point toward Shangri-La being an organisation that seeks to develop social action, alongside a sense of citizenship and community development whilst being both motivated and informed by a locally focused political dynamic. As previously mentioned, the project is engaged in facilitating political argument, debate and deliberation at a Local Authority and strategic level, with young people being at the heart of these consultations and discussions. This political dynamic is discussed more fully below.

## **Organisational Behaviour**

### *Threats of isomorphism*

There is a very strong sense that Shangri-La is facing a significant threat to mimic what goes on in the emerging new political commissioning landscape and comply with normative expectations around performance and models of delivery. It feels like they are waiting for others to plot the (commissioning) course before seemingly having to follow in their footsteps.

Whilst they have shown significant resilience and resourcefulness in their work to date, this potential re-plotting of their course by outside forces brings a threat to their mission and focus. Fortunately, they appear to be alert to this threat, but it remains to be seen as to whether economic reality and the need to survive take precedence over good intentions and grounded beliefs.

Dinham’s (in Furness 2012) portrayal of subconscious secularism also seems to have some relevance here. For example, Gavin considers the possible threats that a new landscape might bring and concludes that they would have to work hard to maintain their mission and values. He assumes that Shangri-La’s faith position is made clear in their literature and web site:

036. I think it’s [keeping their distinction in a commissioning culture] a potential threat. However, because of the way I’ve described previously, early on about how we work and the values and what underpins and how we use faith in our work, I think we would be in a reasonable position to be able to continue as we are, but obviously ... I think we would be under heavier scrutiny and I think it’s in that scrutiny that we have to work hard to continue to keep our distinctiveness. So perhaps it’s not in forming a partnership with someone, perhaps it’s in a well meant trying to compromise to actually pick up a piece of work or get the funding pot in, because I think when people are, look into us as they will they’ll look on the websites, they’ll look through the literature, and as soon as they realise what our background is then their suspicions are going to be arised and they’re going to look into it further. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*



But in fact, no such references are found. It might be argued from the data that this distinctiveness is already not present and that Shangri-La has become subconsciously secular already. This conclusion is also alluded to in comments made by Ivor. He reflects that over a five or six year journey many questions have been addressed regarding the faith position of Shangri-La and that now this is widely understood:

311. In terms of the 'faith thing' and people trying to second guess what that means for us as a project and almost feeling they need to sort of tip toe around you know ask indirect questions to figure out whether there is kind of ulterior motives to what we're about or whether we're seeking to proselytise or convert every young person that comes through the door. So maybe five, six years ago that was a barrier that we worked hard to, we didn't apologise for being faith-motivated project, but we worked hard to say 'this is what it means for us', 'you can work with us', 'we do do things well', 'we have got a lot of commonality', 'yes many of us are Christians and that's part of the DNA of our project but that's our driving force and everybody needs that', 'that's what spurs us on to do you know what we do' and that doesn't mean that we're you know trying to get into school and then do lots of other things that are more ... more evangelistic; it's purely about effective youth work. That's not the case now, people know us well enough, but I think it probably if we were to move to a new place, a new town or whatever then we'd have to kind of go right back round. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

However, it might be argued from the data that this is not the case. The data suggests that the faith position is not understood by everyone and that Shangri-La is in danger of becoming subconsciously secular and that it is this actuality that is putting external stakeholders more at ease, rather than understood acceptance of any foundational faith motivations.

Gavin also considered that future commissioning demands for joined-up working with other faith groups might represent a further threat to their distinctiveness and be a challenge.

032. I would imagine it [partnerships with other faith groups] will increase with commissioning routes and all those paths lying ahead, I think it will have to increase and I think they'll be testing times in the fact of keeping our, keeping what makes us distinct at the moment. I think it'll be hard to form alliances with different people and not sort of succumb to the ... making something work by being the group that give their values over easier. But yeah, so not so much at the moment but certainly I can see it developing. *Gavin, Shangri-La staff member*

Perhaps this notion might be termed 'subconscious pluralism' in that policy makers not only have a secularity lens through which they prefer to see things, but as faith and religion might be seen as returning to the public realm (Dinham et al eds. 2009; Williams 2012) they increasingly have a pluralistic one as well - one that embraces idealistic notions of interfaith harmony and commonality, whilst remaining cautious of single faith approaches.

### **Partnerships**

Reference has already been made to the significance of partnerships within the work of Shangri-La and it is considered further in due course. This significance should not be underestimated regarding the behaviour of the organisation. Their collaborative working appears to be fundamental to all that they do. This enables them to have a greater reach and profile in the area, communicate news of their work and messages to a large group of stakeholders, mutually benefit from the support of others and politically influence what happens in the area. As a consequence they appear to have a

bigger space and place within civil society than they would otherwise do, were they to operate exclusively on their own.

### **Expansion**

As has been noted, the desire to replicate and expand the work of Shangri-La to other areas is marked. What is clear is that they want to do this, but what is less clear is why, how and when they will do this.

Whilst there is no doubt an underpinning desire to serve more young people, other motivations and drivers relating to factors such as faith, influence, affiliation and power dynamics are less clear and would warrant further investigation before any conclusions could be drawn. This expansionist paradigm, however, does appear to be at the heart of Shangri-La and its governing charity. As such, its significance and influence cannot be ignored because it influences so many other factors associated with the project. These include how it responds to the local needs of young people, the partnerships it forms and cultivates, how it markets itself, how it is funded and sustained and the extent to which it might engage in any future commissioning processes.

### **Strategic Approaches**

Several of the considerations relating to this Strategic Approaches category have already been referred to above:

- Meeting young people's needs;
- Working for the long-term;
- Focusing on one particular community;
- Working in partnership.

### **Political Engagement**

This is explicitly discussed further below, but the strategic significance of how Shangri-La is involved at a local political level needs to be fully noted.

They appear to invest a significant amount of senior leadership time into participating at a strategic Local Authority level regarding matters such as services for young people and the role of the voluntary sector in the provision of those services. This gives them profile, influence and a close ear to the ground regarding future policy and political developments, which in turn influences and potentially shapes some of their work.

### **Getting It!**

When analysing how the project works, what it does, what motivates it and what its faith dynamic is there is a discourse that revolves around a conceptualisation of needing to 'get it'.

