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Soul Raider - Ethics, Hermeneutics + Video Games –

An exploratory study of how and why computer games are used in youth work contexts.

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of computer games within Scottish youth work. The researcher-viewing picture of a youth club triggered the study; within this image there were four computer game playing spaces. This study explores what this usage of computer games reveals about youth work and computer games. The study is theological in nature, applying ethics as a lens to both youth work and computer games, revealing the hermeneutics at work within the relationship. This is a small-scale research project utilising qualitative data from interviews with fifteen participants, drawn from within contemporary Scottish youth work practice. The study has three main questions; How do those active in the youth work task, define youth work within Scotland? How does Scottish youth work use computer games? What investigating the ethical and hermeneutical situations created by youth works use of computer games can reveal? The study found indications that youth work within Scotland is lacking confidence, is under supported and in need of additional resources in relation to computer games. Youth workers are using computer games as a youth work tool without the resources or time to critique and assess them fully. Despite this computer games can provide vital youth work functions around emotions, safety, behaviour and relationship building for youth worker and young person. Theology provides insight, language and tools for youth work and computer games to establish a solid base for their uncertain relationship. The study reveals that the relationship between youth work and computer games needs further consideration in order to illuminate how computer games can be used constructively for youth work purposes.

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1. Introduction

This study will utilise ethics and hermeneutics to explore how youth workers are using computer games. Computer games have become socially accepted as one part of the pervasiveness of technology in everyday lives. Current figures indicate that the average computer game player is a 30-year-old woman (IABUK, 2014) and that over 70% of girls and 90% of boys aged 10-14 in the UK, play computer games; this figure has a slight fall for 15-19 age group of young people (Swift and Padilla, 2012, p1). Considering this demographic information, youth work has availed itself of the opportunity to provide computer games for those who participate in activities. This study endeavours to critique, assess and consider youth works usage of computer games, questioning these ways of working.

This study intends to help youth workers evaluate computer games and their potential uses through the application of critical ethics and hermeneutics. It is considered that this is appropriate as computer game theorists claim that computer games have ethics and, that these ethics are inherent in the way they interact with humans (Sicart, 2010, p5). As such this is not an ethical consideration of the computer game narrative or story primarily, it is a consideration of the way computer games and their Infosphere interact ethically with the player. Hermeneutics is key to studying this ethical process.

This study is a work of theology. This may seem a strange place to host this exploratory conversation, yet theology has three strategic strengths that commend it to this area of study. First youth work was birthed by evangelical and social church work (Sercombe 2010, Coburn & Wallace, 2011). Recently the relationship between youth work and theology had been eroded, as youth work has increasingly become one of the functions of the state, however there is still a shared history between youth work and theology. Secondly ethics and hermeneutics are part of the theological academic family. When computer games claim to be ethical, those claims need to be weighed and considered from solid ethical and hermeneutical basis such as the basis theology provides¹ (Burns 2011). Finally theology and in particular practical theology is a generous host of

¹ A fuller exploration of the basis which theology provides can be found in section 3 Theological engagement with popular culture.

conversations. It seeks parity with conversation partners but does not seek to dominate the conversation (Swinton & Mowat, 2006).

This study sets out to explore three key questions.

1. How do those active in the youth work task, define youth work within Scotland?
2. How do youth workers within Scotland use computer games?
3. What can be revealed by investigating the ethical and hermeneutical situations created by youth works use of computer games?

2. Methodology

In this section we will look to theology's engagement with popular culture in order to provide the tools and an appropriate method for this study to operate.

Gordon Lynch, Michael Ramsey Professor of Modern Theology at the University of Kent, in *Exploring the Research Agenda for Theology, Religion and Popular Culture: Report of a Panel Discussion at the American Academy of Religion, November 2005*, (2006), draws out several keys to unlock theological research of popular culture. One of the keys identified is the attitude of the researcher to the subject. The panel considered that most researchers choose to study popular culture, because they are self-involved.

Research in this field frequently emerges out of the researcher's personal sense of the pleasure, meaning and value of a particular form of popular culture.

...

What is intended here is not some form of solipsistic academic enquiry, but rather the recognition that the motivation for such work can reasonably include a process of on-going self-reflection and transformation that generates new insights into the ways in which subjectivity is constructed through different forms of cultural practice (Lynch, 2006).

