Technological University Dublin
ARROW@TU Dublin

Dissertations

Social Sciences

2010-9

Opting In and Staying In: Older Teenagers' Decisions on Becoming and Remaining Involved in Youth Services in Dublin City.

Kerri Martin
Technological University Dublin

Follow this and additional works at: https://arrow.tudublin.ie/aaschssldis

Part of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation

Martin, Kerri: Opting In and Staying In: Older Teenagers' Decisions on Becoming and Remaining Involved in Youth Services in Dublin City. Masters Dissertation, Dublin, Technological University Dublin, 2010.

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Sciences at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie, vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie.

Opting In and Staying In: Older Teenagers' Decisions on Becoming and Remaining Involved in Youth Services in Dublin City.

A thesis submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology, in part-fulfilment of the requirements for award of Masters in Child, Family and Community Studies.

By

Kerri Martin

September 2010

Supervisor: Dr. Matt Bowden

Department of Social Sciences, Dublin Institute of Technology

Declaration

I hereby certify that the material which is submitted in this thesis towards the award of the **Masters (M.A.) in Child, Family and Community Studies** is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfilment of the award named above.

Signature of candidate: _____

Date:

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the young people and the services who participated in this study, as without their input, this research would not have been possible.

To my supervisor, Dr. Matt Bowden, for his support, guidance and speedy replies to panicked emails, I owe immense gratitude.

I am extremely grateful to all of my family, friends and colleagues for their encouragement, assistance and tolerance throughout this process.

I would like to dedicate this study to my husband and my parents, whose immense support in completing this course will never be forgotten.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ..... **i**

Table of Contents ..... **ii**

List of Tables and Figures ..... **iv**

List of Abbreviations ..... **v**

Abstract ..... **vi**

Chapter 1: Introduction **1**

1.1 Outline of the Study 1

1.2 Context & Rationale 1

1.3 Research Aim & Research Questions 2

1.4 Contribution of the study 2

Chapter 2: Literature Review **4**

2.1 Introduction 4

2.2 Youth Work Legislation and Policy in Ireland 5

2.3 Models of Youth Work 6

2.4 Young People in Ireland Today 8

2.5 Distinctive Features of Youth Work 10

2.6 Outcomes and Impact 14

2.7 Conclusion 14

Chapter 3 Research Methodology **15**

3.1 Introduction 15

3.2 Research Design 15

3.3 Access and Entry to the Field 15

3.4 Data Collection Methods 16

3.5 Sampling 19

3.6 Analysis of Data 20

3.7 Ethical Issues 21

3.8 Limitations 22

3.9 Conclusion 22

Chapter 4: Findings **23**
4.1 Introduction 23
4.2 Profile of Youth Work Sites 23
4.3 Reasons for Initial Involvement 25
4.4 Reasons for Continued Involvement 30
4.5 Recruitment of Young People 39
4.6 Conclusion 40

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions & Recommendations **41**
5.1 Introduction 41
5.2 The Creation of a Youth Public Sphere 41
5.3 Culture of Participation & Active Involvement 43
5.4 Centrality of Relationships 46
5.5 Activities, Programmes & Youth Cafes 48
5.6 Conclusions 49
5.7 Recommendations for Future Research 50

References **52**
Appendix A: Questionnaire **58**
Appendix B: Letter of Consent **62**
Appendix C: Questionnaire Response Summary **63**

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Reasons for joining.....26
Figure 2: Reasons for staying involved.....32
Figure 3: What young people enjoy about being involved.....36
Figure 4: Decisions young people have a say in.....37
Figure 5: Hart's Ladder of Participation.....44
Figure 6: Treseder's Model of Participation.....45

Table 1: Location Profile of Case Study Sites.....24
Table 2: Reasons for joining by age group.....27
Table 3: Reasons for staying involved by age group.....35
Table 4: Reasons for staying involved based on length of time involved in service.....39

List of Abbreviations

CDYSB	City of Dublin Youth Service Board
DES	Department of Education and Science
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland
NYWDP	National Youth Work Development Plan
OMCYA	Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
SAHRU	Small Area Health Research Unit
YP	Young People

Abstract

It is widely recognised in Ireland and internationally that the engagement of young people in the youth work process brings with it a range of positive benefits and outcomes, both for the young people involved and society in general. However, it has also been found that young people aged 15-19 participate less in youth services and therefore do not gain the associated benefits. This dissertation explores the perspectives of young people aged 15-19 who are engaged in youth services in Dublin City, in relation to their decisions to become and remain involved in youth services. The aim of this research was to point to ways of attracting and sustaining the engagement of more young people within this age group. A case study design was employed, using multiple data collection strategies in two youth work sites in Dublin City. The findings suggest that in order to attract and maintain the engagement of young people aged 15-19, youth services, together with young people, must endeavour to actively co-produce a youth public sphere. Relationships, both existing and those arising from the youth work process, have an important influence on young people's decisions to become and remain involved in youth services, as do the activities and programmes offered by youth services. It emerged from the research that, in comparison to other forms of engagement youth services offer young people a place to go where they can be with friends, get involved in activities of interest to them, form relationships with youth workers and have an input into decisions that affect them. The study concludes by recommending a number of areas in need of further research within the Irish context, particularly the youth work relationship, the co-production of a youth public sphere and the youth cafe model. It is also recommends that research relating to youth work must consider the views of those at the centre of the process – the young people.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Outline of the Study

This dissertation explores the perspectives of young people aged 15-19 who are engaged in youth services in Dublin City, in relation to their decision to become and remain involved in youth services. Chapter One will outline the context within which the research was carried out. The rationale and research questions guiding the study will also be presented. Chapter Two provides a review of the existing literature relating to youth work. In particular, it provides an overview of youth work legislation and policy, models of youth work, young people in Ireland today and the literature relating to the distinctive features of youth work provision. Chapter Three will focus on the methodology employed in this research. It describes the sampling, data collection and analysis processes involved and presents the limitations of the study. The findings are presented in detail in Chapter Four while Chapter Five discusses the most significant findings in relation to the relevant literature and makes recommendations for future research.

1.2 Context & Rationale

Since the first major statutory initiative in youth work, The Vocational Education Act 1930, voluntary organisations have largely driven the development of youth work in Ireland (Lalor, de Roiste, & Devlin, 2007). The prevailing model, the youth club, run mainly by volunteers, began to change in the 1970s and 1980s as social problems in disadvantaged areas became more severe (Lalor et al., 2007). The Costello Report (1984), aimed at developing a coherent youth policy, led to the White Paper, In Partnership with Youth: The National Youth Policy. However, this policy was never fully implemented (Lalor, et al., 2007). The Youth Work Act 2001, influenced by the Costello Report, placed youth work on a statutory footing (Department of Education and Science (DES), 2003). Following this act, the National Youth Work Development Plan (NYWDP) 2003-2007 was produced, which outlines a strategy for the delivery of a comprehensive youth service in Ireland.

There is a limited amount of published Irish literature relating to youth work, resulting in a reliance on British and International literature, however 2006 did see the emergence of the journal Youth Studies Ireland (Forde, Kiely, & Meade, 2009). The limited Irish

literature and more abundent British and International literature have shown the positive benefits of youth work for the young people involved (Devlin & Gunning, 2009; Merton, Payne, & Smith, 2004). However, it is well documented that older teenagers participate less in youth services (City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB), 2008; DES, 2003; Powell, Geoghegan, Scanlon, & Swirak, 2010). If the "engagement and participation of young people cannot be assured, neither can the ultimate outcomes of the work" (Bamber, as cited in Harland & Morgan, 2006, pp. 5). Therefore, the focus of this research will be on 15-19 year olds who are involved in youth services, to ascertain why they became and remain involved in such services.

The emphasis on service provision in recent youth policy fails to put young people at the centre of that service provision and has led to young people being treated as passive consumers of youth services (McMahon 2009). McAuley & Brattman (2002) suggest that the limited consultation with young people in developing the NYWDP can be seen as tokenistic. In addition, the research design in the most recent independent and national study of youth work provision in Ireland, carried out by Powell et al. (2010), did not include direct consultation with young people. It is for these reasons that this research will look primarily at the views of young people. It is only they, who truly know why they became and remain involved in youth services.

1.3 Research Aim & Research Questions

The aim of this research is to explore young people's interest in becoming and remaining involved in youth services and the unique contribution youth work can make relative to other forms of youth engagement. Specifically, the research will explore a number of related research questions:

- *Why do young people, aged 15-19, become involved with youth services?*
- *Why do these young people remain involved with youth services?*
- *What does youth work offer that other activities or interests do not?*
- *What factors promote continued participation in youth work?*

1.4 Contribution of the study

The results of the study will contribute to a growing set of national and international findings in the field of youth work and will enhance the understanding of the factors

contributing to involvement in the youth work process**.** In the current climate, with a focus on outcomes, youth services are under considerable pressure to ensure that young people are engaging in services. An insight into why young people aged 15-19 become and remain involved in youth services, from the perspectives of young people themselves, will enable youth organisations to develop policies and programmes which enhance engagement. It is hoped that the exploratory nature of this study will provide the impetus for future and more in depth studies into the experience of young people involved in the youth work context in Ireland.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

There appears to be a dearth of published Irish and International literature considering the decision by young people to become and remain involved in youth services. Devlin & Gunning (2009a) briefly addressed this question in their recent study, however, it was considered only as part of their overall study. Therefore, this research will explore this question in greater detail and with a particular focus on the views of young people. This review will look at the scarce Irish literature and more abundant International literature in relation to youth work in general, focusing on the following areas:

- Youth Work Policy in Ireland: The policy context will be outlined, as this will affect the type and nature of services available to young people.

- Models of Youth work: "The gap between theory and practice in youth work must be bridged" (Spence, 2007, p. 15). Particular attention will be paid to Hurley and Treacy's (1993) Models of Youth Work as they were developed within the Irish context.

- Young People in Ireland Today: In order to understand the context within which youth work is provided, a brief overview of young people's lives in Ireland today will be given.

- Distinctive Features of Youth Work: This section will look at what are considered to be the distinctive features of youth work: voluntary participation, active involvement, informal and non-formal education, relationships, programmes and activities (Merton et al., 2004; Smith, 2002).

- Outcomes and Impact: Literature identifying the positive outcomes and impact of youth work will be discussed.

2.2 Youth Work Legislation and Policy in Ireland

The Costello Committee carried out the first prolonged examination of youth work services and policy in Ireland and published a report in 1984, outlining a framework for the provision of a comprehensive youth service, which greatly influenced the Youth Work Act 2001 (DES, 2003; Lalor et al., 2007).

The Youth Work Act 2001, (s.3) defines youth work as:

> *a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons' through their voluntary participation, and which is— (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.*

The Act provides "a legal framework for the provision of youth work programmes and services" (DES, 2003, p. 5). There is clear agreement, in Ireland and internationally, that the primary purpose of youth work is the personal and social development of young people and a fundamental concern is for their education and welfare (Merton et al., 2004; Spence, Devanney, & Noonan, 2006). A criticism of the definition of youth work provided in the Act suggests that young people would not voluntarily participate if they were aware of the importance being placed on "planned" programmes of education, a point which will be returned to below (Spence 2007).

The NYWDP 2003-2007, significantly influenced by the Youth Work Act 2001, sets out a strategy for the delivery of a comprehensive youth service in Ireland. It identifies four broad goals aimed at supporting and developing youth work at local and national level:

1. *To facilitate young people and adults to participate more fully in, and to gain optimum benefit from, youth work programmes and services.*
2. *To enhance the contirbution of youth work to social inclusion, social cohesion and active citizenship in a rapidly changing national and global context.*
3. *To put in place an expanded and enhanced infrastructure for development, support and coordination at national and local level.*
4. *To put in place mechanisms for enhancing professionalism and ensuring quality standards in youth work* (DES, 2003, p. 17).

The NYWDP then proposes the actions necessary to achieve these goals. The Plan's implementation did not begin until 2005 and in 2006 the Department of the Taoiseach (as cited in Lalor et al., 2007, pp. 280) suggested that following a review of the plan in 2008 the need for a further plan would be considered.

At EU level, the recently published *EU Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering*, advises that "youth work should be supported, recognised for its economic and social contribution, and professionalized" (European Commission, 2009, p. 21). As with the Youth Work Act 2001, the Strategy emphasises the development of young people as being of central importance in youth work.

2.3 Models of Youth Work

As increased funding for the sector has allowed for the provision of a wider range of youth services, youth work practice must be grounded in some theoretical framework (Galvin, 1995). Hurley and Treacy (1993 p. i) believed that not enough attention had been given to the "development of a theoretical base for Youth Work" and proposed four models of youth work, based on Burrell and Morgan's functionalist and interpretive paradigms (based on functionalist theory) and, radical humanism and radical structuralist paradigms (based on conflict theory). Each model has a different view of what should be contained in the programme, the nature of the youth work relationship and the extent of young people's involvement in decision-making, which in turn produce different outcomes for young people and society (Hurley & Treacy, 1993). If youth work is to reach its full potential, youth workers must be aware of what they are trying to achieve, their values and how these may influence their work (Cooper & White, 1994).

Functionalist Paradigm

"Functionalism centres its analysis on a view of society as a cohesive unit made up of interrelated institutions, all functioning to maintain society as a whole" (Hurley & Treacy, 1993). The school, family and church are examples of such institutions (Galvin, 1995).

The *Character Building Model* has a conservative role in assisting such institutions to prepare young people for specific roles in society by supporting the moral values of that society. As young people have a tendency to rebel, youth work is aimed at directing their energies in a constructive way, through their interactions with appropriate adult role

models (Cooper & White, 1994). Programmes aim to prevent deviance and prepare young people for traditional and gendered adult roles (Hurley & Treacy, 1993). Adults are the primary decision makers and usually have an authoritarian role, while young people's decision-making is limited to basic programme decisions (Hurley & Treacy, 1993).

Interpretive Paradigm

"The interpretative approach largely originated out of a response to the functionalist and structuralist approaches which neglected the role of human creativity and freedom and ignored the richness and complexity of human life" (Hurley & Treacy, 1993, p. 20).

Institutions such as the family, state or education can influence individuals. However, it is the individuals themselves who choose how to act based on this influence (Weber, as cited in Hurley & Treacy, 1993, pp. 21).

The *Personal Development Model* focuses on providing young people with opportunities to develop the skills they need to take on adult responsibility, once they have successfully passed through the youth stage (Galvin, 1995). Similar to Cooper and Whites' (1994) reform model, this model is based on a consensus view of society. It is more liberal in its ideology than the character building model, as it sees individuals as having the ability to "pursue their own interests and to make their own rational judgements" and encourages young people to take responsibility for their choices (Galvin, 1995, p. 15). Programmes seek to encourage co-operation, inter-dependence, group commitment, involvement in the community and to develop life skills while also promoting gender equality (Hurley & Treacy, 1993). Young people are involved in decision-making but adults have the final say. Both of these models of youth work could be thought of as integrative as they are primarily concerned with the socialisation of young people (Merton et al., 2004).