299. [In] presenting our work to a churches together meeting or whatever some people will get it and really warm to it. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

301. So I think that's one of the biggest challenges is and we've had it internally as well within the organisation particularly in the early days where for me it got quite awkward and heated you know with some directors who, you know, well where is distinctiveness where you know if it's not in this and it's not in that where's it gonna be. We're at risk of just becoming like, you know, everyone else. And I think I'm much more relaxed about I think the distinctiveness is not always in the hard tangible things it's in the softer stuff and ... I'm moving off the question now. So, no, you're right, some ... I mean it's interesting because as a Christian in this field of work I feel easier and more relaxed around non-Christian folks who 'get it' than I do around some church folks who 'don't get it' and I feel really I suppose I find

it hard to place myself I'm not quite sure where. But I just find it a really awkward, frustrating you know context to be in. So I love it when I'll meet another 'person of faith' who gets it, and who gets what drives us and who gets what we're about, so yeah. *Ivor, Shangri-La staff member*

It would appear that this is about understanding what Shangri-La is about and what it is not about. It revolves around appreciating the heart and soul of what its being is and having resonance with what makes it tick, gets people out of bed in a morning and helps people feel part of it. Whilst these metaphors and extractions do little to shed further light on the detail and distinctiveness of Shangri-La, they do appear to highlight a nuanced perspective that is important to embrace in considering this type of faith-based youth work.

Those that 'get it' seemingly understand it and have no issues with what it does or how it does it. Those that don't 'get it' might well be confused, uncertain and have many questions about it. It occurs that this dynamic is symbolic of faith itself; those that 'get' faith, religion or belief just do whilst those that don't might struggle to appreciate what is happening and why.

### **Branding and Marketing**

The sense of strong branding and marketing described above enables Shangri-La to establish a presence and tell its stories in a very strategic way.

This presence is established in the community, amongst young people and with strategic stakeholders and representatives. It would appear that the stories Shangri-La tells for its marketing are a reflection of the life-blood that runs through the project. They bring the stories of what they do with young people to life and communicate them in a compelling fashion. This is aptly illustrated by a simple story and statement that appears from one of Shangri-La's young people on one of their leaflets:

'Want to come here everyday'

This simple statement communicates so much and aligns itself with Shangri-La's aims, objectives and intentions to meet with young people. It also elevates perceptions about the work it does and generates momentum for the project.

It is unfortunate that for reasons of attempting to preserve anonymity that their actual name, logo and branding are not disclosed as this would further enhance understanding regarding this important strategic approach. Subjectively, I consider their branding and presentation some of the best examples I have witnessed in my long-standing practice experience.

### **Political Context**

#### **Local Context**

The political context being experienced by Shangri-La during the time of my study highlights succinctly the reality of how a dominant political and cultural ideology and policy framework can so easily impinge upon the work of the type of faith-based projects being investigated.

The proposed invitation to '*jump*' to a commissioning model of service may mean projects like Shangri-La are inevitably invited to ask '*how high?*'. The explicit challenge being that such a jump could represent a long-term opportunity for the much desired financial security and expansion of their work. Against this must be set the significant isomorphic challenges that may well follow whereby a pre-requisite compliance and acceptance of protocols, secrecy clauses and externally set targets is required.



Only time will tell if Shangri-La can successfully negotiate any political and policy transitions as it seeks to balance its own financial needs and zeal for expansion against commissioning and procurement processes that might further drive it toward subconscious secularism. If it blindly walks into any new arrangements it could easily fall victim to a subconscious secular paradigm that would further cloud its already ambiguous faith dynamic.

On the more positive side of the scenario, Shangri-La is fully engaged in discussions about the strategic changes proposed. It thus has an opportunity to bring political influence that will hopefully enable it to achieve better outcomes for the young people it serves and position it for the future.

However, this in itself is not without bringing further challenges for Shangri-La. During one of my field visits, I had a meeting with project manager, Ivor in a nearby coffee shop. Ivor talked about a certain degree of animosity with those in the local statutory sector who have an 'imbalanced view that the voluntary sector have been gaining unfairly from the demise of the statutory sector'. Ivor went on to say that the statutory sector 'are in a bit of a flap at present' and that local youth policy is proving contentious. This highlights further possible tensions between state, market and civil society approaches and responses to current developments, projects like Shangri-La being potentially caught in the middle of such tensions.

Ivor also indicates that he has concerns about the current proposed political transitional arrangements as it will be young people who lose out as interruptions to services occur. He reflects that you can use any building to work from, but if you lose relationships you can't replace them as easily as a building. With a degree of frustration he states that local politicians 'don't seem to get this'. This political element relating to their work is of paramount importance when considering the space and place within which Shangri-La operates and the impact of it cannot be under-estimated.

### **Big Society**

The absence of any comments about the Big Society that were not solicited by me is a further telling indictment of the notion. Whilst, when questioned, senior workers were very aware of it, more junior workers and the volunteer were largely ignorant of the term further indicating that there has been a failure to communicate the vision adequately.

In common with the findings of other cases, there was a positivity (particularly about the micro-embedded aspects) of the notion amongst those who had no prior knowledge about the Big Society when they were given a brief overview about what it was said to be about.

132. [in response to saying knows nothing about the Big Society] *Basically, it's David Cameron's idea about making things more local and empowering local people making more volunteering opportunities, it's about transforming the way we do everything so that the state doesn't pay for it but it's funded by other sources. Do you have a view on whether those things are positive?*

133. Well ... it would be good if you can get plenty of people to volunteer, if you can get the community to engage. Sometimes that just doesn't happen does it? Or you get the same people doing the same things every time. *Mandy, Shangri-La staff member*

In this case, this suggests at least a quasi favourable view of the notion if not a ringing endorsement.

Where the interview data did evidence knowledge of Big Society associations and discourses, there was a high degree of knowledge that embraced both the 'micro-embedded' (for example, being locally rooted, community empowering and volunteering) and macro-marketisation (for example,

opening up of public services, community engagement, innovation and enterprise) aspects of the notion.

In the interviews there was mixed support for Big Society rhetoric and ideals, with negative soundings that it was nothing new, a cover for cuts and negatively impacted provision and standards. On the positive side it was seen as an opportunity for Shangri-La to grow its work, proclaim the quality of what it does and potentially shape future strategy. There was a sense that Rowan Williams's (2010) 'two and a half cheers' would be a view that potentially resonates with the sentiments of those interviewed.

In a very clear sense, Shangri-La outworks on the ground, in a sustained and meaningful way, the very policy agendas that the Big Society aspires to. Irrespective of the relative merits of state, market and civil society responses to these agendas, projects like Shangri-La need supporting and funding if policy rhetoric is to be transferred and become actual reality at grass-roots level. It seems unlikely in the current climate that such work will be adequately funded, and this does nothing to ensure the long-term viability of projects like Shangri-La.



### Faith-Based Dynamics

The place of faith within Shangri-La is not a dynamic that can be easily positioned or stated. As noted, there are differing individual perspectives, potential inconsistencies and organisational uncertainty around the role faith plays in the shape and intentions of how the project operates.

In one sense, this study represents a microcosm of my entire investigation. This study of what is a relatively small project potentially portrays how the large world of faith-based and motivated youth work exists. Whilst not wishing to over-generalise my findings in any specific way, there is a sense that analysing and determining the place of faith in such work is illusive, open to interpretation, potentially impugned, with the absence of a grand narrative indicating a post-modernist relativist paradigm that confines any conclusions to be akin to the metaphorical grappling of horns (McGrath 1981) considered in my Thesis.