This is vital for the field of study, as studies carried out from a positive viewpoint will bring important balance to the field. Primarily, academic research has focused on the negative influence of computer games. Research has focused on subjects in negative forms, including links to aggressive behaviours (Ferguson, 2007, p309). This has led to the view of video games as predominantly negative while identifying some abstract positive values. By looking at games from a self-involved standpoint, the balance of the messiness of human experience and its engagement within research subjects should be held in more recognizable tension.

The role of the researcher within qualitative research is of key importance. Kaya Yilmaz, in *Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Traditions: epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences*, (2013), emphasises that the researcher is the key conduit through which the research travels, and as such the orientations, predispositions and biases of the researcher should be overtly revealed, (Yilmaz, 2013, p315), with "discussion of their background such as gender, ethnicity, disciplinary orientation and ideological viewpoint affected the interpretations of the findings" (2013, p321). The researcher is a white European male in their late

30's. The worker has been involved with youth work for more than twenty years, starting as a volunteer in a community centre at 16 years old. Since that time the researcher has worked within Christian Faith Based (CFB) youth work, (in both community projects and places of worship), for statutory agencies, and volunteered with third sector agencies. This work has taken place within the context of schools, street based work, within dedicated centres, and in CFB places of worship. Academically the researcher has a background in fields of Theology, and Community Learning and Development.

The researcher has utilised computer games as a part of their practice since 1998. This experience was welcomed as it provided a way to work with young people, that also appealed to a pastime the researcher enjoys. Without ever formalising a considered position on the use of computer games, their nature or ontology, the researcher is generally positive about the role computer games can play within youth work. The starting point for this study came from a practical questioning of how one youth work context could use the tool of computer games well when it utilised more computer game playing consoles than staff. The question of how these tools are being used has a revelatory role on the meaning that computer games have for contemporary youth work practice within Scotland.

The researcher's research epistemology is based on a belief that youth work should be a transformative process. The tools youth work chooses should have the facility to aid that process of transformation for both worker and young person. The researcher considers that conscious choice of tools is a key indicator of the youth work ethics being taken by the worker.

The aim of this study is to consider if computer games are being used well as a tool. The route to this has to come from the considerations of the youth workers who are interviewed in conversation with the theory revealed within the literature review. The complexity of this conversation is a fine line to walk. By moving the computer game to being a tool and making the youth worker the unit of analysis, the study design renders the positive attitude to the tool moot. The samples responses and literature review will reveal if the tool can be used well, in practice and in theory. This will then be the standard that the analysis will compare against, mitigating some of the bias that the researcher may bring to the analysis. The research will include in its sample some workers who do not use computer games in their context deliberately. This viewpoint is important to consider when

addressing the why youth workers use computer games question. The how youth workers use computer games part of the research question may prove to be more significant to the overall worth for the research as a whole given the ubiquity with which computer games have been adopted by youth work projects.

Lynch in *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, (2005) presents a model of engagement with popular culture. Within the context of this ethnographic model, the meaning of the item is contextual, never fixed (Lynch, 2005, p165).

A fuller insight into significant beliefs, values, and practices of contemporary society can only be achieved by exploring how popular cultural resources are used and experienced in everyday settings (2005, p164).

The researcher wished to consider a qualitative process to look at the totality of life. Lynch considers formal interviews to be one of the appropriate methods for investigation.

Writing in *Studying Religion and Popular Culture*, (2006) David Morgan, Professor of Religion and Visual Culture at Duke University, makes the observation that,

The account of religion that will work best is one that is practice centred – able, in other words to describe what people *do* in addition to what they *say* they believe (Morgan, 2006, p26).²

Taking this into account the researcher must apply an approach that considers how an object is engaged in daily life, shaping ways of being (2006, p27). Morgan argues for the use of a matrix of production, distribution & reception. Morgan illustrates this using the example of a piece of art. To address the production aspect Morgan questions how the art is produced and what were the artist's intentions. Turning to the question of distribution it is asked; where did it go, who bought it and who did not and where did it have an effect? Finally reception is considered and refers to the response of institutions such as church's, universities and museums to this art (2012, p27). The following study is based upon this matrix taking into account the production of the computer game, and in particular the ethical aspects of game design, the distribution of computer games within youth work, and the reception that computer games have received from youth workers and young people.