Radical Humanist Paradigm

The radical humanist approach tries to "…find ways in which the individual can be freed of the structural constraints and reach their full potential" (Hurley and Treacy, 1993, p. 32). The belief is that an individual's potential is limited by the structures of society and that conflict is required to bring about social transformation (Ryan, as cited in Hurley & Treacy, 1993, pp. 40).

The *Critical Social Education Model*, similar to Cooper and White's (1994) radical advocacy and radical empowerment models, sees the inequalities in society as unjust and damaging. Using consciousness-raising strategies, youth work looks to increase young people's awareness about how the dominant value system can cause them damage as a group and hinders their development by upholding the status quo (Galvin, 1995). The hope is that this will motivate them to "seek change within structures of institutions that impact negatively on their life situation" (Hurley & Treacy, 1993, p. 40). Youth workers seek to give young people power and treat them as partners in identifying and exploring issues that concern them (Hurley & Treacy, 1993).

Radical Structuralist Paradigm

Radical structuralists "emphasise the fact that radical change is built into the very nature and structure of contemporary society and they seek to provide explanations of the basic inter-relationship within the context of total social formations" (Hurley & Treacy, 1993, p. 45).

The *Radical Social Change Model,* which has a more overtly critical and revolutionary purpose (Treacy, 2009), sees young people as being a socially exploited group, marginalised by the interests of dominant economic and social groups, thereby reducing their life chances. Programmes are aimed at exploring the experiences of young people in order to show they are socially exploited and encouraging them to actively reject oppressive social institutions in the hope that they will be viewed as political activists (Hurley & Treacy, 1993).

Although a framework approach is valuable, there is now a "theoretical incompleteness" in the above models given that they were developed in the 1990's, and have not been reworked to take into account late modern theoretical developments and forms of practice (Kiely, 2009, p. 27).

2.4 Young People in Ireland Today

The last 10-15 years have seen dramatic economic, political, technological and cultural changes in Irish society, which affect both adults and young people. With increased globalisation, greater access to, and use of information and communication technology, has come a culture of consumerism and individualism (DES, 2003; Youth Service Liaison Forum, 2005). Young people are "more visible as a social group and as objects

and subjects of policy concern" (Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMYCA), 2010, p. 7). Although young people are more visible nowadays, they continue to be excluded from public spaces (Bowden, 2006; Copeland, 2004). Their personal lives are also more complex, involving a greater range of choices relating to lifestyle, relationships and sexuality (Merton et al., 2004). However, having greater choices can also bring added pressure for young people (DES, 2003). "An increasing number of young people will, at some stage, face transient difficulties due to personal circumstance" (Youth Service Liaison Forum, 2005, p. 17). Also, although it is easy to distinguish between adults and young people - not only by their faces but for example in how they speak, what they wear and the music they listen to (Holmes & Gronlund, 2005), the boundaries between youth and adulthood have become blurred, with the transition to economic and social independence occurring later for many young people (DES, 2003; MacDonald, Shildrick, Webster, & Simpson, 2005 Youth Service Liaison Forum, 2005).

Youth groups often function within such difficult contexts, dealing with young people who "…are weakly attached to school, have vague, if any, vocational aspirations, and have limited or sometimes grandiose, views of possibilities for the future" (Halpern, 2005, p. 14). Also, given Ireland's transformation from a relatively homogenous society to one which is more culturally diverse (Ruhs, 2005), an important task for youth work relates to realising the positives associated with such diversity while at the same time "countering racism and intolerance in all their forms" (DES 2003, p. 2).

These changes have dramatically altered the context within which youth work is provided, presenting both challenges and opportunities for the way it is delivered (DES, 2003). Youth workers' approaches will vary depending on many factors, one of which is the backgrounds of the young people they find themselves working with (Cooper & White, 1994). Changes in the lives of young people, and how they spend their time in late modernity mean that youth work, in order to be successful, must come up with alternative ways to attract and work with young people, particularly older teenagers (DES 2003; France & Wiles, 1997; Smith, 2001; Youth Service Liaison Forum, 2005). "Young people no longer depend on subcultural affirmation for the construction of their identities…but construct lifestyles that are as adaptable and as flexible as the world around them" (Miles, 2000, p. 160). It is important to recognise that, what works with one group of youths may not work with another, or what works with one group at one

time may not work with the same group at a different time and therefore youth work programmes need to be tailored to meet the changing needs of the particular group involved (Curriculum Development Unit, 2003; France & Wiles, 1997).

2.5 Distinctive Features of Youth Work

It is widely agreed that, what makes youth work distinct from other services for young people is its focus on voluntary participation, active involvement, relationships and informal education (Jenkinson, 2000; Merton et al., 2004; Smith, 2002). This section will consider each of these areas in more detail.

2.5.1 Voluntary Participation and Active Involvement

The voluntary engagement of young people is a central feature outlined in the Youth Work Act 2001. Given the demands on young people and the vast range of activities available to them, the voluntary nature of youth work presents the challenge of attracting and sustaining the interest and commitment of young people (DES, 2003). Their voluntary engagement is essential in building trust, respect and self-esteem (Merton et al., 2004; Ord, 2009), and interventions with young people will only be effective if the young people allow them to be (Crimmens et al., 2004).

As previously referred to, young people may be reluctant to become involved voluntarily if they believe they are, as the Youth Work Act 2001 suggests, joining up to a "planned programme of education" (Spence, 2007). However, although young people may be attracted to the informal, unstructured type of provision, research suggests that they gain the most benefit from structured programmes (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007). Therefore, it is the task of youth services to develop structured programmes which encourage young people to voluntarily participate.

Participation in youth work not only relates to "turning up", but also to having an input into the planning and running of the group, that is, more active forms of participation (Seebach, 2008; Shaw & McCulloch, 2009; Shier, 2001). Young people involved in decision-making in youth groups are more likely to become involved, feel confident to share opinions with adults and feel their opinions are valued, than those young people who are not involved in the youth work process (Youth Council for Northern Ireland, 1998). Involving young people in decision-making gives them opportunities to make choices, find solutions and to learn skills that they can transfer to other contexts (Merton

et al., 2004). In order for youth work to be successful in encouraging the voluntary and active engagement of young people, it needs to "start where young people are at", by listening, understanding, and responding to where they are coming from, that is, taking account of the aforementioned changes in young people's lifestyles, culture, interests and abilities (Spence, 2007; Youth Service Liaison Forum, 2005).

2.5.2 Relationships

For young people to participate meaningfully in the youth work process, their relationships with youth workers are paramount (Mckee, Oldfield & Poultney, 2010). Youth workers must ensure opportunities are provided for building interpersonal relationships with young people (Galvin, 1995). The success of any youth work intervention will depend on the "quality of the face-to-face relationship the worker is able to establish with young people" (Crimmens et al., 2004, p. 26). Trust and respect in this relationship are crucial (Crimmens et al., 2004). In a number of studies, young people commented on the willingness of youth workers to trust and respect them, something they had not found possible with other adults in their lives (Devlin & Gunning, 2009a; Merton et al., 2004). Furthermore, youth work has been found to have a positive impact on young people's friendships, offering them opportunities to make new friends while also contributing to their ability to understand difference that is, bridging social capital (Devlin & Gunning, 2009a, Merton et al., 2004). On youth work's contribution to social capital, Merton et al. (2004, p. 15) point out:

> *…Youth work is well positioned to make a sustained impact through the simultaneous development of relationships that connect young people with their communities so they can strengthen them (social capital) and the development of their own personal and social skills (human capital).*

Putnam (1995, p. 2) defined social capital as the "features of social life-networks, norms, and trust-that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives". Youth work contributes to the development of social capital, both bridging and bonding, by rebuilding relations between young people and adults, between young people and their communities, and between young people themselves (Bassani, 2007; Jarett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005; Merton et al., 2004; Scottish Government, 2008; Smith 2001).

The frequent portrayal of young people in the media and policy as being a "problem" (Cockburn, 2007; Panelli, Nairn, Atwool, & McCormack, 2002), fails to acknowledge that many of those problems, framed as "youth problems", are problems that are shared by adults (Barber, 2007; Jeffs & Smith, 2006). The NYWDP appears to move away from this portrayal stating that, "Young people are not a 'problem' to be solved, any more or less than adults…" (DES, 2003, p. 14). However, funding for youth work in Ireland tends to be targeted towards areas and young people classified as disadvantaged which can stigmatise those young people, while simultaneously preventing other young people and areas benefitting from the opportunities youth work can provide (Devlin & Gunning, 2009a; Jeffs & Smith, 1999). Youth work should be committed to "working from a potentiality rather than a deficiency model of the young" (Davies, 2005, p .16). A focus on "at risk" groups detracts from the ability of youth work to develop social capital (Smith, 2003). "Targeted work fuels resentment amongst those denied the service, stigmatises those who receive it and confirms in the minds of a majority the prejudices they already hold concerning groups of young people and the 'poor'" (Jeffs & Smith, 2002, p. 62). It would be to the advantage of society as a whole if youth work were universally available to all (Devlin & Gunning, 2009a).

2.5.3 Education in the Youth Work Context

Essentially youth work is an educational and developmental process, which depends on the commitment and voluntary participation of young people (National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), 2010). As learning can occur in various contexts, it is important to understand how learning occurs in the youth work context (Hurley & Treacy, 1993). Similar to formal education, non-formal education is planned; however, it usually occurs outside the school context (Youth Service Liaison Forum, 2005). Informal education is considered to be "the learning that flows from the conversations and activities involved in being members of youth and community groups..." (Jeffs & Smith, 2005, p. 5). Youth work involves both non-formal and informal education (Youth Service Liaison Forum, 2005). Youth workers' relationships with young people are the main source of learning (Smith, 2001). The success of the non-formal aspect of youth work is dependent "...upon the informality of youth work relationship building" (Spence, 2007, p. 7).

The use of words like "planned programme" and "training" in the Youth Work Act 2001 restricts youth workers' opportunities for negotiations with young people in the youth work process (Spence, 2007). However, for informal education to be successful,

planning is necessary to ensure that young people get the most from the process (Devlin & Gunning, 2009a). Jeffs & Smith (2005) advise that there are two approaches to education:

1. *Product approaches* which focus on outcome: This approach limits opportunities for democracy, group work, creative learning and dialogue/conversation.
2. *Process approaches* which focus on interaction: This approach will have more general aims and does not have a specified outcome.

In emphasising the importance of the process in youth work, it is important not to devalue its products, as these are central to, and do not necessarily get in the way of the process (Brent, 2004). However, the outcomes of projects are often not measureable or recordable but can clearly be seen (Brent, 2004). Youth work makes a fundamental contribution to the development of self-awareness, relationship building and communication skills (Merton et al., 2004). The personal and social development outcomes, that is, the "soft" outcomes, can lead to more tangible outcomes such as, re-engagement with formal education, reduction in drug-taking or criminal activity, or finding a job (Merton et al., 2004). The flexibility and responsiveness of youth work are what makes it valuable, so predetermined targets are not necessary in order to achieve outcomes (Brent, 2004).

2.5.4 Programmes

Opportunities for decision-making, relationship development and informal learning take place in non-formal settings, through young people's engagement in a range of activities such as recreational and sporting activities, spiritual development programmes, welfare and wellbeing programmes, intercultural awareness activities or programmes targeted at specific groups (Curriculum Development Unit, 2003; DES, 2003). What all of these activities have in common is their focus on the process (DES, 2003). How programmes are facilitated and engaged in is just as important as what the programmes are or where they take place (Devlin & Gunning, 2009a).

Programmes focusing on the development of broad skills and knowledge, that are unrelated to "issues" in the young person's life can inadvertently help young people with difficulties they may have (Halpern, 2005; Merton et al., 2004). Young people are more open to interventions targeted at issues of importance to them rather than those issues

that are of a concern to youth workers or youth organisations (Crimmens et al., 2004). With respect to the goals of interventions, many youth workers believe that target and issue driven youth work can damage the belief that negotiation should take place (Crimmens et al., 2004). "…Open and generic work needs to be afforded a far higher priority – and so-called 'issue-based' work needs to be more closely interrogated as to the benefits it brings" (Smith, 2001, p. 1).

2.6 Outcomes and Impact

As discussed throughout this review, research has found that youth work positively contributes to young people's personal and social development, in terms of their confidence, self-esteem, opportunities for relationship-building, development of practical skills and ability to seek advice, make decisions and understand difference. It also positively contributes to communities and society more generally (Devlin & Gunning, 2009a; Merton et al., 2004). A final point in relation to the recent literature, relates to the notion of youth work having a diversionary purpose. There appears to be little reference to this is a key purpose of youth work, other than to suggest that it can contribute to reducing young people's involvement in antisocial behaviour, drug-taking and crime. Furthermore, nowhere in the Irish Youth Work Act 2001 or the NYWDP does it mention the word diversion. However, in Devlin and Gunning's (2009a, p. 48) study, when asked explicitly what they believed the purpose of youth work is, the majority of young people pointed to the "diversionary dimension". This will be examined further to ascertain the extent to which this diversionary element impacts on young people's decision to become and remain involved in youth work.

2.7 Conclusion

Despite the complexity of young people's lives in late modernity, this review has shown that there is ample evidence to support the claim that the distinctive nature of youth work can lead to positive outcomes for the young people involved. There is little published research relating to youth work in the Irish context. This study aims to address this gap by considering, from the perspectives of those at the centre of the process, that is, the young people, what factors contribute to their decision to become and remain involved in youth services. The following chapter will outline the methodology used in this study.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the research design, sample and the methods used to collect the data in this study. It will explain the rationale for, and implementation of, the data collection methods chosen, as well as the approach used to analyse the data. The ethical issues related to this study will be considered and finally, the limitations of the research methodology will be discussed.

3.2 Research Design

A multiple case study research design was chosen in order to provide rich information that was grounded in the local context (Bryman, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although case studies usually involve the intensive study of one case, multiple cases can be used, providing each case is intensively studied (Denscombe, 2003; Gerring, 2007; Stake, 1995). The purpose of the case study design was "to provide a holistic description of what actually occurred at each of the program sites" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 11). The rationale for this research design was two-fold: 1) to improve theory building by allowing comparisons to be made while also enhancing the reliability and validity of the results (Baharein & Noor, 2008; Bryman, 2004) and, 2) during the preliminary stage of this research, key informants advised the researcher that the summer months usually see a decline in attendance. As the data collection was due to commence during this time, the intensive study of two sites would ensure an in-depth insight into young people's decisions to become and remain involved in youth services. The case studies involved multiple data collection strategies, which are outlined below.

The case study sites were two youth services in Dublin city, both managed independently by voluntary boards of management under the auspices of the CDYSB. A more detailed description of each site is given in Chapter Four.