In the answer to a question about what difference the faith dynamic of the project makes, Eve answers using the words 'we':

222. In the way that we react to them how we talk to them, how we engage with them. I suppose our whole attitude. (underlining my emphasis)

However, the findings do not suggest that there is one homogenous collective 'we' approach and portrayal. Moreover, a picture is established that encompasses a very broad range of understandings and perspectives. These range from those of people like Eve, to those like Mandy, who sees no differentiation between the work of Shangri-La and that of the Local Authority, simply because the project is allegedly, faith-based. Rather, it appears that whilst there is an organisational faith dynamic backdrop, how this manifests itself in reality is almost entirely determined by individual beliefs and approaches. If this is the case, then it can only be concluded, as with the case of Mandy – if a team member is not a Christian, that the purported faith-based dynamic has little consistent relevance.

The most positive summation regarding the faith element of Shangri-La is that it is faith-permeated and centred at organisational, management and senior staff levels, but less so at junior and part-time staff and volunteer levels, significantly drifting toward being secular at times.

My analysis regarding the faith element Shangri-La can be summarised by mapping the data against the 'conceptual categories' of Sider and Unruh (2004). The following table assesses the pertinence of the various categories:



Genre	Typology and Characteristics					
	Faith-Permeated	Faith-Centred	Faith-Affiliated - Motivated	Faith-Background	Faith-Secular Partnership	Secular
<b>1. Mission</b> The place of faith in the organisation's identity and purpose	X X X	X				
<b>2. Founding</b> The connection with faith in the heritage, original and on-going vision of the organisation	X	X X X				
<b>3. Governance</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment in the selection of board members		X X X X				
<b>4. Project Leaders</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment	X	X X X				
<b>5. Other Staff</b> The role and expectations of faith commitment as a requirement of employment		X			X X X	
<b>6. Support</b> The extent to which funding is from faith-based sources					X X X X	
<b>7. Beneficiaries and Users</b> Whether activities are aimed exclusively or not at people of a particular faith	X				X X X	X
<b>8. Practices</b> The integration of faith practices into the organisation		X			X X X	
<b>9. Environment</b> Whether the activities take place in a space/building associated with the faith					X	X X X
<b>10. Programme Content</b> Whether the programme content is explicitly religious		X			X X X	X X X
<b>11. Project Outcomes</b> The extent to which religious and spiritual experience is connected to the project's desired outcomes		X			X	X X

#### Key

- x Valhalla
- x Paradise
- x Nirvana
- x Shangri-La

#### Notes

- 1) Sider and Unruh's (2004) original work had twelve genres: eight characteristics of organisations and four characteristics of projects. For layout and analysis purposes I have merged these together and removed genre '3 – affiliated' from the original as none of my cases studied are affiliated denominationally. My study is not about churches and more inclusive and universal language is required to reflect this.
- 2) The general language and terminology has been adapted to more succinctly be applicable to my cases.
- 3) Of significance wider than semantic changes is the fact that I have changed the typology 'Faith-Affiliated' to 'Faith-Affiliated/Motivated' to reflect the lack of affiliative characteristics in my cases, whilst recognising the motivational place of faith within them.

## Space and Place

The following conclusions can be drawn regarding the space and place Shangri-La occupies:

- Shangri-La occupies a significant space geographically in the work that it undertakes in the community and a unique place regarding the type of work it undertakes. The space, in terms of this specific project, is bounded and limited to the town of R. It is the only provider of such work in this area;
- In terms of both the work it undertakes and the wider civil society aspirations of aiming for an associational life, developing the good life and promoting the public sphere, Shangri-La is a key civil society organisation in the community, seeking the common good;
- Embracing the ideas of solidarity and subsidiarity (see below), Shangri-La strongly favours a space and place in civil society. It works with government agencies and more market orientated providers, but operates according to its own agendas and vision as it seeks to make a difference and bring about change and transformation;
- It has inspired, instigated and helped shape the broader space and place of civil society orientated youth work in the area as well as seeking to impact wider youth work policy, perspectives and practice;
- The actuality and reality of the notion of the Big Society occupies a broad-based space and place within the work of Shangri-La. However, the notion is not given any significant space and place within the project, this being predominantly because Shangri-La just gets on with its work rather than because of any explicit political identification with the notion;
- Shangri-La is well known and highly regarded by young people and some elements of the community. It occupies a very, very significant place in the hearts and minds of those who work for it and a significant place with those with whom it works and relates to;
- In terms of social capital, there is strong evidence that Shangri-La embraces bonding, bridging and linking social capital components and it occupies a space and place in local politics and strategic decision-making processes;

- Shangri-La enjoys a significant space regarding its relationships with other civil society organisations and state bodies. Whilst there are clear isomorphic threats, that are likely to gather momentum in the future, Shangri-La appears to have maintained a large degree of autonomy and has not been unduly influenced by state policies, prerogatives and programmes, although there is some evidence that it might have succumbed to recent dominant secular worldviews and ideological perspectives;
- The faith position of Shangri-La is clear at governance level, clear at senior leadership level, but less clear at junior staff and operational levels. Furthermore, where there is clarity this is not universally consistent and understood, with the space and place faith occupies in its daily work being somewhat ambiguous and intangible;
- Shangri-La seeks to extend its future space by displaying strong branding and communications about its work and the young people it seeks to work with.

### An Emerging Hypothesis: The Shape of Faith-Based Youth Work

My 'p priori specification of constructs' (Eisenhardt 1989: 536) proposition that four key benchmark ideas of Catholic Social Teaching are particularly relevant to current debates and help shape an emerging hypothesis regarding faith-based youth work is significantly borne out, albeit with a number of shortcomings and additional considerations emerging.

My findings and data strongly indicate that there is a high degree of respect for **Human Dignity** within the work of Shangri-La - the previously described, 'unconditional positive regard'. There is a fundamental belief that every young person is important and valuable and has the latent capability to realise their full potential.

Supporting the social and personal development of young people and helping them succeed is important. Each is included, afforded equal rights to respect, freedom, justice and peace and there is an immense valuing of young people and concern for the wider community, with the work continually seeking change and transformation.

There is clear evidence that Shangri-La has **Solidarity** with the people with whom it works. Having solidarity with those young people that are marginalised is an important component of its work. Shangri-La is focused on helping young people develop and making a difference in their lives. This is done not only for the sake of the young people, but also so that there will be solidarity with the wider community, enabling young people to contribute to that and be seen in a more positive light by it. There is clear evidence that they welcome people from all backgrounds, seeking the common good and promoting inclusion.