² Italics used in context

The strength of this model is it provides theology with a different way to assess and investigate popular culture. It is interdisciplinary with the matrix Morgan refers to being a common model within cultural studies (2006, p26). The weakness of the approach is that with the researcher having a positive outlook on the subject, questions looking for the negatives may never be considered or even asked.

The research project sits well with the qualitative research tradition. John W. Creswell, in his 2013 book, *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method approaches*, defines quantitative research as being, “An approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2011, p4). For Creswell this approach is good at “building from particulars to general themes” giving a focus on individual meaning and sketching a picture of the situation that reflects its embedded complexities (2011, p4). He distinguishes this from Quantitative data, “an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship between variables” and also mixed methods research “an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data”(2001, p4).

This choice relates well to the epistemological stance of the researcher and the worldview of the subject being investigated, the researcher is a youth worker, and the subject under investigation is youth work. Youth work is a task of working with vulnerability and seeking transformation (Sercombe 2010, p22). The transformative paradigm or research epistemology is avowedly political and sited in social justice (Mertens, 2014, p21). In *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity With Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*, (2014), Donna M Mertens, points to four key characteristics of this research approach.

- It places central importance on the lives and experiences of diverse groups that traditionally have been marginalized.
- It analyses how and why inequalities ... are reflected in asymmetric power relationships.
- It examines how results of social inquiry on inequalities are linked to political and social action.
- It uses transformative theory to develop the programme theory and the research approach (2104, p21).

This study uses qualitative research methods to engage in a practical theology investigation. By using a revised model of Mutual Critical Correlation, as detailed by John Swinton, Professor of

Practical Theology and Pastoral Care, University of Aberdeen and Harriet Mowat, honorary Research Fellow in the Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability, University of Aberdeen, the study can perform the core practical theology task while giving equal voice to three competing subjects (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p77), theology, youth work and computer games. In particular, the hospitality which theology brings as a Christian practice, allows for theology to be a generous host of this conversation (2006, p91). However, Swinton & Mowat also look for what they term a conversion from the other side of youth work and computer games, in which they are turned turn towards God through an engagement with theology. This engagement is based on critical interaction and the possibility of change from both sides (2012, p93).

This new knowledge born out of hospitable conversation and creative conversion enables the practical theologian to challenge forms of 'false consciousness' and to develop an approach which is marked by critical faithfulness (2006, p93).

The empirical part of this study was conducted over a one-year period by the researcher. The main data for this study was in depth interviews with a total of 15 youth workers, who used or had deliberately chosen not to use computer games as part of their youth work with young people. These participants were drawn from a range of work contexts including CFB youth work, third sector agencies, and statutory bodies. Statistics from 2009 indicate that the CFB youth work is a major provider of Scottish youth work (Mallon, 2009, p39-40). The unit of analysis within this study is the youth worker. Within the youth work computer game-playing situation there are several things that could contribute to this study. The use of the youth worker is beneficial as it reveals the way the worker is using the tool. Is that usage to the best of the tools ability or to the best of the groups dynamic?

The researcher contacted potential participants by three different methods. In the first instance the researcher directly contacted 20 youth workers using personal contacts. Secondly an email approach was made to current and former students of academic youth work providers. Third a call for participants was placed on youth work Internet groups, primarily using the Facebook social network platform. Interview participants would often suggest to the researcher others who may be relevant to research. This allowed for the recruitment of further interview participants.

A total of fifteen individuals took part in this study³. Twelve participants were male, three female and all were aged 18-45 with the vast majority between the ages of 20-30. Figures from 2010 indicate there are 75000 youth workers who are active on behalf of voluntary youth work organisations within Scotland (YouthLink Scotland, 2010). Research published in 2012 showed that the Community Learning and Development (CLD) sector has 3000 employees and volunteers (Lifelong Learning UK Scotland, 2010).⁴ This research reveals a profile of CLD employees and volunteers by gender showing 76% of employees and 55% of volunteers within CLD are female.⁵

The aim of the research interviews was to encourage participants to talk about the role computer games played within their youth work practice, and explore how this usage was interpreted and used by the sample in order to facilitate youth work. In the first instance the researcher sought to address the initial question of this study, how do those active in the youth work task define youth work within Scotland? Questions relating to definition, and purpose and aims were posed, alongside discussions on models of working and models of community engagement. In the second phase of the interview the researcher explored the questions of how do youth workers within Scotland use computer games in order to reveal the ethical and hermeneutical situations created by the use of computer games in youth work. This was achieved by focusing on questions such as, how youth work uses computer games as a tool, how games were selected and what considerations facilitates those decisions.⁶