3.3 Access and Entry to the Field

The researcher made contact with numerous youth services in an attempt to gain access. Provisional access was obtained to three services however, when it came to the data collection stage, summer programme commitments in two locations meant the research

could not be accommodated. The third site advised that the service was not at an appropriate stage of development to take part in the research. However, from this process the researcher made contact with two CDYSB liaison officers who advised of two sites interested in taking part in the research. The researcher emailed the managers in both sites outlining the purpose of the study and the planned methodology and followed these emails up with phone calls. The researcher then met with youth workers in both sites to explain the research. They agreed to inform the young people about the research to ascertain if they were interested in taking part. The young people in both sites were willing to participate in the research.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

A multi-methods approach to the data collection most suited this case study design. A case study design "invites and encourages" such an approach as it produces different kinds of data that can improve the quality of the research (Denscombe, 2003, p. 31). Using both qualitative and quantitative methods allowed for a more intensive examination of each case (Gerring, 2007), while facilitating "the validation of data through triangulation" (Denscombe, 2003, p. 38).

The methods chosen include:

- Examination of Documents
- Observations
- Questionnaires
- Focus Groups

A brief explanation of why these methods were chosen will now be given and each will be discussed in detail below. An examination of documents relating to each site gave the researcher an insight into the context within which youth work was provided. The observations allowed the researcher to witness first-hand the interactions occurring within each site rather than relying solely on the accounts of the young people or written information about the settings (Patton, 2002). They also provided an opportunity to speak with key informants. In addition to providing quantitative data relating to young people's decisions to become and remain involved in youth services, the data emerging from the questionnaires provided the researcher with a means to structure the focus groups. The focus groups were used to verify the data gleaned from the other data

collection methods and to provide qualitative data relating to young people's decisions to become and remain involved in youth services.

3.4.1 Examination of Documents

Establishing how documents function within organisations, is an important part of social research (Prior, 2003). All documents were assessed for their quality and relevance to the research topic using Scott's (as cited in Bryman, 2004, pp. 381) four criteria for assessing the quality of documents:

- ***Authenticity.*** *Is the evidence genuine and of unquestionable origin?*
- ***Credibility.*** *Is the evidence free from error and distortion?*
- ***Representativeness.*** *Is the evidence typical of its kind and, if not, is the extent of its untypicality known?*
- ***Meaning****. Is the evidence clear and comprehensible?*

The researcher examined the mission and vision statements in both locations and information relating to the youth work programmes on the websites of both services. In the first site, an independent service evaluation report (2009) was used as documentary data. Reports from both services to the CDYSB, relating to levels of participation were also consulted, as was the CDYSB Youth Count Report (2008).

3.4.2 Observations

The second stage of data collection involved unstructured observations (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000) in each site over a 4 week period. Observation has been defined as "the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 79). As well as providing the researcher with a clear and holistic understanding of the context within which the individuals interact, the personal knowledge and impressions gained during observations were useful when interpreting the other data collected (Patton, 2002).

The researcher took on what Gold (as cited in Kawulich, 2005, para. 21) termed an "observer as participant stance" whereby participants were aware the researcher was observing and the researcher was able to participate in the group if desired, however the primary task was to collect data. This stance is considered the most ethical form of observation, as participants are aware that observations are underway (Kawulich, 2005). The researcher used the literature review and documentary data as the basis for identifying the features of the situation to be observed (Denscombe, 2003). The

researcher spent five occasions observing in each site, ranging from two to three hours on each occasion. On three occasions, the researcher observed in the drop-in space[1] and the other two occasions were spent observing structured groups. The number of occasions the researcher spent in each site was aimed at retaining the "naturalness of the setting" (Denscombe, 2003, p. 203). Detailed field notes were written up immediately after each observation.

3.4.3 Questionnaires

An online self-completion questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used to gather quantitative data relating to why the young people got involved and stay involved in youth services. This data was also used to provide a structure for the focus groups.

Creating the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was devised using the online survey tool, www.surveymonkey.com, and questions were based on the review of the literature and the documentary data. The researcher did not ask any open-ended questions as they can be overly demanding of the respondent's time and may have made participation in the study less attractive (Cohen, et al., 2000).

Piloting the Questionnaire

Before piloting, the text from the questionnaire was tested for its readability to ensure it would be easily understood by the young people (Simpson, 2009). Following this the questionnaire was piloted with three young people who are involved in youth services in order to ensure the questions operated well (Bryman, 2004). Piloting the questionnaire increased the reliability, validity and practicability of it (Oppenheim, as cited in Cohen et al., 2000, pp. 261). Some minor changes were made before its administration. For example, to eliminate unintended bias, the questionnaire was designed so that each time it was opened by a new respondent, the answer choices appeared in a different order, that is, randomised (Surveymonkey.com, 2010).

Administration of Questionnaire

The questionnaire administration took place over a period of four weeks. Youth workers within each site were provided with a link to the survey and were asked to invite young

[1] The terms youth cafe and drop-in will be used interchangeably throughout.

people to participate while in the centre with a view to increasing response rates. Also, with youth workers present the young people had the opportunity to ask for assistance if necessary. In the third week, youth workers were asked to forward the questionnaire link to young people who had not attended the centre in the previous three weeks.

3.4.4 Focus Groups

The final method of data collection was focus groups, which allowed participants to interact with each other so that their views emerged (Cohen et al., 2000). Given that youth work takes place in group settings, the focus groups provided the researcher with an opportunity to examine the norms and practices of the group (Share, 2008). It has been suggested that in focus groups, participants may feel more relaxed and less inhibited in the presence of friends (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001). It was for this reason that both focus groups consisted of young people who have been involved in structured groups together.

3.5 Sampling

As it has been found that older teenagers participate less in youth services, (CDYSB, 2008; DES, 2003; Powell et al., 2010) the focus of this research was on young people aged 15-19 who are engaged with youth services, to ascertain why they became and remain involved, with the aim that the findings may point to ways of attracting and sustaining the engagement of older teenagers.

In the hope of learning more about the issues that were central to the study and to ensure information rich cases were chosen, purposive sampling was used (Denscombe, 2003; Patton, 2002). Youth workers in each site were asked to provide young people with information about the research and to seek out volunteers to take part in the questionnaire and the focus groups.

3.5.1 Questionnaire Sample

A total of 44 surveys were completed.[2] Twenty-three (52.3%) respondents were male and twenty-one (47.7%) were female. Ten (22.7%) respondents were aged 15, nineteen (43.2%) were aged 16, two (4.5%) were aged 17, five (11.4%) were aged 18 and eight (18.2%) were aged 19. Seventeen (38.6%) respondents had been involved in youth

[2] See Appendix C: Response Summary

services for up to a year while twenty-seven (61.4%) were involved for longer than one year.

3.5.2 Focus Group Sample

Morgan (as cited in Cohen et al., 2000, pp. 288) suggests there should be between four and twelve people in a focus group and advises over-recruiting by twenty percent in order to allow for people not "turning up". Although the researcher did over-recruit, only three of the eight young people recruited for the focus group in Site One turned up on the day. This focus group was made up of two females age 15 and one male aged 16. Each of these young people had been involved for one year or less.

In Site Two, nine young people took part in the focus group, made up of five males and four females. One male was 16 yrs old. Three females and three males were aged 18 and one male and one female were aged 19. Apart from one male who had just recently become involved, the remaining participants had been involved in youth services for more than two years.

3.6 Analysis of Data

Documents: As recommended by Denscombe (2003) the researcher used content analysis to analyse the contents of the documents. As such, the texts were broken down into smaller component parts, categorised and coded in parallel with the data emerging from the literature.

Observations: First the researcher wrote up detailed field notes describing the physical setting, individuals within the setting and interactions and activities within the setting (Merriam, as cited in Kawulich, 2005). This data was coded and categorised in relation to the data emerging from the questionnaires and focus groups. The qualitative data analysis was undertaken while data collection was ongoing (Glaser & Strauss, as cited in Charmaz, pp. 11).

Questionnaires: The quantitative data generated was analysed using an online software package (www.surveymonkey.com). As it was a structured questionnaire, the data was pre-coded. The questionnaire set up did not allow incomplete questionnaires to be submitted. The findings were interpreted in relation to the other three methods of data collection and the literature.

Focus Groups: The focus groups were recorded (using audio tape) and then transcribed, which increased familiarity with the data (Bryman, 2004). Data analysis was an ongoing process of reading, asking questions of, and writing notes about the data (Bryman, 2004). Once familiar with the data, coding and categorising commenced. The data from each of the methods were cross-checked against each other, that is, triangulation (Bryman, 2004; Patton, 2002).

3.7 Ethical Issues

The research complied with the Ethical Guidelines of the Sociological Association of Ireland (2008-2010). All potential participants were given detailed information about the research so that an informed decision could be made about whether they wished to participate. All the young people involved partook in this research voluntarily. The anonymity, confidentiality and privacy of participants were respected throughout and guarantees given have been adhered to.

This issue of parental consent applied to those young people under 18 years old. In both sites, the management considered the survey and observations to be within the youth service's programme, therefore consent from parents was implied. As such, provided there was no identifying information or issues of sensitivity in the questionnaire and that quotes from the observations were not used in the write up, the researcher was not required to obtain direct parental consent. Prior to questionnaire administration, the service managers, acting in the interests of the young people and their parents, examined it to ensure it met the necessary criteria. In order to ensure anonymity a web link collector was used, which meant, names and email/IP addresses of participants were not saved when responses were submitted.

The researcher was required to obtain parental consent to allow young people under the age of 18 to partake in the focus groups (see Appendix B: Copy of consent letter). The researcher ensured that focus group participants agreed that discussions would remain confidential, and were reminded of their responsibility to respect each other's wishes in relation to confidentiality (Bloor et al., 2001).

3.8 Limitations

Case studies are open to criticism in relation to the extent to which generalisations can be made from the findings (Denscombe, 2003). The researcher is aware that the limited population and geographical location studied, is not representative of young people's perspectives generally. However, it is hoped the findings, while not aiming to be representative, will provide an insight into the opinions of young people in relation to why they became and remain involved in youth services.

As the research was carried out during the summer months, when there is usually a fall-off in attendance, the sample used may not be representative of young people who use the youth services during the school term. However, the researcher believes that having chosen information rich case study sites, the data obtained should also be rich.

This research relates only to young people who are presently motivated and involved with youth services. It says nothing about young people who do not engage or are sporadically involved. This may be an area of interest for future research.

The number of participants in the focus group in Site One may also be considered a limitation. However, as the information gleaned from this focus group was similar to the findings from Site Two it was not deemed necessary to hold a third focus group. It was also important to respect the voluntary nature of the youth work setting. Despite its limited size, this study may lead to further and more in-depth studies involving young people.

3.9 Conclusion

This study employed a case study design, using multiple data collection strategies, in two youth work sites in Dublin City. The exploratory nature of this study was aimed at giving an in-depth insight into older teenagers' decisions to become and remain involved in youth services. The following chapter will present the findings from this research.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings from the study that relate to the young people's decisions to become and remain involved in youth services.[3] The findings are presented in accordance with the research questions outlined in Chapter One, and are based on themes emerging from the data. The first section profiles both case study sites. The second section looks at the young people's reasons for initial involvement while the third section presents the findings relating to their reasons for continued involvement in youth services. The final section outlines some suggestions made by the young people regarding how youth services might engage more young people their age.

4.2 Profile of Youth Work Sites

4.2.1. Site One

This youth centre, located to the south of Dublin City and built initially as a parish community centre, prides itself on being "a community resource". Its mission is to provide "pursuits, amenities, programmes and activities which seek to develop young people personally, socially, educationally and recreationally, in a high quality, safe environment that respects its users". A profile of the area where this youth service is located is presented in Table 1 below. In recent years, the centre has been refurbished and is equipped with modern technology including music recording facilities and an indoor soccer/basketball court.

The centre is managed by a voluntary board of management and there is one young person on the board. There is a centre manager, a project leader, two youth workers, a drugs education worker and a media/arts officer. As part of the youth work programme the centre provides group programmes and a youth cafe service. Fifty percent of the young people using this service in 2007 were aged 15-19 compared to an average of thirty-two percent across the 66 CDYSB funded projects in Dublin city (CDYSB, 2008).[4]

An independent evaluation in 2009, carried out on behalf of the CDYSB, put this service forward as a "model of best practice in terms of targeting 'at risk' young people, offering

[3] See Appendix C: Questionnaire Response Summary.
[4] Figures only relate to CDYSB funded projects at the centre.

programmes with high levels of participation and progression…", also noting that this targeting of "at risk" young people is balanced with "the provision of services to young people not 'at risk'" in the hope that such young people will be positive role models.

Table 1: Location Profile of Case Study Sites (CDYSB, 2008)

	Site 1	Site 2
Site Location	Dublin City (South)	Dublin City (West)
Population of young people aged 15-19 in area in 2006	843	1182
SAHRU Deprivation Index Score in 2006[5]	3 Electoral Divisions scored: 10 1 Electoral Division scored: 9	6 Electoral Divisions scored: 10 1 Electoral Division scored: 8
CDYSB Funded Projects in area	1	4

4.2.2 Site Two

This purpose built centre located to the west of Dublin City, was developed following a European Commission initiative, which found there was a need for a "dedicated space for children and young people".[6] A profile of the area where this youth service is located is presented in Table 1 above. Its mission is to provide "...programmes, services, facilities and a place for the most at risk" and the service works "in partnership with the community from its unique facility where all children, young people, staff and the wider community are respected, accepted, listened to and cared for."

The centre is run by a board of directors and has two young people on the board. There is a project leader, three youth workers, a substance misuse worker, a media project

[5] For an explanation of the SAHRU Deprivation Index, see CDYSB 2008, pp. 13. A score of '1' indicates a relatively affluent area, while a score of '10' indicates the highest level of deprivation.