Shangri-La is very much focused on the local community and it operates within a clearly defined area having made a long-term commitment to the area it works within. As such, the principle of **Subsidiarity** is embedded into how it works. In the spirit of subsidiarity, Shangri-La seeks to empower and enable at a grass-roots level. It does this with both the young people it works with and its staff and volunteers. It does this so that they can fulfil their aspirations and accomplish whatever they can by their own enterprise and industry and resolve problems relative to them. As previously discussed, there is significant talk of organisational expansion, but this is always considered within the context of wishing to preserve the local and facilitate a very specific service based around a geographically defined area and group of young people.

The elements of human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity combine to help Shangri-La work towards achieving the **Common Good**. By supporting, empowering, giving confidence to, training and enabling young people to more effectively participate in the community, they are helping achieve a greater sum total of social conditions that enable individuals and the collective to achieve greater well-being, fulfilment and better outcomes more fully and more easily. They very much achieve the goals of their strap-line – raising aspirations and releasing potential, expecting that they will make a difference in the lives of individual young people and the wider community.

However, this representation does not fully portray my findings. Five other notable defining attributes also emerged. These are:

1. Having Positive Regard;
2. Making a Difference;
3. Strong Communications Branding and Portrayal;
4. Working in Partnerships;
5. Funding and Expansion.

### **1. Having Positive Regard**

The data points overwhelmingly to a narrative that seeks to be positive about and for young people. Shangri-La wants young people to have the opportunity to try new activities so that they can grow in confidence and realise their full potential.

This means that each of them is held in the highest regard and all are included, valued, and positively recognised as part of the community. Shangri-La offers a fun place and homely environment so that they can improve and achieve their aspirations.

### **2. Making a Difference**

Similarly, there is a very clear sense from the data that the project wants to make a difference in the lives of young people. From small intangible changes and peripheral skills development to life-building and potential realising transformations, Shangri-La and all working for it, are totally committed to achieving this aim.

This is not achieved by some of the more confrontational remedies put forward by those of a more centre-right political persuasion (such as boot camps, conscripted national service, non-compliance sanctions and punitive retributions), but by being welcoming, offering warmth, cosiness and safety and providing the opportunity for young people to try new things and grow in self-belief and confidence.

### **3. Strong Communications Branding and Portrayal**

There is also an organisational storytelling delivered through strong branding and public relations efforts that portrays the work of Shangri-La and disseminates its activities to a wider audience.

Their distinctive branding is a recognised gathering point for young people and a point of reference for local policy makers. This brings a familiarity, confidence and sense of trust for other stakeholders. It also creates a platform from which similar projects can be replicated in different geographical areas.

This enables the profile of the project to be raised, highlighting the challenges, hopes and possibilities for local young people and increasing their profile, raising support and developing a

critical consciousness about all of these dynamics, thus achieving their strap-line objectives for both young people and the organisation.

#### **4. Working in Partnerships**

Shangri-La enjoys a number of key relationships and partnerships that support its work and help it achieve its objectives. The data indicates that a highly significant portion of these are more than just partnerships or relationships of convenience. They are partnerships that embody a sense of interdependence, reciprocity, mutuality, collaboration and accountability, formed to support the common good aspiration.

The main incursions that threaten these relationships are when external agendas and institutional isomorphic risks have an imposing foothold on the missional agendas, positioning and activities of Shangri-La. This is particularly true at this time of economic and policy uncertainty, where there is some sense of Shangri-La waiting for others to decide the (commissioning) course before following where they go.

#### **5. Funding and Expansion**

The on-going work of Shangri-La is dependent upon the ability of the charity shops (that the governing charity operates) to keep on generating income for them. These shops are both environmentally and sustainably a very creative and enterprising operational model, but it does not appear that they generate sufficient income on their own to secure long-term economic security for Shangri-La. This has been borne out recently by the story of the staff taking a pay cut in order to ensure no one was made redundant by the project. It would appear that additional grant funding or contracted work is needed to sustain Shangri-La in the future.

At the same time as these challenges are being experienced, there is a universal desire to expand the work of Shangri-La. If this is to happen then the shops need to develop and grow markedly and be opened in many more towns around the area. It remains unclear if this is a viable and realistic possibility.

When these additional emergent themes are combined with the original Catholic Social Teaching dynamics, underpinned by an organisational Christian motivation that is part of Shangri-La's foundations, summative conclusions can be drawn about how Shangri-La undertakes the work that it does.

### **Towards a Theoretical Framework: The Intention of Faith-Based Youth Work**

Using the theoretical framework proposed by Doyle and Smith (2002),



Shangri-La has the following elements that describe its intentions and functions regarding what it does in its work:

1) Present: -

- Formation and Education – through instruction and accredited courses (ASDAN) and formal intervention programmes. Usually these are not rooted or located within a faith paradigm or pedagogy;
- Informal Education – via drop-in sessions, creative projects, mentoring, personal and social development and relationship building work;
- Pastoral Care – of individuals over a sustained and long time period, via support work, counselling services and confidence and esteem building work.

2) Absent: -

- Youth Ministry – any evidence indicating that this took place was limited to occurrences when a young person raised the issue of faith or spirituality;
- Evangelical Youth Work – this element was absent from their work and any communication about the Christian faith was at best a notional prerogative, with no evidence that it was explicitly and actively present in the work.

A number of additional findings emerged from the study. These indicated that Shangri-La's faith-based youth work has elements that are about:

- Operating in spaces that influence policy agendas and seeking better outcomes for young people locally, especially regarding social justice, building social capital and meeting the needs of the marginalised;
- Being role-models and building positive identity amongst young people, reducing substance abuse, anti-social behaviour;
- Nurturing and celebrating the lives of young people and working for their empowerment as valued members of society;
- Developing community and seeking to work in inclusive ways, providing safe spaces and building a hospitable and homely environment that enables potential to be developed and released;
- Undertaking social action and facilitating preventative, creative and problem addressing projects that benefit both young people and the wider community; and
- Making a difference in young people's lives by raising their aspirations, creating opportunities, meeting their needs and being positioned to work with and for them over the long-term.

It is not suggested that these elements have exclusive association with faith-based work and whilst the original motivation, positioning and intended aspirational outcomes of this project (and some of those workers facilitating and implementing the work) are potentially rooted in and motivated by their underpinning faith beliefs, it may be argued that any link to any faith dynamic is somewhat ambiguous.

## Conclusions

The portraiture element of my methodology determines that the tone, gestures, and seeking understanding of those interviewed is analysed in order to capture the 'texture and cadence' (Lawrence-Lightfoot in eds. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997: 99) of the study. When combined with a 'search for goodness' (ibid 141-146) and an 'empathetic regard' within my

observations that resonate with my own aspirations for such work (ibid: 146-152), it is clear that Shangri-La is very much a civil society organisation, seeking the common good. As such it occupies a significant space and place within the area it operates, embracing diverse views about the Big Society.