Having conducted the interviews, the researcher transcribed and anonymised the data. The researcher analysed the data using a form of grounded theory analysis (Townsend, 2013 p11). Shorter quotes were identified within the data that allowed main themes to be grouped and considered. This allows for quantitative analysis of the qualitative data. This grouping of subjects allows for common areas of concern to be identified and coded. This has the effect of revealing some generality from within the sample. On completion of this process a theme-based list of issues or points was generated to engage with.

³ An anonymised profile of participants is available in appendix A.

⁴ CLD sector includes statutory youth work provision as a constituent part. See chapter 4's section on Scottish youth work policy.

⁵ The resultant question of youth work, gender and computer games will be addressed later in chapter 7's section Influence upon game choice.

⁶ A question list from interviews 3, 8 and 13 are included in appendix B

Limitations of this study include geographic range. Despite using social media, and youth work networks to call for participants, most participants were drawn from central Scotland. Most of the participants were white and educated to degree level, but perhaps that becomes a moot point when considered next to the gender imbalance of participants. This imbalance is noteworthy and is revealing when issues of gender and computer games are considered. This may point to a perception by youth workers that computer games within youth work are gender defined for males only.

The second limitation to be considered is of a small sample size. This was deliberate in order to reflect the intensive amount of administration and investigative work interviews require. While this has benefits in terms of the amount of qualitative data raised, the small study size means that this sample cannot automatically be taken as representative of wider youth work within Scotland. Strong emerging themes may be interpreted as suggestive for wider youth work. An argument can be made for including an element of quantitative data in future research in order to gain a more representative sample size. Previous research within the Christian Faith-Based youth work sector by Clyne used this approach (Clyne, 2012).⁷ Clyne issued questionnaires using an Internet based survey tool, receiving 110 usable responses to his first question, 85 responses to his second question, and 58 usable responses to his last question. Given a low response rate from the sector to previous academic attempts to gather quantitative data from this sector, the researcher decided to focus solely on qualitative data collection.

This section has outlined the model under which this study took place as a qualitative study of the everyday life, rooted in what youth workers actually do in regards to computer games. It has also considered the method of question development, participant recruitment and offered a brief discussion of sample size.

⁷ The further discussion of Clyne's 2012 research is included in chapter 4.

3. Theological engagement with popular culture

In order to facilitate this research a literature review has been undertaken of theological engagement with of popular culture and further computer games. This section examines some historical examples of how theology has engaged with popular culture, before assessing various models of carrying out this engagement.

The panel discussion facilitated by the Religion and Popular Culture Group of the American Academy of Religion in 2005 looked forward to methodological and theoretical challenges within the research of Religion and Popular Culture (Lynch, 2006). It gave reasons for researching in this area such as, culture,

... is the primary medium for the construction of self and community and for the ongoing human processes of meaning making. It is important in clarifying the relationship between the sacred and profane ... (this field of study has) ability to acknowledge the messiness of human experience and cultural practice (2006).

The panel indicated what could strengthen this area would be studies in future that included, developing interdisciplinary skills and work; moving beyond simplistic analogies between popular culture and conceptual categories of religion to the space where a serious working of the media form being studied is achieved; and a shift from,

Over-emphasis on the study of objects and texts by focusing study in this field more on practices and audiences (2006).

This final development is a move from an analysis of the text, onto the reception of the text by audiences and how these texts are then used as resources for everyday life. This embodiment is key theologically,

... human experience is a place where the gospel is grounded, embodied, interpreted and lived out (2006).