[6] To ensure the anonymity of participants, the details of this initiative have not been given.

worker and other facilitators who provide services to the youth work programme. The youth work programme in this site also provides group programmes and a drop-in service. Twenty-nine percent of the young people using this service in 2007 were aged 15-19, which is slightly below the average of thirty-two percent across the 66 CDYSB funded project in Dublin City (CDYSB, 2008).[7]

4.3 Reasons for Initial Involvement

4.3.1 Peer Relationships

The survey found that for the majority of young people (56.8%)[8], the most influential factor in their decision to become involved in youth services was having friends who were members, or who joined with them (see Figure 1). This was particularly reinforced by such comments as:

> *Cos you don't wanna be there if you don't know anybody and you're just there like.* (Female, Focus Group Site 1)

Gesticulating towards the group and indicating that involvement can bring with it a real sense of belonging, two young people made the following comments:

> *I got involved cos of all yous.* (Female, Focus Group Site 1)

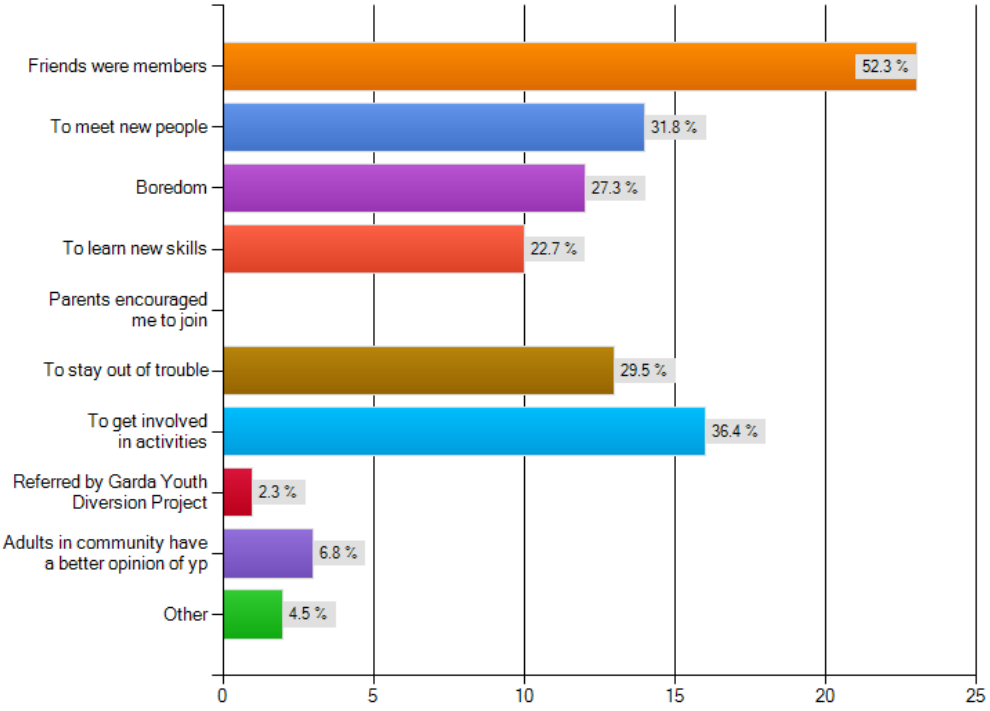
> *...the reason why I joined is cos the rest of them are already in it and then I wasn't in it, and then every Tuesday or probably Sunday and they're all like I'm going off here with (name of centre) or I'm going there and I was just left alone...* (Male, Focus Group Site 2)

Some young people (31.8%) joined "to meet new people", with females (42.9%) being more likely than males (21.7%) to join for this reason. Over half of those aged 18-19 (53.8%) indicated that they joined "to meet new people" compared to 22.6% of those aged 15-17 (see Table 2). Meeting new people did not arise in the focus group discussions as a reason for initial involvement.

[7] This is the average across four CDYSB funded projects in the area and may not accurately reflect the number of older teenagers who used the services in site 2. Figures only relate to CDYSB funded projects at the centre.

[8] This figure includes 2 young people who indicated in the "other" section that they joined because of friends.

Figure 1: Reasons for joining (more than one response possible)



4.3.2 Activities & Programmes

The activities and programmes provided by the services had a bearing on many young people's decision to become involved, with 36.4% indicating that they joined "to get involved in activities" (see Figure 1). Almost one quarter (22.7%) joined in order "to learn new skills" with 30.4% of males joining for this reason compared to 14.3% of females. Those aged 18-19 (46.2%) were more likely to join in order "to learn new skills" than those aged 15-17 (12.9%), (see Table 2).

It emerged during focus group discussions that the young people were more likely to become involved if the activities/programmes on offer were of interest to them. One young person in Site Two, whose friends were not involved, joined because he was interested in the programme. When asked if they would get involved in other groups that might be on offer, one young female in Site One said:

It depends what kind of one's there is like...

When a young person enjoyed themselves the first time they attended the centre, they were more likely to return regularly making attending part of a weekly routine, as the following comment suggests:

> *...remember I was like, no I don't wanna go down cos I thought it would have been boring...and then when Marie was saying 'come down to just see what it's like' and then I came down and once I came down, I wanted to keep comin down.* (Female, Focus Group Site 1)

Table 2: Reasons for joining by age group

	Age 15-17 (%)	Age 18-19 (%)
Friends were members	51.6	53.8
To meet new people	22.6	53.8
Boredom	29	23.1
To learn new skills	12.9	46.2
Parents encouraged me to join	0	0
To stay out of trouble	41.9	0
To get involved in activities	32.3	46.2
Referred by the Garda Youth diversion project	3.2	0
Adults in the community would have a better opinion of young people	6.5	7.7
Other	3.2	7.7

(More than one response possible, therefore percentages do not total to 100. All cases have been included)

4.3.3 An Alternative Focus and Activity

A number of focus group participants indicated that getting involved in youth services offered them an alternative to having nothing to do. One young person explained how a youth worker facilitated her in doing a school project and she then recruited friends to get involved as opposed to "hanging around the road" (Female, Focus Group Site 2). Another said:

> *It was something else for us to do because we were practically doing nothing...just an opportunity for us to get involved in something.* (Male, Focus Group Site 2)

The data emerging from the survey reinforced the idea that youth work's capacity to provide young people with an alternative focus or activity can be a factor in their decision to become involved. The researcher included the categories, "boredom" and "to stay out of trouble", within this overall theme: 27.3% of respondents joined because of "boredom" and 29.5% joined "to stay out of trouble" (see Figure 1). Those aged 15-17 (41.9%) were significantly more likely to get involved "to stay out of trouble" than those aged 18-19 (0%), (see Table 2).

4.3.4 Youth Cafe/Drop-in service

It emerged during observations, and through conversations with key informants, that drop-in services are crucial to the initial engagement of young people, and for their progression onto structured programmes. The drop-in spaces in both sites are bright and comfortable with access to various facilities such as internet, computer gaming, jukeboxes, pool and table tennis, and wireless television screens. Both sites also offer snacks and drinks.

In Site One, the drop-in times for 14-19 year olds, usually run two nights per week but has been reduced to one night per week until mid-august, due to a recent reduction in attendance. The young people in the focus group advised that they would prefer if it were still on two nights per week. In Site Two, the youth cafe runs three to four nights per week for the 15+ age group.

Survey participants were asked about hobbies and interests in their spare time. The following are activities they reported doing more than twice a week: 45.5% play sports, 97.7% hang out with friends, 77.3% watch television, 52.3% enjoy music/art, 27.3% play computer games and 63.6% use the internet. These are all activities provided during the drop-in times in both services. The researcher noted during observations that the drop-in service gave young people the opportunity to meet with friends and do activities of interest to them; both important factors found to contribute to young people's initial involvement.

During drop-in times in both sites, youth workers engaged in conversations with the young people while joining them in various activities. Key informants advised that this opportunity to build relationships with young people is the first step in the process of

getting them involved in structured programmes. The drop-in services are used to ascertain what activities young people are interested in with a view to putting in place structured programmes for those interested.

The following figures indicate that drop-in services have the potential to engage more young people, at one time, than structured groups. The 2009 report to the CDYSB from Site One indicated that a total of 88 males and 76 females used the senior drop-in over 51-week period with an average of 25 young people attending per night. The 2009 report for Site Two indicated that 32 males and 15 females used the senior drop-in over a 32-week period with an average of 40 young people attending per night. Site Two also ran a youth cafe for 10-25 year olds. 40 males and 22 females attended this over a 12-week period with an average of 53 young people attending per night. However, during observations it was noted that, in both sites, the numbers in attendance did not reach these levels suggesting that other factors may influence young people's decision to attend during the summer months. Key informants advised that a fall-off in attendance is common during this period. The researcher suspected that the fine weather may have been a factor and addressed this with the young people in the focus groups.

When the young people in Site Two were asked if the good weather makes a difference to people coming, the following were the replies:

> *Yeah, it would.* (Male)
>
> *Yeah we decided to go camping.* (Male)

The young people in Site One were asked if they knew why more young people had not been attending the cafe recently. Their replies suggest that the weather affects young people's decision to attend:

> *Because it's the summer, you know when it's nice out, you wanna go to the beach or just the park or something instead of comin in here like.* (Female)
>
> *There does usually be loadsa people like when ye start back school and when the weathers bad.* (Female)

The independent evaluation of Site One pointed to the absence of a space outdoors that could be used to deliver programmes during the summer. The following points suggest

that, if youth workers arrange an alternative to being inside in the good weather young people may choose to attend:

> *...when the weather was really good one day like she brought us to the museum during the day instead of having our meeting at night like.* (Female, Focus Group Site 2)

> *Yeah we went fishing and on a speed boat as well like instead of having a meeting on a Tuesday.* (Male, Focus Group Site 2)

4.4 Reasons for Continued Involvement

The general finding within this section relates to the creation of a youth public sphere so young people can become active citizens through social engagement.

4.4.1 Having a Space for Young People & an Alternative Focus

As there appears to be a link between them, the researcher has included, under this theme, the following categories from various survey questions "a good place to hang out", "it's a safe place", "keeps me out of trouble" (Q.14), "to spend free time in a positive way" (Q.10), "having a place to go" and "having a space for young people" (Q.6).[9]

The most common response given for continued involvement was "a good place to hang out" (45.5%), with 58.1% of those aged 15-17 saying this compared to only 15.4% of those aged 18-19 (see Table 3). One quarter said they stay involved because "it's a safe place" (see Figure 2). The majority (56.8%) indicated that what they most enjoy about being involved is "having a place to go" with over two-thirds (67.7%) of those aged 15-17 saying this compared to less than one third (30.8%) of those aged 18-19. One quarter of young people said they most enjoy "having a space for young people" (see Figure 3).

Almost one third of survey respondents (31.8%) reported that they remain involved because it keeps them out of trouble, with those aged 15-17 (41.9%) significantly more likely to say this than those aged 18-19 (7.7%), (see Table 3). Of those who said they stay involved because it keeps them out of trouble, 78.6% also reported staying involved because "it's a safe place", "a good place to hang out" or both. Many young people

[9] See Appendix A & C

(45.5%) indicated that since joining, they have learned to spend their free time in a positive way.

Focus group discussions supported the importance of such factors in young people's choice to remain involved in youth services, as the following comments illustrate:

> *Yeah for something to do like, there's nothing really to do out...stay out of trouble.* (Female, Focus Group Site 1)

> *Yeah like...it's just a place to go*. (Female, Focus Group Site 1)

In both focus groups, the areas where the centres are located were mentioned as a factor in young people's continued involvement and point to the need to create a youth public sphere:

> *Basically if you look around (area name), there is nothing there for youth so that would be one reason, this is here, so we may as well use it...(*Male, Focus Group Site 2)

> *...ye realise that there's actually something here in (area name) that's like, not bad, like ye can go and enjoy yourself and won't have to worry like, there's always a place to go.* (Female, Focus Group Site 1)

This young person was asked what she worries about. Her reply suggests that the provision of a youth service may counter the negative stigma related to the area:

> *Trouble outside cos (name of area) is not the perfect place to be so….people don't have to look at (name of area) as a bad place anymore cos places like this.*

A common theme emerging was that young people feel comfortable to be themselves and not be judged in the youth centres. The following comments suggest that through their engagement young people can construct a positive identity:

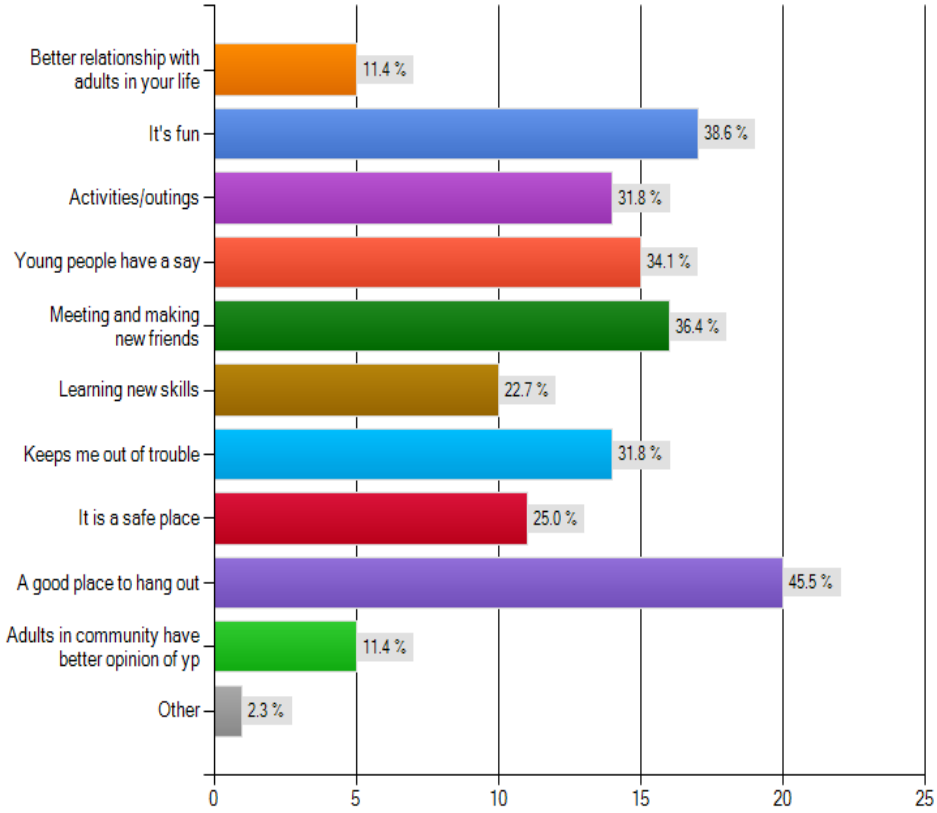
> *Ye feel comfortable coming down like...you're just gonna enjoy yourself and ye know ye will.* (Female, Focus Group Site 1)

> *...and like it doesn't matter whether you're eh small, tall, squeaky voice… just be yourself and no-one will care or anything, but where on the road like, that's it you're gone…ye have to be the hard man.* (Male, Focus Group Site 2)

> *It doesn't feel like you are going into a building, it's like you are going into an atmosphere…you know when you go in the door you're not gonna be hassled,*

*you're not gonna have to like kinda put on a face, you can just go in and that's it, and be yourself. (*Female, Focus Group Site 2)

Figure 2: Reasons for staying involved (more than one response possible)



4.4.2 Activities & Programmes: Fun, Learning & Opportunities

The research found that the provision of activities and programmes of interest is also a factor in many young people's decision to remain involved in youth services. Over one third of survey respondents (38.6%) indicated that they remain involved because "it's fun", (see Figure 2). Those aged 15-17 (45.2%) were more likely to indicate this as a reason for continued involvement than those aged 18-19 (23.1%), (see Table 3). Almost one third said they stay involved because of "activities/outings" (31.8%), and 22.7% said what they most enjoy about being involved is the "outings" (see Figure 3).