Shangri-La is very much motivated by its founding faith positioning, but the extent to which this faith is evident in its day-to-day work is more associated with a 'faith in action' narrative than any explicit attempt to convey a set of beliefs to others. Shangri-La exhibits a 'latent underpinning' approach to the faith dynamic of its work. The extent to which this is manifested in the day-to-day work of Shangri-La varies across the project.

In recent times its work has been impacted by the economic crisis, but project staff have responded to these challenges by agreeing to reduce their individual salaries to prevent any staff losing their jobs. Whilst Shangri-La is a resilient and creative project that has managed to maintain the integrity of its operations in challenging economic times, subconscious secular agendas and a possible move to a commissioning model of youth service delivery in the area potentially threaten its original missional objectives.

Shangri-La is a highly motivated, locally rooted and passionate project that is very committed to the young people and the community within which it operates. It is the key youth work provider in the area and works closely with others in the community. It has a strong focus on meeting the needs of the local young people, being positive role-models for them, being positive about them and building relationships. The overarching objective of the project is to bring about raise young people's aspirations and help them to realise them.

Based on the evidence of this case study, any tentative **emerging hypothesis** about how faith-based youth work is undertaken and the form it comprises has merit in appealing to the stated principles of Human Dignity, Solidarity and Subsidiarity found in Catholic Social Teaching as a foundational starting point from which a model can be developed. Additionally, several new elements help portray how Shangri-La goes about its work, namely: having an unconditional positive regard for young people, focusing on making a difference, delivering strong representations about the work undertaken, working in mutually beneficial partnerships and looking to adequately resource the work and expand it further. These elements enable a hypothesis to be considered that has the aspirational objective of achieving the common good whilst being a reference point for triangulation against the findings in my other case studies.

With regard to this study of Shangri-La, any developing **theoretical framework** about what faith-based youth work does and how it functionally operates needs to embrace elements from the framework suggested by Doyle and Smith (2002), namely: formation and education, informal education and pastoral care. With a number of additional elements also identified, namely: political campaigning, building positive identity amongst young people, nurturing and celebrating young people's lives, developing community, undertaking social action and making a difference.

# Questions Asked

The interviews undertaken with those involved in the project were of a semi-structured basis explored in full in my Thesis. This meant that a core set of structured questions were asked, supplemented by additional questions that emerged as the interview developed. The structured questions are set out below for reference purposes.

## Introduction

- 1) What 3 words first come to mind when I mention '[organisation] and faith-based youth work'?
- 2) If you were to pick an animal, a car, an image or other metaphor to portray [the organisation's] work with young people what would it be?
- 3) How would you describe [the organisation's] faith-based work with young people?

## Mission and Values

- 4) Why is [the organisation] motivated to work with young people?
- 5) What are the key values of [the organisation]?
- 6) What is [the organisation] trying to do in their work with young people? What stated aims of [the organisation] are you aware of?

## Relationships and Influences

- 7) What relationships do [you/the organisation] have with other faith groups re the youth work you do?
- 8) What relationships do [you/the organisation] have with government bodies, funders, other stakeholders re the youth work you do?
- 9) How is [your work/the organisation] influenced by outside factors? E.g. government, culture, media, funders

## Civil Society and Policy

- 10) How does [your/the organisation] work with young people make a positive contribution to wider society?
- 11) Do you think faith-based work with young people is taken seriously by wider society?
- 12) Do [you/the organisation] want to be valued by wider society? Government? Local community?
- 13) I don't know if you have heard of the Big Society? (Explain if not) – does your faith-based work have any connections with it? Are you doing anything different in your work as a result of the Big Society?

## The Future

- 14) If there was one thing you could change about [your/the organisation's] faith-based youth work, what would it be?
- 15) How do you want [your/the organisation's] faith-based youth work to develop?



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## **Appendix 14 – Case Study: Summary Overview Sample**

A summary overview of the Paradise investigation.

Sent to the project director so he could critique my findings and act as a respondent validator.

# Paradise: Summary

---

## Overview

Paradise is a highly motivated, locally rooted and passionate project that is very committed to the young people and the community within which it operates. It occupies a significant space and place within the community being the only deliverer of youth work in the area. It has a strong focus on meeting the needs of the local young people, being positive role-models for them, being positive about them and building relationships. The overarching objective of the project is to bring about transformation and develop community.

It wrestles with the on-going threat of isomorphism, having been over influenced by external factors in the past. It is now more focussed and purposeful, fully reflecting its strap line of building hope, unlocking potential and realising worth. Partnerships are important in its work and it has a strong public profile.

Paradise exhibits a 'tacit' approach to the faith dynamic of its work, whilst aspiring to develop this further within the general dynamic of seeking restoration and redemption for the young people it works with and the wider community.

Those interviewed offered the following three word descriptors of what first came to mind when they thought of Paradise:

Caring communities  
Positive  
Integrity  
Long-term  
Authentic  
Change  
Transforming  
Commitment  
Hope x 3  
Incarnational  
Relational  
Believing in young people

When account was taken of the tone, emphasis and frequency of the responses made, the following is a summary conclusion of what was being communicated. Paradise was said to be about:

Hope, transformation, being authentically compassionate.

Those interviewed offered the following metaphors and images as portrayals of Paradise:

- Butterfly – helping young people spread their wings and be beautiful;
- People carrier – reliable and always room for more;
- Climbing up a mountain/going on a trek – a challenging expedition;
- Building blocks – of character, leadership, personal and social development, spiritual awareness, change-making and journeying with young people.

Within the description and sentiments offered and observed about the project, there was an overwhelming sense of a hope that things could be different. This sense of possibility, life and anticipation of transformation underpinned everything. There was a strong pedagogy and approach that was very much focussed on young people, rooted in a desire to see the transformation of individuals and the community. Within the language of my overarching investigation it was evidently a faith-motivated project operating in pursuit of the common good.

### ***Mission and Values***

#### Motivation

- Being positive about young people and facilitating the telling of their stories was a prime motivation.
- Creating space for young people and making sure their voices were heard was significant.
- Supporting the development of young people and helping them succeed was important.
- Having solidarity with those young people that were marginalised was a key component.
- Being role-models and modelling something different to dominant narratives was also a motivation.
- Developing community was crucial.

#### Values

- Seeing young people thrive and flourish.
- Making a long-term commitment to the people and area.
- Operating locally.
- Believing in hope.
- Expecting change and transformation.
- Valuing community.
- Seeking shalom and the Kingdom of God.
- Seeing something in everyone and everything, believing no one is lost.
- Creating space for reflection.

### ***Aims and Objectives***

Several clear aims and objectives were manifest:

- Achieving the objectives of the strap line.
- Meeting the needs of the young people.
- Helping young people make better life choices.