The history of the relationship between theology and popular culture is long. In *The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture*, (2005), Kelton Cobb, Professor of Theology and Ethics at Hartford Seminary, finds a starting point with Tertullian, writing in 197CE, who created an anti-culture stance against the theatre (Cobb, 2005, p80). Then Cobb points us to Augustine, writing in 378-379CE, who looked for the virtuous in the surrounding culture (2005, p84), concluding that all truth found in the world belongs to God, so that if a pagan symbol of ritual can be an occasion for

gratitude to God, then it can be appropriated by Christianity (2005, p86). Both these ways of dealing with popular culture can be viewed through the lens of German theologian Ernst Troeltsch's work, using his concepts of sect and church. For Troeltsch, sect represents being closed off and rejecting culture. Conversely church represents being open to cautious compromise (2005 p84). For Cobb this division is both historic and current, leading to the provision of a profile where Cobb views the Anabaptists, Quakers, Leo Tolstoy and theologians including John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, George Lindback, Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder in the lineage of Tertullian, (2005, p88), while Martin Luther, John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Paul Tillich are aligned with Augustine (2005, p90).

Cobb considers the work of German theologian Paul Tillich as foundational for theology's relationship with popular culture. Cobb points to a lecture Tillich gave in 1919 as the beginnings of a move to give a larger voice to the place of popular culture within theology. In this Tillich differentiates between the theology of the church, and the theology of culture. That religion is both a discrete sphere within a culture, and secondly that religion is,

The source of meaning ... that seethes beneath the surface of all cultural spheres and maintains our conviction that participating in them is worthwhile (2005, p92).

Tillich moves to safeguard the prophetic role of the church, but also introduces the 'latent' church to the discussion. The latent church being those who are outwith organized religions visible trappings and structures, but still accept the touch of the spiritual presence. For Tillich this was a group who were an unexpressed church. The latent church could bring goodness and truth to the manifest church, and should be heard (2005, p93). Later, Tillich, writing in 1926, surveyed Germany after World War One, finding the church silent in its work as the voice of revelation. Seeing that in this silence "Theonomous revelation occurs through the ordinary processes of life" (2005, p94).

This question of how God is revealed is tackled in H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*, first published in 1951. His central argument is that there is no agreed central view of how God engages with culture. For Niebuhr, who taught ethics at Yale, Jesus' answer would be one thing, his followers answer a different thing, but yet the followers are told that Jesus would use their works to achieve his works (Niebuhr, 2001, p2). For Niebuhr there are five ethical types which could provide a way forward for theology's engagement with popular culture. Niebuhr introduces the types as five typical answers to the issue of Christ and culture:

- 1 The new law type - Christ Against Culture. Absolute good Christ contrasts against absolute bad culture.
- 2 The natural law type - The Christ of Culture. Christ's life is culture, and some of cultural life lives Christ's truth.
- 3 The architectonic type - Christ Above Culture. Culture had its good parts but is perfected in Jesus.
- 4 The oscillatory type - Christ and Culture in Paradox. Both are right but separate parts of life.
- 5 The Conversionist Type - Christ the Transformer of Culture. We live where every moment is an eschatological moment and every man is in conversation with Christ (2001, pxliv).

Lynch, in *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, (2005), builds on the work of both Tillich and Niebuhr in order to bring a new way for theology to engage with popular culture. Defining popular culture as thinking "in terms of the environment, practices and resources of everyday life" (2005, p17), Lynch argues that theological traditions have made a distinct and important contribution to the evaluation of this culture (2005, p21) and that theology is the process of seeking normative answers to questions of truth, goodness, evil, suffering, redemption and beauty in the context of particular social and cultural situations (2005 p36). One of the cultural contexts that functions as a focus for this theological reflection is popular culture.

Lynch provides four ways of theology engaging with popular culture. First he provides assessment and redistribution of Niebuhr's five answers into two different approaches. The first way takes three of Niebuhr's answers, Christ against Culture, The Christ of Culture, and Christ and Culture in Paradox, and labels them *applicationist* (2005, p101), as approaches that do not allow for dialogue between theology and popular culture. His second method combines the remaining two of Niebuhr's categories Christ above Culture, and Christ the Transformer of Culture, putting them into relationship with Tillich's work which he describes as *correlationist* (2005, p103). It is a way to hear what the problem is, evaluate an answer from within the religious tradition and then present that to society in a way that can be understood. The third way outlined by Lynch is a Revised Correlational model based on the work of theologians David Tracy and Don Browning. The model is influenced by Tillich but has two distinct steps beyond his position. First it views the relationship between religion and culture as more equal, leading to a mutually critical conversation based on question and answers from both sides involved (2005, p103). The second move is to say that culture can be a "mediator of truth and goodness in its own right" (2005, p104); therefore popular culture can challenge religion with the same right as religion has to challenge popular culture. Finally Lynch's fourth approach is outlined briefly as the praxis model of conversation between

theology and popular culture. Lynch roots this approach in the work of liberation theology. It is distinctive as this method moves to a place of critiquing both religion and popular culture based on its “...commitment to an orthopraxy, (their capacity to promote right action)” (2005, p104).