The following are some of the comments made by the young people in the focus group in Site One relating to why they stay involved:

The enjoyment. (Male)

It gives you something to do that's fun. (Female)

As well as being involved in their structured group, the young people in the focus group in Site Two get involved in other activities they are interested in, when they are run in the centre:

> *...some of us were doing drumming lessons and guitar lessons, Ben is doing cooking classes…Colm is doing media group and there was a make-up course that we were doing as well...ah there's loads*. (Female)

They also discussed at length, and with great pride, the activities their group has been involved in since joining. These included activities at local, national and European level. The activities ranged from fundraising in the centre, to health promotion activities at national level to cultural exchanges. As one young male put it:

> *Our main goal was to do kind of activities in our area but since then we've kind of grown and now we are doing it at national and European level as well.*

Learning new skills was found to be a more influential factor in the 18-19 year olds (53.8%) decision to remain involved in youth services than for those aged 15-17 (9.7%), (see Table 3). When young people were asked what they enjoy most about being in a youth group, 29.5% indicated that they enjoy learning new things (see Figure 3), with 19.4% of those aged 15-17 saying this compared to 53.8% of those aged 18-19.

This was reinforced in the focus group in Site Two, which consisted of mainly 18-19 year olds. A number of young people made comments relating to learning when asked why they remain involved:

> *Learning new things and then like learning even more about myself, and what I can achieve.* (Female)

> *Learning different things about like ways of life and all*. (Female)

When asked what the difference is in learning in the youth group and school, one young person commented:

> *You learn it better here because you're out doing it instead of sitting in talking about it.* (Female, Focus Group 2)

The young people in Site One were asked if being involved in the youth service has helped them in any way. One young person commented:

> *Ye feel more confident, cos ye can talk to more people.* (Female)

This is borne out in the data emerging from the survey. When asked if they have learned anything since joining, 40.9% said they learned to have confidence in themselves. Females (52.4%) were more likely to have learned to have confidence in themselves than males (30.4%). Almost half of those involved for longer than one year (48.1%) said they had learned to have confidence in themselves compared to 29.4% of those involved for less than one year. Those aged 18-19 (61.5%) were more likely to say this than those aged 15-17 (32.3%).

The confidence and opportunities gained, through their continued involvement, were important factors in many young people's decision to remain involved, as the following passage from the focus group in Site Two illustrates:

> *It has helped us communicate ourselves better, and advocate for what we believe in and stuff like that, gives us a voice, like we have a lot of session talks like so they give us confidence.* (Male)
>
> *Opportunities, endless opportunities.* (Female)
>
> *Yeah opportunities and confidence.* (Male)

These young people suggested that the opportunities they get through their involvement would not be available to them elsewhere:

> *...not in school anyway, you wouldn't get the opportunities you get in (name of centre) in school.* (Male)

The following comment was made by a young person who had just received a call in relation to appearing on an upcoming RTE television show:

> *...like I used to be really shy and I mean to think of the way, how shy I could have been right now like if I'd never have joined here...I ended up getting a phone-call and everything about it, which is something I'd never have gotten the opportunity to do or had the confidence to do...(Female, Site 2)*

Table 3: Reason for staying involved by age group

	Age 15-17 (%)	Age 18-19 (%)
Better relationship with adults in your life	9.7	23.1
It's fun	45.2	23.1
Activities/Outings	35.5	23.1
Young people have a say	29	46.2
Meeting and making new friends	29	53.8
Learning new skills	9.7	53.8
Keeps me out of trouble	41.9	7.7
It is a safe place	25.8	23.1
A good place to hang out	58.1	15.4
Adults in the community have a better opinion of young people	9.7	15.4
Other	0	7.7

(More than one response possible, therefore percentages do not total to 100. All cases have been included)

4.4.3 Relationships: Friends & Youth Workers

The third most common reason young people gave for remaining involved in youth services was "meeting with and making new friends" (36.4%), (see Figure 2). Young people aged 18-19 (53.8%) were more likely to remain involved for this reason than those aged 15-17 (29%), (see Table 3). Many (43.2%) said that what they most enjoy about being involved is "meeting with and making new friends" (see Figure 3), with 53.8% of 18-19 year olds saying this compared to 32.3% of 15-17 year olds.

Relationships also emerged as a common theme during focus group discussions. Many young people mentioned "friends", "the people" or "meeting new people" as reasons for their continued involvement:

> *We have like our own little family within our group like, and that's the way we are.* (Female, Focus Group Site 2)

> *...for the people that are in the building itself...as I said there is a good sense of community and you do make friendships from coming up here.* (Male, Focus Group Site 2)

> *Cos your friends are here and the workers are nice.* (Female, Focus Group Site 1)

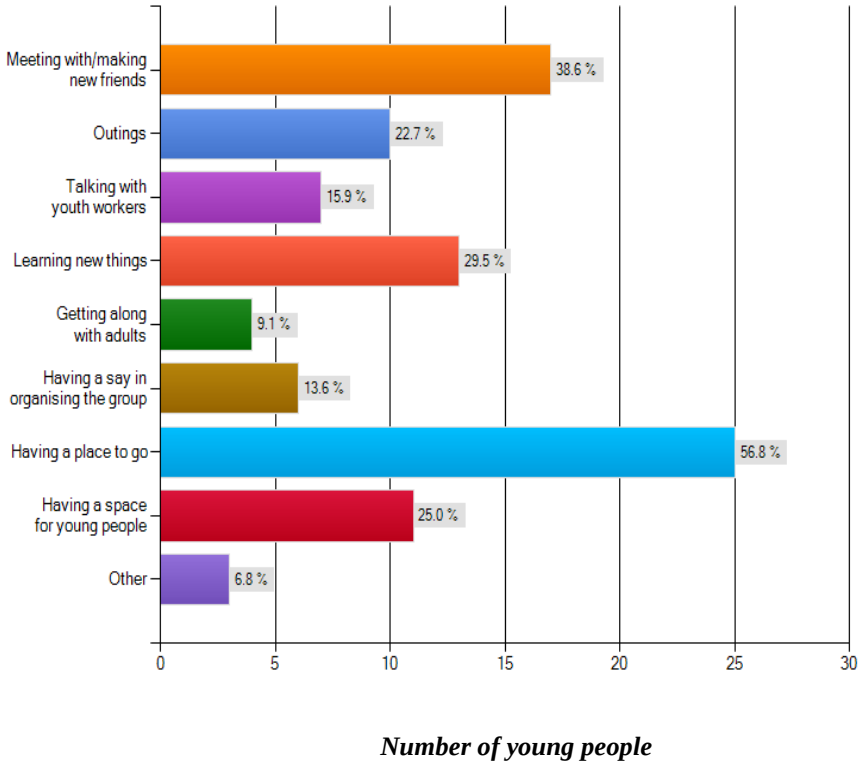
It emerged during focus group discussions that, for many young people, their relationship with youth workers is a factor in their continued involvement. The young people were asked what they enjoy and what makes them keep coming back, given everything that is available to them nowadays. The following two passages indicate the importance of the relationship with youth workers in maintaining involvement:

> *The workers are real nice to you and all, they talk to ye and all like.* (Female)
> *Ye get on with them.* (Male) (Focus Group Site 1)

> *The youth workers, we get on so great with them like.* (Male)
> *It's their attitude.* (Female) (Focus Groups Site 2)

The young people in Site Two also explained how they found it difficult when two of the youth workers involved with them left. One young person advised that the group took a "hard knock" when that happened. When asked to compare their relationship with youth workers to their relationships with other adults in their lives most survey respondents (90.9%) said that youth workers always listen to them and treat them with respect. A large majority (84.1%) said that youth workers always give young people advice, and information and 81.8% said that youth workers always give young people "a say" and that they can always trust youth workers.

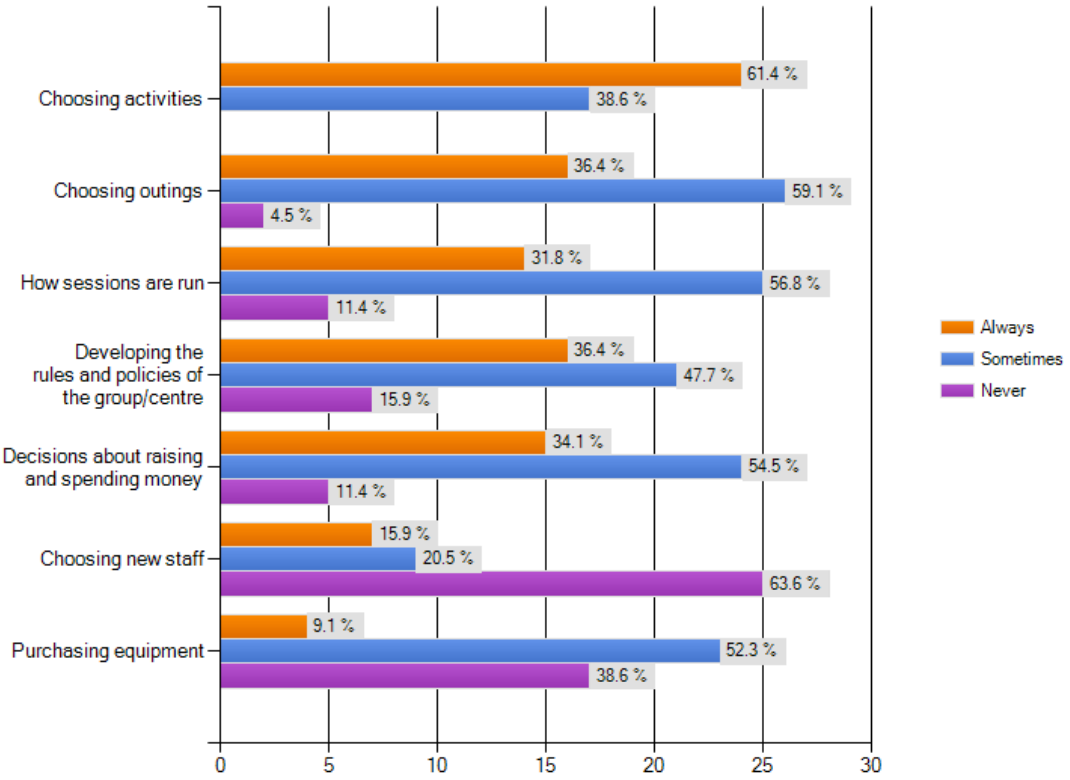
Figure 3: What young people most enjoy about being involved (more than one response possible)



4.4.4 Decision-making

Over one third (34.1%) of survey respondents reported staying involved because, "young people have a say" (see Figure 2). This was a more influential factor for those aged 18-19 (46.2%) than for those aged 15-17 (29%), (see Table 3). Those involved for longer than one year (44.4%) were more likely to indicate this as a reason for continued involvement than those who were involved for less than one year (17.6%), (see Table 4).

Figure 4: Decisions young people have a say in:



Number of young people

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of input into various service decisions. Apart from "choosing activities", which the majority (61.4%) said they always have "a say" in, and "choosing new staff", which the majority (63.6%) said they never have "a say", respondents were more likely to say they sometimes have "a say" in all other decisions (see Figure 4).

When their responses to other questions are considered, it would appear that many young people may be satisfied with this level of input into decisions. For example, when compared to relationships with other adults in their lives, 90.4% of young people said

youth workers always listen to them and 81.8% said youth workers always "give young people a say". Also in relation to the statement, "youth work gives me the chance to have my opinion heard" over 90% were at least in agreement with this statement.[10]

This was supported in the focus group discussions. Despite the fact that the youth committee in Site One has recently disbanded, when asked if they would like to have more of an input into decision-making, the young people seemed happy with their current input:

> *Well ye kinda do already, cos all ye have to do is talk to (name of youth workers) and they'll see if they can facilitate it for you.* (Male)

In their report to the CDYSB in 2009, Site Two stated that in the development of the drop-in service, young people were included in the planning, design, costing and buying and that all programmes are developed and reviewed in consultation with young people. This level of input into decision-making was supported by the young people in the focus group:

> *Like there's nothing really that doesn't come back to us at some stage...from the times of drop ins, what goes on in the drop ins, how to get people in…everything is down to us and our opinions, so it's brilliant that way.* (Female)

However, in Site Two the young people did speak about their current lack of input into the recruitment and selection process. One young person commented as follows:

> *There's one thing that we haven't got input into but we're trying to in the future, and that's for recruitment and selection of people...because it is the people that we are going to be dealing with...on a daily basis.* (Male)

Another young person explained that this group will have an input into the recruitment process in the near future:

> *They are starting up a recruitment process...and (name of group) is going to have the chance to partake in it...not that we will have the final say but we'll have our input on the type of questions that are being asked to the person that's coming getting interviewed, so I think we are the only youth group or youth centre that are gonna be letting their youth or young people kind of partake in kind of strong decisions.* (Male)

[10] One young person failed to answer this question correctly so percentage is out of a possible 43 responses.

Whether or not this level of input into recruitment decisions will suffice remains to be seen, but perhaps if managed well, youth workers could engage young people in calling this "strong" decision.

Table 4: Reason for staying involved based on length of time involved with service

	< 1 Year (%)	> 1 Year (%)
Better relationship with adults in your life	17.6	7.4
It's fun	52.9	29.6
Activities/Outings	23.5	37
Young people have a say	17.6	44.4
Meeting and making new friends	47.1	29.6
Learning new skills	11.8	29.6
Keeps me out of trouble	23.5	37
It is a safe place	35.3	18.5
A good place to hang out	47.1	44.4
Adults in the community have a better opinion of young people	17.6	7.4
Other	0	3.7

(More than one response possible, therefore percentages do not total to 100. All cases have been included)

4.5 Recruitment of Young People

Focus group participants were asked what they thought youth workers in other services could do in order to recruit older teenagers. The following are some of the responses:

> *They should promote themselves as a free space. It starts out with a group of friends, they have to find a common interest and it builds from there.* (Male, Focus Group Site 2)
>
> *Youth workers should ask young people for advice, they should listen to the young people more. Make young people feel it's their centre. Get other young people to brag about what they have done and get them to tell other young people to join.* (Female, Focus Group Site 2)
>
> *They should put up posters around the place.* (Female, Focus Group Site 1)

On the website of Site Two, it states that they provide a detached youth work service which, "takes place on young people's own territory". One of the focus group participants supported this, advising that the youth workers go on "walkabouts" in an attempt to get young people involved with the youth service.