There were also some more subtle and nuanced findings .....

- Making small, incremental and on-going progress was valued.
- Some of the work was difficult to measure, but no less important.

### ***Faith dynamic***

I propose describing this dynamic as 'tacit faith'. As such it is not always distinguishable in the work of Paradise, but the motivator of it.

Some of those interviewed, who practiced their faith, had an aspiration for the faith and spiritual dynamic to be more prominent.

### ***Relationships and Influences***

My study discovered that the project experienced a variety of significant relationships and external influences.

It would appear that in the recent past the ideology and demands of those funding the work have shaped and driven the work undertaken perhaps to an unhealthy extent.

What has happened in the past regarding the allowing of external agendas, funding and drivers to shape the work has meant that isomorphism has been an ever-present threat and reality. The recent economic cuts and consequential staff reductions made in the project have meant that this threat is now more fully recognised and forced a re-think about what work is actually done and how it is resourced. It appears that the economic situation has acted as a wake-up call and the work is now more driven by Paradise's mission and values.

Although the word 'citizen' is only mentioned once by those interviewed, a strong relationship with the ideas behind the notions of citizenship and civil society were evident both in the interviews and in organisational publicity materials. Words and concepts such as: identity, relationships with others, transitions, personal development, building blocks, understanding communities and society, empowerment, participation, interdependence and transformation were commonplace.

### ***The importance of 'being and working locally'***

This has already been mentioned above, but bears repeating here given the weight with which it was portrayed by those interviewed. It was evident that any initiatives need to avoid being 'top-down', but rather be rooted in Community Organising ideas and ideals.

### ***Atmosphere***

The project has a community feel and welcoming persona. It is an oasis in a desert of closed shops. It oozes life and excitement in contrast with its surroundings.

The project building is spotlessly clean, well-organised and looks professional. This all adds up to convey a collective feel that this is a good place to be. The atmosphere and environment reflects the hopes, beliefs and aspirations of the project.

### ***Youth Work Frameworks***

The data and findings set out above point toward a youth work pedagogy and framework that is:

- Focussed around being positive about, and believing in, young people;
- Centred on hope and the possibility of change and transformation;
- Creating spaces, places and forms that help young people thrive and flourish;
- Supporting their development and being life-affirming;
- Explicitly recognising the needs and voices of marginalised young people;
- Concentrated on the local community;
- Intentionally telling positive stories about young people.

## **Appendix 15 - Case Study: Respondent Validations**

Feedback emails from project directors sent in response to the Summary Overviews.

See Appendix 14 for a sample of these overviews.

## **Paradise**

Thanks Nigel

I think it's a wonderful reflection of our work and what we are about and trying to achieve.

Thank you for coming and doing this with us and also sending me the reflections

Speak soon

## **Nirvana**

Hi mate

Thank you for what you've written – feel quite emotional – feel very proud that we've become and are becoming who I'd always hoped we'd be. Your words are very kind and when the timing is ok for you I'd like to be able to use them in some way if that's allowed and appropriate.

Hope all goes well with the geeky part of the research as well

Yours

## **Valhalla**

G'day Nigel,

Great to hear from you and enjoyed the read of your case study mate. Really enjoy hearing external and independent perspectives on [Valhalla], as helps us review what we are doing and how we are talking about it to others.

The only question I had was where you have taken much care to make it make to code [Valhalla] and make it anonymous.<sup>1</sup> But you reference our tagline so if anyone wanted to they could very easily find who you are referring to. On one had I do not have a problem with this, and anyway we are as you say pretty unique in this field. But if you wanted to hide who we are a bit more you could tweak this sentence (in the second paragraph) to disguise a bit more.

I am curious about how we compare to others you researched? In saying this I guess the fact you found it so difficult to find organisations to study could be an indication of where we sit.

Also, I am sure we would be very interested to see your final conclusions, and where advice may be forthcoming to guide our desire to grow and influence more. Will you be sharing an executive summary or similar?

Better go but thanks again so much mate. God bless.

<sup>1</sup> This sentence does not make sense, but text left as originally written to preserve authenticity.

## **Shangri-La**

Hi Nigel,

Hope you're well.



Apologies for the delay in getting back to you.....a few areas below that I wanted to run past you

**RE: Research.**

Really enjoyed reading this summary....I think it captures well who/what we seek to be and articulates something of the DNA of the project. I particularly like the concept of 'latent underpinning' in relation to the faith dynamic! It's an area, as you know, that it's often difficult to find the language that best fits.....but I think this gets close!

As the project manager I was really encouraged & reassured by what I've read from your findings. As a project that seeks to be values-driven it made for a good read!

I've circulated the summary to the wider staff team, including those who participated in the interviews ...<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The email continued ... to talk about recent project developments and contained two further requests: one to be put in touch with other similar projects and, two, to undertake a review day for the project about their values and outcomes. The details have been omitted as they primarily relate to my professional practice rather than my research investigation, but they serve to remind me of the link between the two and an encouragement that both my professional practice and my research are valued by the project.

## **Appendix 16 – Ethical Clearance Forms**

Fast-Track Ethical Approval Form – Survey and  
Consultations

Faculty Ethics Committee Approval

Fast-Track Ethical Approval Form – Case Studies

Faculty Ethics Committee Approval

Clarification Email

## STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY FAST-TRACK ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM (STUDENTS)

Tick one box: TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE MODULE assignment

Title of Course on which enrolled: POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE - RESEARCH METHODS

Tick one box: FULL-TIME STUDY

Title of project: THE BIG SURVEY AND THE BIG CONSULTATION – RESEARCH INTO FAITH-BASED YOUTH WORK AND THE BIG SOCIETY

Name of student researcher: NIGEL PIMLOTT

Address: 28 THE GRANGE, NORTH MUSKHAM, NEWARK. NG23 6EN

Name of supervisor/module tutor: PETER TWILLEY (PhD Supervisor) DOUGLAS BURNHAM (Module Tutor)

**Student Researchers- please note that certain professional organisations have ethical guidelines that you may need to consult when completing this form.**

**Supervisors/Module Tutors - please seek guidance from the Chair of your Faculty Ethics Committee if you are uncertain about any ethical issue arising from this application.**

		YES	NO	N/A
1	Will you describe the main procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	X		
2	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	X		
3	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	X		
4	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	X		
5	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	X		
6	With questionnaires and interviews will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	X		
7	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	X		
8	Will you give participants the opportunity to be debriefed i.e. to find out more about the study and its results?	X		

If you have ticked **No** to any of Q1-8 you should complete the full Ethics Approval Form.