For Lynch an engagement with the third model, the Revised Correlational model is the best approach for study.⁸ This involves a three-stage process. The first stage is that of descriptive theology, an act of developing a clearer picture illustrating “...the concerns, beliefs, values, practices, and experiences associated with this aspect of popular culture” (2005, p106). The second phase is to reflect and scrutinize the religious tradition we are working from and ask what relevance it has to the aspect of popular culture we are looking at. The third move is to bring the two considerations together and let them ask critical questions of each other.

In what respects does popular culture offer a truthful or constructive account of existence? To what degree are the values evident in popular culture good or healthy? ... Does popular culture raise questions that have been inadequately explored by our tradition? Does it generate insights that help us to interpret our tradition in new ways? Or do particular perspectives on truth and goodness within popular culture challenge us to reject aspects of our tradition that may themselves be inadequate or damaging? (2005, p106).

Lynch outlines three approaches to theological study of popular culture; Author Focused approach – where the background of the author reveals more about the popular culture item, the analysis reflects this background and culture; Text Based approach – where we read the popular cultural item as a text, without engaging with the author who created them; Ethnographic/Audience Reception approach – where the researcher works with the “meaning popular culture has for people in real world settings” (2005, p106). This is important as it provides us with a model of theological study which asks, what meaning does computer games have for youth work and young people in real world settings? And further consider how can theology respond to this meaning?

3.1 Christian Ethics

3.1.1 A brief history of Christian ethics

The chapter, Christian Ethics (2014) by Brian Brock, in *Mapping Modern Theology* a collection edited by Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack, provides a brief overview of the historic development of Christian ethics as a distinct subject. For Brock, Lecturer in Moral and Practical

⁸ The model outlined by Lynch shares similarities with the model of Swinton & Mowat outlined in chapter

Theology at the University of Aberdeen, there are historical issues that explain the current situation where theology is separated from Christian ethics.

Brock outlines three broad time periods before 400CE⁹, in this period it was assumed that ethics were inherently tied up with reflecting Jesus and writing down how this was done as in the books of the New Testament. The second section from 400-1400CE, Brock terms Constantinian, referring to an assumption that all people are Christian during this section. Considering that Christian ethics revealed its moral self in the form of 'common sense' (Brock, 2012, p294). Brock's third move is a move to natural reason, levering issues of God from a primary position to one of a secondary order. This appeal allowed for a philosophical understanding of reason completely separate from God. Brock dates this back to the work carried out in monasteries in the high Middle Ages (2012, p295).

This created a division between doctrine and reason. This separation moved a discourse with God to a secondary position, as reason becomes the primary concern. In order to respond to this Brock looks at three influential North American based ethicists to see how theological ethics trajectory is set, and uses a fourth North American Christian ethicist to critic this trajectory. Brock begins by looking at the work of Walter Rauschenbusch, theologian at Rochester Theological Seminary, H Richard Niebuhr, & Reinhold Niebuhr, Professor of Practical Theology at Union Theological Seminary, pointing out all three were members of the German liberal Baptist movement¹⁰ and also all three had seminary educations, yet deliberately did not try to pass this knowledge onto those they trained. Brock considers H Richard Niebuhr's position as a halfway point between Rauschenbusch's social gospel and Reinhold Niebuhr's recovering sinfulness.

Walter Rauschenbusch was the originator of the Social Gospel concept. Brock considers that "his (Rauschenbusch) response was to call for a renewal of a Christian love that builds social bonds and equalises all humans to bring justice and material equality to societies" (2012, p300). This outworking of love towards those who are not equal, tied into a reading of the bible and of Jesus concern for the poor in society. Brock credits Rauschenbusch with applying the Kingdom of God

⁹ CE time era signifier used within Brock

¹⁰ An account of the effects of the German liberal Baptist movement upon the Baptist tradition within USA is contained within Newman, A. 1906. *Recent Changes in the Theology of Baptists*, The American Journal of Theology – <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3154427>

motif to the social gospel movement (2012, p301). This move was based on a use of historical criticism to chip away at the theological doctrine and tradition in order to reveal the central theme of Christ's work, a new life, open to all, and based on love. This creates a natural divide where Christian ethics can function without the need for doctrine.