The researcher also discussed the recruitment of older teenagers with a key informant in Site One who suggested that youth workers may need to get out of the centres and go to the young people. However, he regrettably stated that this was not an option for this particular centre due to staffing resources. The independent evaluation suggested that Site One should look to increase outreach work especially during the summer.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the main findings from the data collected in this study. The findings suggest that in order to attract and maintain the engagement of young people aged 15-19, youth work services, together with young people, must endeavour to actively co-produce a youth public sphere. Relationships, both existing and those arising from the youth work process, have an important influence on young people's decisions to become and remain involved in youth services, as do the activities and programmes offered by youth services. These findings will be discussed further in the following chapter and related to the literature outlined in Chapter Two.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the most significant findings from this study within the context of the literature outlined in Chapter Two. The chapter will first look at the idea of youth workers and young people co-producing a youth public sphere, and the culture of participation and active involvement required for this to happen. The importance relationships play in young people's decisions to become and remain involved in youth services will then be discussed. The influence that the activities and programmes provided by youth services have on young people's decisions to become and remain involved will also be considered. Finally, the research will be drawn to a conclusion and recommendations for future research will be suggested.

5.2 The Creation of a Youth Public Sphere

The importance of space to young people, particularly those aged 15-17, and the capacity of youth work to provide such a space emerged as an important finding from this research. For the young people, being involved in youth services provides them with a space, which does not appear to be available to them outside of their involvement in youth services, to "hang out" with friends, be themselves, get involved in activities of interest to them, build relationships with youth workers and have an input into decisions that affect them. The provision of such a space is an important factor in their continued involvement with youth services. For young people, "'hanging out' is about independence, meeting and being with friends and being in a place where they can see and be seen" (Panelli et al., 2002, p. 38).

The findings are supported by a wide range of literature that has noted the exclusion of young people from public spaces such as shopping centres and leisure facilities (Bowden, 2006; Copeland, 2004; France & Wiles, 1997; Kiely, 2009). Article 15 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child promotes "the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly" (1989, p. 4). However, the privatisation, in late modernity, of what were previously public facilities and services allows for the exclusion of those who are considered to be undesirable, often young people and can in return limit their lifestyle choices to "second rate public space and

facilities" (France & Wiles, 1997, p. 70). When young people "hang out" in spaces other than home and school, they are often presented in the media as problematic (Panelli et al., 2002). France and Wiles (1997) oppose the neo-liberal ideology that suggests, what is offered by youth work would be better provided by commercial leisure facilities, as they believe this ideology wrongly assumes that the market will provide for all young people while ignoring the aforementioned exclusion of some young people from private/public space. Despite promises of endless choice, the dominant consumer/market culture does not give young people very much choice (Shaw & McCulloch, 2009).

This research found that young people aged 15-17 were particularly likely to indicate that they became and remain involved in youth services in order "to stay out of trouble". It was not within the scope of this research to consider what the young people considered "trouble" to be. However, considering the aforementioned portrayal of young people in the media as problematic and their continued exclusion from 'public space', some young people's idea of "trouble" may simply be related to the fact that when they congregate in 'public spaces' they are often moved on regardless of what they are doing. Involvement in youth services offers them a space to go to hang out where they will not be portrayed as problematic troublemakers. For others however, "trouble" may be related to more serious activities such as drug-taking or other criminal activity (see for example, Devlin & Gunning, 2009a). Further research is required into what young people's understanding of "trouble" is and how youth work can provide them with an alternative focus and activity to "divert" them from such "trouble".

Opportunities for active involvement in decision-making processes was found to influence many young people's decision to remain involved in youth services, particularly those involved for longer than one year. These findings support the argument put forward by Bowden (2006, p. 19) suggesting that it is necessary to construct an "active public sphere for young people". It is not just about creating a public space but creating a public sphere which, based on the ideas of Habermas, has been described as "the arena of public debate and discussion in modern society" (as cited in Giddens, 2006, pp. 1030). Contemporary youth work must create a space where young people critique and analyse the world around them in order to challenge the way power is employed to sustain inequality (Shaw & McCulloch, 2009). "Through engaging young people in programmes which seek to develop their sociological imagination and,

collectively, to act on the world around them, they may come to feel they have a stake in changing it for the benefit of all" (Shaw & McCulloch, 2009, p. 13).

This youth public sphere must be co-produced by young people and youth workers. Strategies aimed at increasing youth civic engagement and participation must engage differently with young people taking into consideration the new activities, and spaces where they create communities and networks (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2007). As a result of the changing nature of the public sphere, particularly the shrinking of public space available for use by young people and "the rise of consumer culture in its place", the definition of civic engagement has broadened in recent literature to include leisure activities and "non-traditional and transitory association such as online groups" (Harris et al., 2007, p. 19). Harris et al. (2007) found that many young people were involved in activities connecting them with others such as hanging out with friends and playing sport. They suggest that young people prefer to engage in informal activities, which have not been structured by adults or organisations.

In order to allow for the co-production of a youth public sphere, youth organisations must create a culture of participation and active involvement. Several models of youth participation have been proposed and will be discussed briefly in the following section.

5.3 Culture of Participation & Active Involvement

Young people's active participation in decision-making has many benefits, including improved quality of service provision, improved sense of ownership and belonging among young people and increased self-esteem (Seebach, 2008; Shier, 2001). Youth workers are in a position to create opportunities and a space where young people have a voice (Shaw & McCulloch, 2009). This would require a move away from working for young people to the more egalitarian notion of working with young people (Barber, 2007). Bowden (2006, p. 31) argues that:

> *Only a practice that recognises young people's right to participate in the public sphere has transformative potential: by enabling young people's voices to be heard above the vested interests, such a practice may become a means of radicalising and ultimately transforming social institutions*.

A number of participation models have been proposed over the years, such as, Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (1969), Hart's 'Ladder of Participation' (1992),

Treseder's 'Model of Participation' (1997), and Shier's 'Pathways to Participation' (2001).[11] Hart's model (see Figure 5) has been identified as the most influential model of youth participation (Barn & Franklin, as cited in Seebach, 2008, pp. 41). This model presents "degrees of participation" ranging from "manipulation" at the lowest level to "child-initiated shared decisions with adults" at the highest level. Barber (2007) criticised this model as it does little, to address how such participation might happen, or to address the different levels of ability among young people.

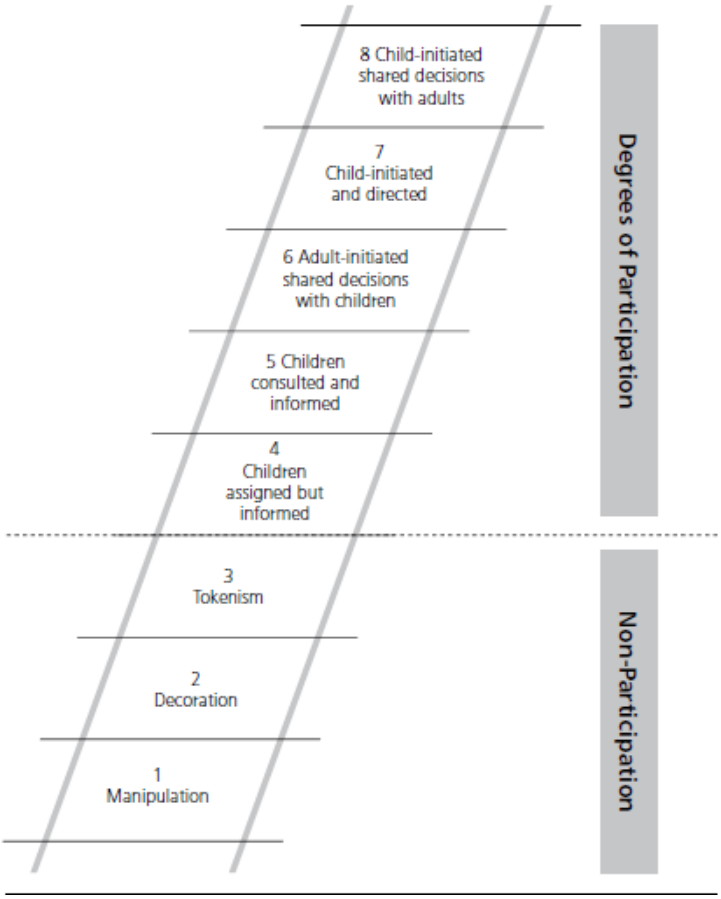


Figure 5: Hart's Ladder of Participation (as cited in Barber, 2007, pp. 25)

A number of writers differentiate between consultation and participation (Edwards, 2008; Shier, 2001; Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, & Sinclair, 2003). In relation to consultation, it is most often adults who hold the power to consult and they who decide what to do with the information whereas, participation "refers to young people taking an active part in a project or process, not just as consumers but as key contributors to the direction and implementation of work carried out" (Bell, as cited in Barber, 2007, pp. 28). In order to

[11] For a detailed description of each model see Barber (2007).

move from consultation to participation there must be a commitment from the adults to share their power with young people (Shier, 2001).

Treseder's model (see Figure 6) differs from Hart's model as it is non-hierarchical and is considered by some as a more appropriate model of participation (Barber, 2007; McAuley & Brattman, 2002). Treseder's model implies that different levels of involvement by young people may be necessary and appropriate depending on the particular circumstances, the needs of the young people and their capacity for involvement (Barber 2007; McAuley & Brattman, 2002).

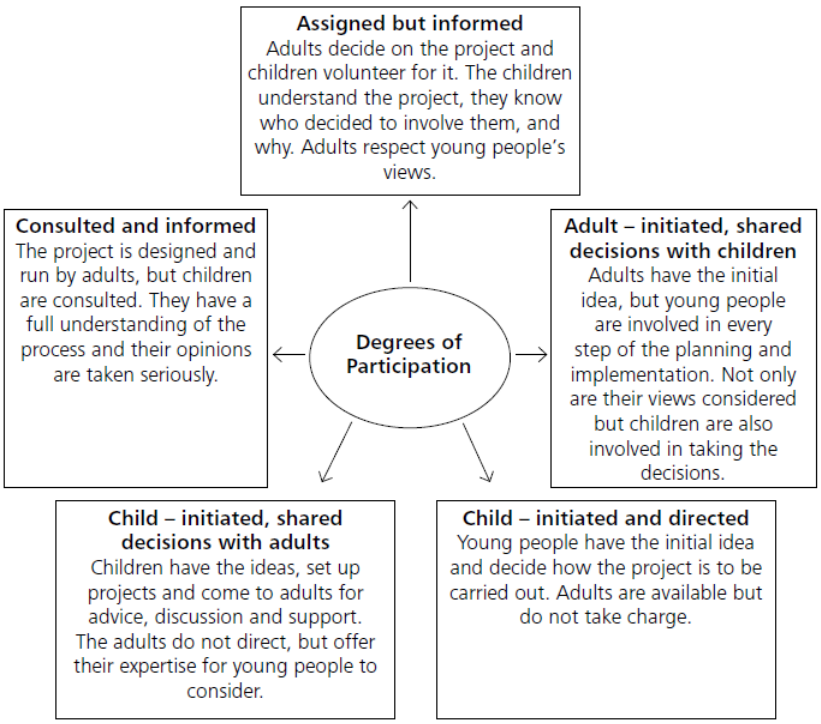


Figure 6: Treseder's Model of Participation (as cited in Barber, 2007, pp. 27)

This research found that within both sites, the decision-making structures were closely related to Treseder's model and appear to be successful given the level of satisfaction expressed by the young people in relation to their input into decision-making. The only area the young people in Site Two felt they should have more input into was the recruitment and selection of youth workers. In line with Treseder's model, these findings suggest that if youth services are to be successful in sustaining the involvement of older teenagers, the age and maturity of the young people involved in the services must be a

constant consideration to ensure that young people are participating at the most appropriate level of decision-making.

This research found that the ratio of adults to young people on the board of management in Site One is 8:1 and in Site Two is 19:2. Given these ratios, the researcher would question the extent to which these young people can have an impact on decision-making. Whether young people's input will have any real impact will depend on their ability to articulate their views in a confident manner (Shier, 2001). According to Cockburn (2007) projects successful in fostering the participation of young people, work towards ensuring equity between adults and young people by embedding them in the decision-making processes, by accommodating young people's everyday informal languages and by changing the settings to accommodate young people while also avoiding patronisation and tokenism.

5.4 Centrality of Relationships

The findings from this study point to the importance of peer relationships as a factor in young people's decisions to become and remain involved in youth services. For young people, especially those who are not closely connected to family, friendships and peer relationships provide them with support and the space to express their concerns as well as connecting them to community (Harris et al., 2007). Research has found that being involved in youth services assists young people in developing positive relationships with their peers and can help create a sense of belonging and solidarity through the creation of relationships based on trust and reciprocity (Devlin and Gunning, 2009a; Merton et al., 2004). Young people's sense of identity has been found to change as a result of participating in a youth group (Merton et al., 2004). The current research has shown that many of the young people gained such a sense of belonging and constructed a positive identity through their involvement in youth services and that these factors contribute to their decision to remain involved.

This research has shown that the nature of the relationship between the young people and youth workers is central to the young people's decision to remain involved in youth services. Previous literature has advised that the success of youth work will largely depend on the quality of the youth worker-young person relationship (Curriculum Development Unit, 2003, Harland & Morgan, 2006, Smith, 2001). Trust and respect are essential for successful practice and are developed through conversation and interaction

(Crimmens et al., 2004; Curriculum Development Unit, 2003, Spence, 2007). "One of the most powerful influences in encouraging young people to engage in potentially contentious work is the trust they have with the youth worker" (Harland & Morgan, 2006, p. 6-7).

As with Merton et al.'s findings (2004), the young people in this study consider their relationship with youth workers to be different to their relationships with other adults. The majority indicated that, compared to other adults in their lives, youth workers are more likely to listen to them, treat them with respect and give them advice, information and an input into decisions affecting them. Many also said they could trust youth workers. Similarly, Merton et al. (2004) found that the trust and mutual respect within the youth worker-young person relationships was, for many young people, lacking in their relationships with other adults. Ord (2009, p. 42) contends that, as youth workers are more likely to communicate with young people "in an adult to adult way" it allows for the development of relationships based on "complimentary communication".

Youth workers see relationship building as an essential part of their work (Harland & Morgan, 2006). The current research supports this focus on relationship building if youth workers are to ensure the continued involvement of 15-19 year olds in youth services. Youth workers have a responsibility to ensure that opportunities are provided for building these relationships (Galvin, 1995). This research has found that both youth work sites have been proactive in creating such opportunities, through the provision of drop-in spaces, activities and programmes of interest to the young people and opportunities for participation in decision-making.

Participation in youth services can contribute to the development of social capital (Merton et al., 2004). The current research has shown that the development of relationships between peers (bonding social capital) and between young people and youth workers (bridging social capital) contributes to young people's decisions to become and remain involved in youth services. The impact that young people's involvement in youth services has on their community and on their relationships with adults in their community, does not appear from this research, to greatly influence young people's decisions to become or remain involved in youth services. This however, does not take away from the fact that young people's involvement in youth services has been

shown to have positive outcomes for communities (Devlin & Gunning, 2009b; Merton et al., 2004; Powell et al., 2010).