		YES	NO	N/A
9	Will your project deliberately mislead participants in any way?		X	
10	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?		X	
11	Is the nature of the research such that contentious or sensitive issues might be involved?		X	

If you have ticked **Yes** to 9, 10 or 11 you should complete the full Ethics Approval Form. In relation to question 10 this should include details of what you will tell participants to do if they should experience any problems (e.g. who they can contact for help). You may also need to consider risk assessment issues.

		YES	NO	N/A
12	Does your project involve work with animals?		X	
13	Do participants fall into any of the following special groups?  <b>Note that you may also need to obtain satisfactory CRB clearance (or equivalent for overseas students)</b>	Children (under 18 years of age)		X
		People with communication or learning difficulties		X
		Patients		X
		People in custody		X
		People who could be regarded as vulnerable		X
		People engaged in illegal activities ( eg drug taking )		X
14	Does the project involve external funding or external collaboration where the funding body or external collaborative partner requires the University to provide evidence that the project had been subject to ethical scrutiny?		X	

If you have ticked **Yes** to 12, 13 or 14 you should complete the full Ethics Approval Form. There is an obligation on student and supervisor to bring to the attention of the Faculty Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.

If you have ticked **Yes** to 13 and your participants are **patients** you must follow the Guidelines for Ethical Approval of NHS Projects.

### STUDENT RESEARCHER

Provide in the boxes below (plus any other appended details) information required in support of your application. THEN SIGN THE FORM.

**Please Tick Boxes**

I consider that this project has no significant ethical implications requiring a full ethics submission to the Faculty Ethics Committee.	X
<b>Give a brief description of participants and procedure (methods, tests used etc) in up to 150 words.</b>	
This research will be undertaken with adult youth workers. These will come from a diverse set of backgrounds.	
A scoping questionnaire will be used to determine attitudes and beliefs regarding community cohesion and the Big Society. This questionnaire will be broadly distributed across the country to a number of individuals and faith-based sector networks. It will also be available on-line and made available at sector gatherings and events.	
A series of two hour consultations will also be undertaken (in London, Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent) exploring a discourse about citizenship, community cohesion and Big Society issues. These consultations will use the World Café methodology.	
Copies of the questionnaire and information sheets relating to both procedures are attached and provide further details.	

I also confirm that: ii) All key documents e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire/interview are appended to this application.	X
Or ii) Any key documents e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire/interview schedules which need to be finalised following initial investigations will be submitted for approval by the project supervisor/module leader before they are used in primary data collection.	

Signed..... Print Name..... Date.....  
(Student Researcher)

**Please note that any variation to that contained within this document that in any way affects ethical issues of the stated research requires the appending of new ethical details. New ethical consent may need to be sought.**

**The completed form (and any attachments) should be submitted for consideration by your Supervisor/Module Tutor**

**SUPERVISOR/MODULE TUTOR  
PLEASE CONFIRM THE FOLLOWING:**

**Please Tick Box**

I consider that this project has no significant ethical implications requiring a full ethics submission to the Faculty Ethics Committee	
i) I have checked and approved the key documents required for this proposal (e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire, interview schedule)  Or	X
ii) I have checked and approved draft documents required for this proposal which provide a basis for the preliminary investigations which will inform the main research study. I have informed the student researcher that finalised and additional documents (e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire, interview schedule) must be submitted for approval by me before they are used for primary data collection.	

**SUPERVISOR AND SECOND ACADEMIC SIGNATORY**

**STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL (please delete as appropriate)**

**1) THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN CONSIDERED USING AGREED UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES AND IS NOW APPROVED**

**2) THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE AS INVOLVING NO SIGNIFICANT ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS, BUT FINAL APPROVAL FOR DATA COLLECTION IS SUBJECT TO THE SUBMISSION OF KEY DOCUMENTS FOR APPROVAL BY SUPERVISOR (see Appendix A)**

Signed..... Print Name..... Date.....  
(Supervisor/Module Tutor)

Signed..... Print Name..... Date.....  
(Second Academic Signatory)

**APPENDIX A  
AUTHORISATION FOR USE OF KEY DOCUMENTS**

**Completion of Appendix A is required when for good reasons key documents are not available when a fast track application is approved by the supervisor/module leader and second academic signatory.**











I have now checked and approved all the key documents associated with this proposal e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire, interview schedule

Signed... .. Print Name... .. Date... ..  
*(Supervisor/Module Tutor)*


**PLEASE FORWARD A COPY OF THIS FORM TO THE CHAIR OF YOUR FACULTY ETHICS PANEL**

**Form Received by Chair of Faculty Ethics Panel**

Signed... .. Print Name... .. Date... ..  
*(Chair, Faculty Ethics Panel)*

-  Outlook Web Access
-  Inbox
-  Junk E-mail
-  Calendar
-  Contacts
-  Tasks
-  Folders
-  Public Folders
-  Options
-  Log Off

 Reply  Reply to all  Forward   X |  Close |  Help

 You replied on 06/07/2011 08:26.

From: FAULKNER Joann Sent: Thu 17/02/2011 15:16

To: PIMLOTT Nigel

Cc:

Subject: Ethics Form - Nigel Pimlott

Attachments:

[View As Web Page](#)

Dear Nigel

Your project proposal has now been approved by the Faculty's Ethics Committee.

You can now begin to work on your proposed study.

Kind Regards

Joann Faulkner

Quality Support.

## STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY FAST-TRACK ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM (STUDENTS)

Tick one box: PhD Project

Title of Course on which enrolled: PhD

Tick one box: FULL-TIME STUDY

Title of project: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH-BASED YOUTH WORK AND SOCIAL POLICY

Name of student researcher: NIGEL PIMLOTT

Address: 28 THE GRANGE, NORTH MUSKHAM, NEWARK. NG23 6EN

Name of supervisor/module tutor: PAM COTTERILL (PhD Supervisor), PETER TWILLEY (PhD Supervisor)

**Student Researchers- please note that certain professional organisations have ethical guidelines that you may need to consult when completing this form.**

**Supervisors/Module Tutors - please seek guidance from the Chair of your Faculty Ethics Committee if you are uncertain about any ethical issue arising from this application.**

		YES	NO	N/A
1	Will you describe the main procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	X		
2	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	X		
3	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	X		
4	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	X		
5	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	X		
6	With questionnaires and interviews will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	X		
7	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	X		
8	Will you give participants the opportunity to be debriefed i.e. to find out more about the study and its results?	X		

If you have ticked **No** to any of Q1-8 you should complete the full Ethics Approval Form.

		YES	NO	N/A
9	Will your project deliberately mislead participants in any way?		X	
10	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?		X	
11	Is the nature of the research such that contentious or sensitive issues might be involved?		X	

If you have ticked **Yes** to 9, 10 or 11 you should complete the full Ethics Approval Form. In relation to question 10 this should include details of what you will tell participants to do if they should experience



any problems (e.g. who they can contact for help). You may also need to consider risk assessment issues.