Rauschenbusch's Christology held that Jesus atonement was not a "bearing of personal sin, but in his bearing the brunt of the social sins against which he had preached. ... The unjust synagogue's obsession with personal piety and an undemocratic and exploitative state" (2012, p302). For Brock this opens up the space for parachurch organisations like the YMCA to be set up within this social gospel movement. The church was removed as a space for learning what a Christian society was or could be. That space for learning is moved to these new expressions of the kingdom of love. Brock points out that an effect of this Christology is to open up a democratization of the trinity, viewing the bible as a pointing towards a gospel of democracy as seen in Jesus and God's relationship.

H Richard Niebuhr saw the Social Gospel message, and considered the role of man as the responder to the Kingdom of Love. Man was not the originator of this kingdom through social actions.

"He argues that Christian ethics is not concerned primarily to develop particular moral imperatives, but with the intensification of human awareness both other historical agents and how our actions affect others. To be responsible is not to do what is right or wrong but what is fitting" (2012, p304).

Brock considers the strength of HR Niebuhr's approach lies in his opening of the Christian community outward. This outward turn considers the "contextual forces" that influence the way humans relate to each other (2012, p304).

Brock examines HR Niebuhr's Trinitarian understanding, finding that his understandings of God reserves sovereignty for God and reduces the role of Christ "to an exemplary human"(2012, p304). The implication of this makes a consideration of theology determinative upon the "subjective and anthropocentric concept of faith" while edging out the transcendent. For the study of Christian ethics the primary task was to engage in justifying faith using secular reasoning (2012 p304-5).

Brock completes his look at contemporary Christian Ethics by considering the work of Reinhold Niebuhr. R Niebuhr was the completing part of the project to take theology, which is primary beyond secular reason. And convert theology into something that is acceptable to this reason. Reinhold Niebuhr saw this as a way to save faith from itself, the truth provided by science while also holding the historical and the transcendent in tension. This tension was seen as necessary by Niebuhr to provide “the ethical fruitfulness”(R Niebuhr, 1935, p9) which is needed for Christian Ethics.

“This rationalization of myth is indeed inevitable and necessary, lest religion be destroyed by undisciplined and fantastic imagery or primitive and inconsistent myth” (1935, p13).

This understanding of dividing theology world from Christian ethics is critiqued by Stanley Hauerwas, Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke University. Hauerwas main criticism being that the church has allowed the world to too much room within Christian Ethics. Hauerwas laments the primacy given to Philosophical ethics categories of right’s and principles and at the expense of the concentration on the categories of good and virtues within Christian ethics.

If religion is no longer considered a matter of truth, it cannot and should not command our attention and something worthy in and of itself. Rather Religion’s significance is reduced, at best to the functional. Thus religious belief may be a source of strength in a personal crisis and/or an aid in interpersonal relations. Accordingly, the church has become but one among many voluntary associations of like-minded people from similar economic strata (Hauerwas, 1983, p12).

Hauerwas pushes for theology to reconfigure itself around the church and its significance. This would then become the key factor in defining the dimensions of Christian ethical reflection, particularly the role of community dependence and its influence within self-realisation and social inventiveness (1983, p29-34). Brock points to the relationship Hauerwas had with theologian John Howard Yoder and the work of Karl Barth of being significant in Hauerwas ethical considerations. Leading to the work on putting the church and their creeds and work of exegesis as the first order of conversation within Christian ethics (Brock, 2012, p314).

What Brock brings us is an identification of the main question Christian ethics is asking, “How we are to know what we should do?” (2012, p316) Historically it was living out following Jesus as recorded in the new testament, then a second era of Constantinian style common sense as Christian

ethics, through the third age of a division between theology and its concern for good and virtues, and Christian ethics build upon philosophy's consideration of rights and principles. For Brock the work of Yoder and Hauerwas build upon Barth has ended the third movement of Christian ethics and is marking the beginning of a fourth space. Where the central sources of knowledge for Christian ethics is the church, its exegesis and creeds.