5.5 Activities, Programmes & Youth Cafes

This study found that the young people were more likely to become and remain involved in youth services when the activities and programmes on offer were of interest to them. This is in line with previous research which found that young people are more likely be open to, and gain benefits from, programmes which are of interest and importance to them as opposed to being focused on the "issues" they may have (Crimmens et al., 2004; Halpern, 2005; Merton et al., 2004). In both case study sites the drop-in times are used as a means to attract young people into the service, to begin the relationship building process and to discover the types of activities young people are interested in, with a view to putting in place structured programmes that are appealing to the young people.

In line with Powell et al. (2010), this study found that the provision of a youth cafe is a contemporary intervention which gives youth workers the opportunity to "start where young people are at" (Spence, 2007, p. 13). Questions have been raised by some in relation to whether the youth cafe constitutes youth work (Powell et al., 2010). The findings from the current research suggest that the youth cafe is an essential part of the youth work process. There are three types of youth cafes in Ireland, ranging from simply providing a place to "hang out" to the provision of targeted programmes and interaction with youth workers, with this latter more intense level of provision being the ideal (OMCYA, 2010). The latter was the type of provision found in both sites in the current study. According to France & Wiles (1997) youth services in late modern society should provide carefully tailored services for different groups of young people with different needs and wants. In the current climate, where funding has become more targeted, the youth cafe model offers youth organisations the opportunity to continue to provide a universal service to all young people (OMCYA, 2010), while also providing targeted programmes in accordance with the needs of young people and funding requirements.

As discussed, Powell et al. (2010) found that participation in youth services decreases with age. There is a suggestion in their study that older teenagers are particularly interested in the informal structure of the youth cafe as it gives them a "place to hang out" (p. 39). However, the current findings suggest this may not be the case for all older teenagers, particularly those aged 18-19 of whom, many said they both became, and

remain involved in order to learn new skills. In line with Powell et al.'s (2010) findings, this research found that for those young people who were new to youth services, having a place to go, to meet with and hang out with friends was important. However, the longer the young people were involved with the service and as they got older, learning new things and having an input into decisions began to have a greater impact on their decision to remain involved.

Similar to the findings of Powell et al. (2010), this research found that demand for youth services is lower during the summer months as young people prefer to be outdoors when the weather is good. Efforts were being made in Site Two to address this issue, whereby youth workers brought the young people out on activities as opposed to having their group in the centre. However, as was mentioned by a key informant in Site One, the staffing, or financial resources are not available for them to offer such activities. Powell et al. (2010) advise that this needs to be tackled.

Through their involvement in youth services the young people in this study had access to opportunities that they did not believe they would have had otherwise. Both case study sites were located in deprived areas as per the SAHRU Deprivation Index. MacDonald et al. (2005, p. 885) found that:

> *...while connections to local networks could help in coping with the problems of growing up in poor neighbourhoods and generate a sense of inclusion, the sort of social capital embedded in them served simultaneously to limit the possibilities of escaping the conditions of social exclusion.*

It has been argued that youth work should move beyond the local context (Kirby, as cited in Treacy, 2009, pp. 242). The young people in Site Two advised of how they have been involved in projects at local, national and European level. The provision of such opportunities has given them an insight into the possibilities and opportunities that are available to them beyond the local context.

5.6 Conclusions

This investigation set out to explore the perspectives of young people aged 15-19 who are involved in youth services in Dublin City, in relation to their decisions to become and remain involved in youth services. The methodology chosen was intended to afford an in-depth insight into the views of the young people involved in the study. Although the

findings may not be generalised to all young people involved in youth services, they do provide an interesting insight into what influences young people's decisions to become, and remain involved. The findings point to the importance of friends in the young people's initial choice to become involved in youth services. The programmes and activities on offer also played an important role in their decisions to become and remain involved. The young people's responses point towards the need to create a youth public sphere, as well as the centrality of the youth worker-young person relationship in young people's decision to remain involved in youth services. It is clear from this research that, what youth services offer these young people that other forms of engagement do not, is a place to go where they can be with friends, get involved in activities of interest to them, form relationships with youth workers and have an input into decisions that affect them.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Research

- Research into the young person-youth worker relationship is essential given both its importance to the youth work process in general and in particular to its influence on young people's decision to remain involved in youth services.

- Further research is required into the creation of a youth public sphere, specifically how youth workers could co-produce such a space with young people.

- Many young people said that their involvement means they are kept out of "trouble". Further research is needed to ascertain what young people involved in youth services perceive "trouble" to be.

- Given the differences found between those young people aged 15 -17 and those aged 18-19, further research is required into how youth services can adapt to meet the differing needs and desires of these two groups of teenagers.

- Research is necessary into the development of contemporary models of youth work practice that reflect the lives of young people in late modern society.

- Further research is also required into the extent to which the provision of youth cafe services contributes to young people's engagement with youth work services.

- Finally, although small in scale and scope, it is hoped this project can spur further exploration of youth work provision in Ireland, on a wider scale. It is also an aspiration that this research has shown the value of consulting with those most in the know - the young people.

References

Baharein, K. and Noor, M. (2008). *Case Study: A strategic research methodology.* Retrieved April 20, 2010, from American Journal of Applied Sciences: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7109/is_11_5/ai_n28551353/pg_3/?tag=content;col1

Barber, T. (2007). Young People and Civic Participation: A conceptual review. *Youth & Policy, 96*, 19-39.

Bassani, C. (2007). Five Dimensions of Social Capital. *Journal of Youth Studies, 10* (1), 17-34.

Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M. and Robson, K. (2001). *Focus Groups in Social Research.* London: Sage.

Bowden, M. (2006). Youth, Governance and the City: Towards a critical urban sociology of youth crime and disorder prevention. *Youth Studies Ireland, 1* (1), 19-39.

Brent, J. (2004). Communicating What Youth Work Achieves: The smile and the arch. *Youth & Policy,* (84), 69-73.

Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods.* Oxford: Oxford Uninversity Press.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* London: Sage.

City of Dublin Youth Service Board. (2008). *CDYSB Annual Report.* Dublin: CDYSB.

Cockburn, T. (2007). Partners in Power: A radically pluralistic form of participative democracy for children and young people. *Children & Society, 21*, 446-457.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2000). *Research Methods in Education.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Committee on the Rights of the child. (1989). *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.* Geneva: UNCRC.

Cooper, T. and White, R. (1994). Models of Youth Work Intervention. *Youth Studies Australia, 13* (4), 30-36. Retrieved March 10, 2010, from http://0-search.ebscohost.com.ditlib.dit.ie:80/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=9501165402&site=ehost-live

Copeland, A. (2004). Public Space: A rights-based approach. *Youth Studies Australia, 23* (3), 40-45.

Crimmens, D., Factor, F., Jeffs, T., Pitts, J., Pugh, C., Spence, J. and Turner, P. (2004). *Reaching Socially Excluded Young People: A national study of street-based youth work.* Retrieved April 2, 2010, from Durham University: http://dro.dur.ac.uk/6409/1/6409.pdf

Curriculum Development Unit. (2003). *Youth Work: A model for effective practice*. Retrieved March 23, 2010, from Department of Education Northern Ireland: http://www.deni.gov.uk/youth_work_-_a_model_for_effective_practice-5.pdf

Davies, B. (2005). Youth Work: A manifesto for our times. *Youth and Policy,* (88), 3 23.

Denscombe, M. (2003). *The Good Research Guide: for small-scale social research projects.* Berkshire: Open University Press.

Department of Children, Schools and Families. (2007). *Aiming High for Young People: A ten year strategy for positive activities.* Retrieved April 10, 2010, from, http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/2512/aiming_high_cyp_10yr_strategy.pdf

Department of Education and Science (DES). (2003). *National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007.* Dublin: Stationary Office.

Devlin, M., and Gunning, A. (2009a). *The Purpose and Outcomes of Youth Work - Report to the interagency group.* Dublin: Irish Youth Work Press.

Devlin, M., and Gunning, A. (2009b). The Benefits of Youth Work: Young people's and youth workers' perspectives. *Youth Studies Ireland, 4 (2), 40-55.*

European Commission. (2009). *An EU Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering.* Brussels: European Commission. Retrieved April 10 from: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0200:FIN:EN:PDF

Forde, C., Kiely, E. and Meade, R. (Eds.). (2009). *Youth and Community Work in Ireland: Critical perspectives.* Dublin: Blackwell Publishing.

France, A. and Wiles, P. (1997). Dangerous Futures: Social exclusion and youth work in late modernity. *Social Policy and Administration, 31* (5), 59-78.

Galvin, A. (1995). *Contrasting Models of Youth Work: An empirical analysis.* Dublin: Catholic Youth Council.

Gerring, J. (2007). *Case Study Research: Principles and practice.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Giddens, A. (2006). *Sociology.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Halpern, R. (2005). Instrumental Relationships: A potential relational model for inner city youth programs. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33* (1), 11-20. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20032

Harland, K. and Morgan, T. (2006). Youth Work in Northern Ireland: An exploration of emerging themes and challenges. *Youth Studies Ireland, 1* (1), 4-18.

Harris, A. Wyn, J., and Younes, S. (2007). Young People and Citizenship: An everyday perspective. *Youth Studies Australia, 26* (3), 19-27.

Holmes, P., and Gronlund, A. (2005). Modelling the Dynamics of Youth Subcultures. *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation , 8* (3). Retrieved March 15, 2010 from: http://jasss.soc.surrey.ac.uk/8/3/3.html

Hurley, L. and Treacy, D. (1993). *Models of Youth Work: A sociological framework.* Dublin: Irish Youth Work Press.

Jarett, R. L., Sullivan, P. J. and Watkins, N. D. (2005). Developing Social Capital Through Participation in Organized Youth Programs: Qualitative insights from three programs. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33* (1), 41-55. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20038

Jeffs, T. and Smith, M. K. (2002). Individualisation and Youth Work. *Youth and Policy* (76), 39-65.

Jeffs, T. and Smith, M. K. (2005). *Informal Education: Conversation, democracy and learning.* Tinknall: Education Now.

Jeffs, T. and Smith, M. K. (1999). The Problem of "Youth" for Youth Work. *Youth and Policy* (62), 45-66.

Jeffs, T. and Smith, M. K. (2006). Where is Youth Matters Taking Us? *Youth and Policy* (91), 23-39.

Jenkinson, H. (2000). Youth Work in Ireland: The struggle for identity. *Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies, 3* (2), 105-124. Retrieved April 11, 2010 from http://arrow.dit.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1104&context=ijass

Kawulich, B. B. (2005). *Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method.* Retrieved April 18, 2010, from Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research: http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/466/996

Kiely, E. (2009). Irish Youth Work Values: A critical appraisal. In C. Forde, E. Kiely, & R. Meade (Eds.), *Youth and Community Work in Ireland: Critical perspectives* (pp. 11-32). Dublin: Blackhall Publishing.

Lalor, K., de Roiste, A. and Devlin, M. (2007). Young People in Contemporary Ireland. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan Ltd.

MacDonald, R., Shildrick, T., Webster, C. and Simpson, D. (2005). Growing Up in Poor Neighbourhoods: The significance of class and place in the extended transitions of 'socially excluded' young adults. *Sociology, 39* (5), 873-891.

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. B. (1989). *Designing Qualitative Research.* California: Sage.

McAuley, K. and Brattman, M. (2002). *Hearing Young Voices: Consulting children and young people including those experiencing poverty or other forms of social exclusion in relation to public policy development in Ireland-Key issues for consideration.* Dublin: Open Your Eyes to Child Poverty Initiative.

Mckee, V., Oldfield, C. and Poultney, J. (2010). *The Benefits of Youth Work.* UK: Lifelong Learning

McMahon, S. (2009). The Voluntary Youth Work Sector's Engagement with the State: Implications for policy and practice. In C. Forde, E. Kiely, & R. Meade (Eds.), *Youth and Community Work in Ireland: Critical perspectives* (pp. 105-126). Dublin: Blackhall Publishing.

Merton, B., Payne, M. and Smith, D. (2004). *An Evaluation of the Impact of Youth Work in England. Research report 606*. Retrieved April 2, 2010, from Department of Children, Schools and Families: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/RR606.pdf

Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative Data Analysis. California: Sage.

Miles, S. (2000). *Youth Lifestyles in a Changing World.* Philadelphia: Open University Press.

National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI). (2010). *Youth Work: What is youth work?* Retrieved March 31, 2010, from National Youth Council of Ireland: http://www.youth.ie/youth_work

Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). (2010). *Youth Cafes in Ireland: A best practice guide.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

Ord, J. (2009). Thinking the Unthinkable: Youth work without voluntary participation. *Youth & Policy* (103), 39-48.

Panelli, R., Nairn, K., Atwool, N. and McCormack, J. (2002). "Hanging Out": Print media constructions of young people in "public space". *Youth Studies Australia, 21* (4), 38-48.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods.* London: Sage.

Powell, F., Geoghegan, M., Scanlon, M. and Swirak, K. (2010). *Working with Young People: A national study of youth work provision and policy in contemporary Ireland.* Cork: Institute of Social Science in the 21st Century.

Prior, L. (2003). *Using Documents in Social Research.* London: Sage.

Putnam, R. (1995). *Tuning In, Tuning out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America, PS: Political Science and Politics.* Retrieved January 29, 2010, from http://www.vstate.org/~gamerwin/pa/classes/padm7240/readings/Putnam%20Article.pdf

Ruhs, M. (2005). *Managing the Immigration and Employment of Non-EU nationals in Ireland: Executive summary*. Retrieved February 2010, from Compas: Centre on Migration - Policy and Society: http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/files/pdfs/Non_WP_pdfs/Reports_and_Other_Publications/ExecSummary_%20PI%20Blue%20Book%2019%20Ruhs%20(May%202005).pdf

Scottish Government. (2008). *Building Connections, Getting Involved: Measuring social capital outcomes of community learning and development.* Retrieved April 1, 2010, from Scottish Government: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/228800/0061950.pdf

Seebach, M. (2008). Youth Participation and Youth Work - A conceptual Review. *Youth Studies Ireland, 3* (2), 37-53.

Share, M. (2008). Choice and Resistance: Young people's perspectives on food and eating at school. *Youth Studies Ireland, 3* (2), 18-36.

Shaw, M. and McCulloch, K. (2009). Hooligans or Rebels? Thinking more critically about citizenship and young people. *Youth & Policy* (101), 5-14.

Shier, H. (2001). Pathways to Participation: Openings, Opportunities and Obligations. A new model for enhancing children's participation in decision-making, in line with Article 12.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Children & Society, 15*, 107-117.

Simpson, D. (2009). *The Readability Test Tool*. Retrieved June 1, 2010, from http://www.read-able.com/check.php

Smith, M. K. (2003). From Youth Work to Youth Development: The new government framework for English youth services. *Youth and Policy* (79), 46-59.