		YES	NO	N/A
12	Does your project involve work with animals?		X	
13	Do participants fall into any of the following special groups?  <b>Note that you may also need to obtain satisfactory CRB clearance (or equivalent for overseas students)</b>	Children (under 18 years of age)		X
		People with communication or learning difficulties		X
		Patients		X
		People in custody		X
		People who could be regarded as vulnerable		X
		People engaged in illegal activities ( eg drug taking )		X
14	Does the project involve external funding or external collaboration where the funding body or external collaborative partner requires the University to provide evidence that the project had been subject to ethical scrutiny?		X	

If you have ticked **Yes** to 12, 13 or 14 you should complete the full Ethics Approval Form. There is an obligation on student and supervisor to bring to the attention of the Faculty Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.

If you have ticked **Yes** to 13 and your participants are **patients** you must follow the Guidelines for Ethical Approval of NHS Projects.

### STUDENT RESEARCHER

Provide in the boxes below (plus any other appended details) information required in support of your application. THEN SIGN THE FORM.

**Please Tick Boxes**

I consider that this project has no significant ethical implications requiring a full ethics submission to the Faculty Ethics Committee.	X
<b>Give a brief description of participants and procedure (methods, tests used etc) in up to 150 words.</b>	
<p>I plan to undertake a series of (up to) six faith-based youth work organisation case studies. These will study projects in the Birmingham geographical area. I will be exploring the relationship between faith-based youth and community work, citizenship, community cohesion and Big Society policy issues.</p> <p>A number of pre-arranged site visits will be undertaken and these will consider a variety of study evidence. Data will be collected using a number of tools: semi-structured interviews, interrogation of organisational publications and unstructured observation. This research will be undertaken with adults. These will be youth workers, young adults (over 18) and other stakeholders connected to faith-based youth work projects. These will come from a diverse set of backgrounds.</p> <p>Conceptual I will collect the data, analyse the evidence and then identify and test an emerging theory.</p>	
I also confirm that: ii) All key documents e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire/interview are appended to this application.	X

<p>Or</p> <p>ii) Any key documents e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire/interview schedules which need to be finalised following initial investigations will be submitted for approval by the project supervisor/module leader before they are used in primary data collection.</p>	
--	--

Signed... .. Print Name... .. Date... ..  
 (Student Researcher)

**Please note that any variation to that contained within this document that in any way affects ethical issues of the stated research requires the appending of new ethical details. New ethical consent may need to be sought.**

**The completed form (and any attachments) should be submitted for consideration by your Supervisor/Module Tutor**

**SUPERVISOR/MODULE TUTOR  
 PLEASE CONFIRM THE FOLLOWING:**

	Please Tick Box
I consider that this project has no significant ethical implications requiring a full ethics submission to the Faculty Ethics Committee	
i) I have checked and approved the key documents required for this proposal (e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire, interview schedule)	X
Or	
ii) I have checked and approved draft documents required for this proposal which provide a basis for the preliminary investigations which will inform the main research study. I have informed the student researcher that finalised and additional documents (e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire, interview schedule) must be submitted for approval by me before they are used for primary data collection.	

**SUPERVISOR AND SECOND ACADEMIC SIGNATORY**

**STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL (please delete as appropriate)**

**1) THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN CONSIDERED USING AGREED UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES AND IS NOW APPROVED**

**2) THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE AS INVOLVING NO SIGNIFICANT ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS, BUT FINAL APPROVAL FOR DATA COLLECTION IS SUBJECT TO THE SUBMISSION OF KEY DOCUMENTS FOR APPROVAL BY SUPERVISOR (see Appendix A)**

Signed... .. Print Name... .. Date... ..  
 (Supervisor/Module Tutor)

Signed... .. Print Name... .. Date... ..  
 (Second Academic Signatory)

**APPENDIX A  
 AUTHORISATION FOR USE OF KEY DOCUMENTS**

**Completion of Appendix A is required when for good reasons key documents are not available when a fast track application is approved by the supervisor/module leader and second academic signatory.**











I have now checked and approved all the key documents associated with this proposal e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire, interview schedule


Signed... .. Print Name... .. Date... ..  
*(Supervisor/Module Tutor)*


**PLEASE FORWARD A COPY OF THIS FORM TO THE CHAIR OF YOUR FACULTY ETHICS PANEL**

**Form Received by Chair of Faculty Ethics Panel**

Signed... .. Print Name... .. Date... ..  
*(Chair, Faculty Ethics Panel)*

-  Outlook Web Access
-  Inbox
-  Junk E-mail
-  Calendar
-  Contacts
-  Tasks
-  Folders
-  Public Folders
-  Options
-  Log Off

 Reply  Reply to all  Forward   X |  Close |  Help

 You forwarded this message on 17/11/2011 08:14.

From: McHUGH Alison Sent: Wed 16/11/2011 17:20

To: PIMLOTT Nigel

Cc:

Subject: Ethics Form - Nigel Pimlott

Attachments:

[View As Web Page](#)

Dear Nigel

Your project proposal has now been approved by the Faculty's Ethics Committee.

You can now begin to work on your proposed study.

Kind Regards

Alison McHugh

Quality Administrative Officer

RE: ethics question - Nigel Pimlott

**Subject:** RE: ethics question - Nigel Pimlott  
**From:** RAFFERTY John V <J.V.Rafferty@staffs.ac.uk>  
**Date:** Tue, 29 Nov 2011 13:29:06 +0000  
**To:** 'Nigel Pimlott' <nigel@pimlott.org>  
**CC:** TWILLEY Peter <P.L.Twilley@staffs.ac.uk>

Hello Nigel.

Thanks for the e-mail.

The change, widening the potential catchment of case studies, has no ethical implications as you will be following the procedures already approved.

So no need for another application, the original serves the purpose, go ahead.

John

---

**From:** Nigel Pimlott [mailto:nigel@pimlott.org]  
**Sent:** 29 November 2011 07:49  
**To:** RAFFERTY John V  
**Cc:** TWILLEY Peter  
**Subject:** ethics question

Hi John

Having chatted to Pete Twilley - one of my PhD supervisors - I was just writing to ask you an ethical clearance question about the recent fast-track application project I submitted and got approval for.

My original application sought permission to do a number of case studies in the 'Birmingham' area. Whilst I am still hopeful that this will be what happens, accessing the cases to study is proving a challenge. I would, therefore, like to broaden my remit to encompass, the wider geographical area of the 'Midlands' rather than just Birmingham.

I would like to action the ethical clearance of this now, in order to avoid any potential delays should my Birmingham negotiations not prove fruitful. In all other respects the information remains the same

Do I need to submit a new application, or can this be approved via email?

I have attached my original application fyi.

Thanks

Nigel