Smith, M. K. (2002). *Transforming Youth Work - Resourcing excellent youth services. A critique.* Retrieved March 20, 2010, from the informal education homepage: http://www.infed.org/youthwork/transforming_youth_work_2.htm

Smith, M. K. (2001). *Young People, Informal Education and Association.* Retrieved March 15, 2010, from the informal education homepage: http://www.infed.org/youthwork/ypandassoc.htm

Sociological Association of Ireland. (2008-2010). *Ethical Guidelines: Sociological Association of Ireland*. Retrieved May 14, 2010, from http://www.sociology.ie/docstore/dls/pages_list/3_sai_ethical_guidelines.pdf

Spence, J. (2007). What Do Youth Workers Do? Communicating youth work. *Youth Studies Ireland, 2* (2), 3-18.

Spence, J., Devanney, C. and Noonan, K. (2006). *Youth Work: Voices of practice – A research report by Durham University and Weston Spirit.* Leicester: The National Youth Agency.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research.* London: Sage.

SurveyMonkey.com. (n.d.). *Help Centre*. Retrieved April 2010, from Surveymonkey.com: http://help.surveymonkey.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/104/kw/randomise

Teddlie, C. and Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundation of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches in the social and behavioural sciences.* London: Sage.

Treacy, D. (2009). Irish Youth Work: Exploring the potential for social change. In C. Forde, E. Kiely, & R. Meade (Eds.), *Youth and Community Work in Ireland: Critical perspectives* (pp. 177-198). Dublin: Blackhall Publishing.

Youth Council for Northern Ireland. (1998). *Benefits of the Youth Service: A study of the experiences of 14-18 year old members of youth groups in Northern Ireland.* Belfast: Youth Council for Northern Ireland.

Youth Service Liaison Forum. (2005). *Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland.* Retrieved April 1, 2010, from Department of Education for Northern Ireland: http://www.deni.gov.uk/youth_work_strategy_pdf_216kb

Youth Work Act. (2001). *Irish Statute Book.* Retrieved March 10, 2010 from http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2001/en/act/pub/0042/index.html

Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. Introduction

This survey is trying to find out more about why young people became involved in youth work and why they stay involved in it. I would be very grateful if you would fill in this short survey. It should take 10 minutes. It does not ask for your name so your answers will be confidential.
Thank You

1. What age are you

- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19

2. Are you:

- Male
- Female

3. Roughly how long have you been in this youth service? (please tick only one)

- Less than 6 months
- 6-9 months
- 9 months - 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- more than 3 years

4. How often do you attend the youth centre?

- Less than once a week
- Once a week
- Twice a week
- More than three times a week

5. What were your main reasons for joining? (Please tick at least 1 and no more than 3 boxes)

- Parents encouraged me to join
- Friends were members
- To stay out of trouble
- To get involved in activities
- To learn new skills
- Other (please give an example)
- Referred by Garda Youth Diversion Project
- Adults in the community would have a better opinion of young people
- Boredom
- To meet new people

6. What do you most enjoy about being in the youth group? (Please tick at least 1 and no more than 3 boxes)

- Meeting with/making new friends
- Having a place to go
- Having a space for young people
- Talking with youth workers
- Other (please give an example)
- Getting along with adults
- Learning new things
- Having a say in organising the group
- Outings

7. What other hobbies or interests do you have in your spare time? (Please tick how often you do any of these)

	A lot (More than twice a week)	Less Often (Once a week or less)	Never
Playing sports			
Member of scouts/guides etc.			
Swimming			
Hanging out with friends			
Watching TV			
Music/Art			
Reading			
Playing Computer Games			
Internet			

Other (please give an example)

8. Youth work gives me the chance: (Please tick one on each line)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
To meet people			
To do new activities			
To talk to youth workers			
To have access to computers			
To organise activities			
To do things for the community			
To learn new skills			
To have my opinion heard			

9. When it comes to decisions about the group/service, young people have a say in:

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Choosing activities	○	○	○
Choosing outings	○	○	○
How sessions are run	○	○	○
Developing the rules and policies of the group/centre	○	○	○
Decisions about raising and spending money	○	○	○
Choosing new staff	○	○	○
Purchasing equipment	○	○	○

10. What have you learned since joining the youth group? (Please tick at least 1 and no more than 3 boxes)

- ☐ To do things to make our community better
- ☐ New skills
- ☐ How to mix with people better
- ☐ New sports
- ☐ To have confidence in myself
- ☐ Other (please give an example)
- ☐ I haven't learned anything new
- ☐ About social issues (e.g. drug/alcohol/sex education)
- ☐ To have fun
- ☐ To spend free time in a positive way

11. How would you compare your relationship with youth workers to other adults in your life? (Please tick one on each line)

	Always	Sometimes	Never
It is easier to talk to youth workers	○	○	○
You can trust youth workers	○	○	○
Youth workers listen to young people	○	○	○
Youth workers give young people a say	○	○	○
Youth workers give young people advice and information	○	○	○
Youth workers are more like friends	○	○	○
Youth workers treat young people with respect	○	○	○

Other (please give an example)

12. If you want to find out information where would you go to find it? (Please tick one box on each line)

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Internet	○	○	○
Teachers	○	○	○
Parent/Guardian	○	○	○
Youth Workers	○	○	○
Friends	○	○	○
Other Relative	○	○	○

Other (please give an example)

13. Who would you speak to if you had a problem? (Please tick one on each line)

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Friend	○	○	○
Youth Worker	○	○	○
Teacher	○	○	○
Parent/Guardian	○	○	○
Other relative	○	○	○

Other (please give an example)

14. Give the 3 main reasons why you stay involved in youth services? (Please tick 3 boxes)

- ☐ Keeps me out of trouble
- ☐ Meeting and making new friends
- ☐ It is a safe place
- ☐ Learning new skills
- ☐ Better relationship with adults in your life
- ☐ Other (please give an example)
- ☐ Adults in the community have a better opinion of young people
- ☐ Young people have a say
- ☐ It's fun
- ☐ Activities/outings
- ☐ A good place to hang out

Appendix B: Letter of Consent

Dear Parent or Guardian

As part of a Masters in Child Family and Community Studies in Dublin Institute of Technology, I am conducting a research project looking at why young people aged 15-19 become involved and remain involved in youth work services.

I would be very grateful if you would consider giving permission for your child to participate in the research. In choosing to allow your child to participate, your child will be asked to take part in a focus group. The aim of the focus group is to give young people the opportunity to explain their reasons for becoming involved and staying involved in youth work services. This focus group will be recorded using audio tape. The voluntary nature of the young people's participation will be respected and their views and ideas will be treated with respect and in confidence.

If you are willing to give consent for your child to participate, please complete the attached consent form and give it to your child to return to the youth workers in the centre. However, if you do not want your child to participate, please indicate this on the consent form also.

If you would like to know more about this research project, please contact me on [redacted] or [redacted]@yahoo.com.

Kind Regards

Kerri Martin

Consent Form for Parents/Guardians

Please complete this consent form and ask your child to return it to the youth workers in the centre.

Thank You

I consent / do not consent (delete as appropriate) for _____ (young person's name) to take part in a focus group.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Questionnaire Response Summary

Why Do Young People Become Involved and Stay Involved in Youth Services

1. What age are you

	Response Percent	Response Count
15	22.7%	10
16	43.2%	19
17	4.5%	2
18	11.4%	5
19	18.2%	8
answered question		44
skipped question		0

2. Are you:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	52.3%	23
Female	47.7%	21
answered question		44
skipped question		0

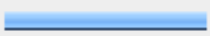
3. Roughly how long have you been in this youth service? (please tick only one)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 6 months	18.2%	8
6-9 months	2.3%	1
9 months - 1 year	18.2%	8
1-2 years	20.5%	9
2-3 years	22.7%	10
more than 3 years	18.2%	8
answered question		44
skipped question		0

4. How often do you attend the youth centre?

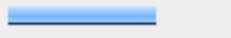
	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than once a week	13.6%	6
Once a week	22.7%	10
Twice a week	38.6%	17
More than three times a week	25.0%	11
answered question		44
skipped question		0

5. What were your main reasons for joining? (Please tick at least 1 and no more than 3 boxes)



	Response Percent	Response Count
Friends were members	**52.3%**	**23**
To meet new people	31.8%	14
Boredom	27.3%	12
To learn new skills	22.7%	10
Parents encouraged me to join	0.0%	0
To stay out of trouble	29.5%	13
To get involved in activities	36.4%	16
Referred by Garda Youth Diversion Project	2.3%	1
Adults in the community would have a better opinion of young people	6.8%	3
Other (please give an example)	4.5%	2
answered question		**44**
skipped question		**0**

6. What do you most enjoy about being involved? (Please tick at least 1 and no more than 3 boxes)



	Response Percent	Response Count
Meeting with/making new friends	38.6%	17
Outings	22.7%	10
Talking with youth workers	15.9%	7
Learning new things	29.5%	13
Getting along with adults	9.1%	4
Having a say in organising the group	13.6%	6
Having a place to go	**56.8%**	**25**
Having a space for young people	25.0%	11
Other (please give an example)	6.8%	3
answered question		**44**
skipped question		**0**

7. What other hobbies or interests do you have in your spare time? (Please tick how often you do any of these)

	A lot (More than twice a week)	Less Often (Once a week or less)	Never	Response Count
Playing sports	**45.5% (20)**	20.5% (9)	34.1% (15)	44
Member of scouts/guides etc.	2.3% (1)	11.4% (5)	**86.4% (38)**	44
Swimming	9.1% (4)	**61.4% (27)**	29.5% (13)	44
Hanging out with friends	**97.7% (43)**	2.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	44
Watching TV	**77.3% (34)**	18.2% (8)	4.5% (2)	44
Music/Art	**52.3% (23)**	31.8% (14)	15.9% (7)	44
Reading	9.1% (4)	31.8% (14)	**59.1% (26)**	44
Playing Computer Games	27.3% (12)	31.8% (14)	**40.9% (18)**	44
Internet	**63.6% (28)**	34.1% (15)	2.3% (1)	44
			Other (please give an example)	5
			answered question	**44**
			skipped question	**0**

8. Youth work gives me the chance: (Please tick one on each line)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Response Count
To meet people	**74.4% (32)**	23.3% (10)	2.3% (1)	43
To do new activities	**61.4% (27)**	36.4% (16)	2.3% (1)	44
To talk to youth workers	**60.5% (26)**	37.2% (16)	2.3% (1)	43
To have access to computers	**41.9% (18)**	**41.9% (18)**	16.3% (7)	43
To organise activities	39.5% (17)	**53.5% (23)**	7.0% (3)	43
To do things for the community	44.2% (19)	**48.8% (21)**	7.0% (3)	43
To learn new skills	**60.5% (26)**	34.9% (15)	4.7% (2)	43
To have my opinion heard	**67.4% (29)**	25.6% (11)	7.0% (3)	43
			answered question	**44**
			skipped question	**0**

9. When it comes to decisions about the group/service, young people have a say in:

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Response Count
Choosing activities	61.4% (27)	38.6% (17)	0.0% (0)	44
Choosing outings	36.4% (16)	59.1% (26)	4.5% (2)	44
How sessions are run	31.8% (14)	56.8% (25)	11.4% (5)	44
Developing the rules and policies of the group/centre	36.4% (16)	47.7% (21)	15.9% (7)	44
Decisions about raising and spending money	34.1% (15)	54.5% (24)	11.4% (5)	44
Choosing new staff	15.9% (7)	20.5% (9)	63.6% (28)	44
Purchasing equipment	9.1% (4)	52.3% (23)	38.6% (17)	44
			answered question	44
			skipped question	0

10. What have you learned since joining the youth group/service? (Please tick at least 1 and no more than 3 boxes)

	Response Percent	Response Count
How to mix with people better	31.8%	14
New skills	31.8%	14
To have fun	31.8%	14
To do things to make our community better	18.2%	8
To spend free time in a positive way	**45.5%**	**20**
New sports	9.1%	4
About social issues (e.g. drug/alcohol/sex education)	27.3%	12
To have confidence in myself	40.9%	18
I haven't learned anything new	2.3%	1
Other (please give an example)	0.0%	0
	answered question	44
	skipped question	0

11. How would you compare your relationship with youth workers to other adults in your life? (Please tick one on each line)

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Response Count
It is easier to talk to youth workers	**61.4% (27)**	36.4% (16)	2.3% (1)	44
You can trust youth workers	**81.8% (36)**	18.2% (8)	0.0% (0)	44
Youth workers listen to young people	**90.9% (40)**	9.1% (4)	0.0% (0)	44
Youth workers give young people a say	**81.8% (36)**	18.2% (8)	0.0% (0)	44
Youth workers give young people advice and information	**84.1% (37)**	15.9% (7)	0.0% (0)	44
Youth workers are more like friends	**63.6% (28)**	29.5% (13)	6.8% (3)	44
Youth workers treat young people with respect	**90.9% (40)**	9.1% (4)	0.0% (0)	44
			Other (please give an example)	0
			answered question	**44**
			skipped question	**0**

12. If you want to find out information where would you go to find it? (Please tick one box on each line)

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Response Count
Internet	**68.2% (30)**	29.5% (13)	2.3% (1)	44
Teachers	18.2% (8)	31.8% (14)	**50.0% (22)**	44
Parent/Guardian	34.1% (15)	**54.5% (24)**	11.4% (5)	44
Youth Workers	**47.7% (21)**	43.2% (19)	9.1% (4)	44
Friends	**65.9% (29)**	27.3% (12)	6.8% (3)	44
Other Relative	20.5% (9)	**56.8% (25)**	22.7% (10)	44
			Other (please give an example)	1
			answered question	**44**
			skipped question	**0**

13. Who would you speak to if you had a problem? (Please tick one on each line)

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Response Count
Friend	86.4% (38)	11.4% (5)	2.3% (1)	44
Youth Worker	18.2% (8)	72.7% (32)	9.1% (4)	44
Teacher	4.5% (2)	22.7% (10)	72.7% (32)	44
Parent/Guardian	34.1% (15)	52.3% (23)	13.6% (6)	44
Other relative	31.8% (14)	45.5% (20)	22.7% (10)	44
			Other (please give an example)	2
			answered question	44
			skipped question	0

14. Give the 3 main reasons why you stay involved in youth services? (Please tick 3 boxes)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Better relationship with adults in your life	11.4%	5
It's fun	38.6%	17
Activities/outings	31.8%	14
Young people have a say	34.1%	15
Meeting and making new friends	36.4%	16
Learning new skills	22.7%	10
Keeps me out of trouble	31.8%	14
It is a safe place	25.0%	11
A good place to hang out	**46.6%**	**20**
Adults in community have better opinion of yp	11.4%	5
Other (please give an example)	2.3%	1
answered question		44
skipped question		0