3.1.2 Christian Ethics and Technology

Brock is useful for this study in considering how Christian ethics are applied with regard to technology. The 2010 book "Christian Ethics in a Technological Age" considers how and what Christian ethics looks like when applied to new technology. Following Brock's critique above what Brock outlines is a rejection of a comprehensive list of principles (Brock, 2010, p170) and a way of being in the world that seeks to link theology back to ethics and provide room for an explorative knowledge (2010, p173).

Central to this is Brock's reliance upon the centrality of hearing God speak. This is the foundational act of the ethical approach he outlines. Christian worship is central to this foundation (2010, p167), as for humans; our true selves are designed to live within communities, not as an individual engaged in self-reflection (2010, p170).

"The fundamental moment of a human life is thus when the call of God reaches it. In the hearing of and reliance on this divine word, human life becomes truly creaturely in embracing the divine challenge to its pretensions to control destiny and other people" (2010, p171).

Brock uses Bonhoeffer and Luther to continue this line of thought developing that this demands not just an interpersonal ethic oriented around the biblical question, "who is my neighbour?" It also demands a social ethic that can call institutions to account (2010, p183).

The task of the moral theologian is to indicate the theological connections that can liberate people to hear God when mired in the confusions of human brokenness (2010, p183).

Graeme Houston, theologian and Church of Scotland minister, writing in *Virtual Morality* (1990), engages with Philip Wogaman who provides a Christian method of moral judgement based upon these moral presumptions. Utilising an approach that seeks both to be perfectionist with a balancing of a situationalist, allows the human to take the best from both approaches. The strength of this is allowing the use of the both the ambiguity of not knowing a correct answer (Situationalist moderating perfectionist), and the probable existence of a best course of action, (perfectionist moderating situationalist).

“... suggests it is more productive to approach moral decision-making by, firstly recognizing our precommitments or presumptions. We should give tentative approval at the outset to the options which are apparently the strongest, with reference to our ultimate value commitments” (Houston, 1990, p86).

For Houston, Wogaman outlines Christian faith as having four positive moral presumptions that provide this ethos for Christian ethics; that created existence is good, that every person is valuable, the equality of human beings life in the moral universe and the equality of humans in God (1990, p87), and also two negative presumptions, finitude and sinfulness (1990, p88).

Houston concludes that Christian ethics in regards to technology, in particular Virtual Reality, needs to affirm two key contribution areas, Anthropology and Eschatology. In anthropology we see mans ability for self-deceit and ability to use “strategies of manipulation” (1990, p184). Christian ethics offers truth, from an objective reality of moral order. This allows us to ask questions of the virtual world we are offered. From eschatology we gain the understanding of Christians as witnesses to “the presence of the future”(1990, p185). Encouraging people to have a foretaste of a future heavens and a future earth now.

Writing on computer games and theology has a short history. The key literature is *Halos and Avatars*, (2010), edited by Craig Detweiler, Charlene Burns chapter Could Digital Gaming be ‘Good for the Soul’?, in *Vice City Virtues* (2011) and *Godwired - Religions, Ritual and Virtual Reality*, (2012) by Rachel Wagner. ¹¹

¹¹ The most recent work on theology and computer games is, *Playing with religion in Digital Games*, (2014) edited by Heidi Campbell, Texas A&R University, and Gregory Price Greieve, University of

The collection edited by Craig Detweiler, Associate Professor of Communication at Pepperdine University, *Halos and Avatars* is the first book that seeks to engage with computer games and theology, inviting academics and relevant professionals to contribute to the theological discussion. This provides a multifaceted collection that examines some of the key issues within the subject area including narrative storytelling; interactivity and the closed nature of the canon; and role playing and virtual selves (Detweiler, 2010, p13-15); while providing encouragement for readers to engage theologically with computer games.

Writing in *Halos and Avatars*, Dr. Daniel White Hodge, Director of Centre for Youth Ministry Studies, North Park University, provides analysis of research with young people to exploring how Role Playing Games (RPG) provides theological space (2010, p163). Hodge finds the key attractor for young people to these forms of games, is narrative (2010, p164). The issues Hodge identifies as significant include; that playing the game is considered a sacred space; gaming offers a community to participate in; and the game provides a strong emotional reaction (2010 p165-6). In order to engage with these three wider areas, Hodge considers three main themes, from within games, and provides theological reflection upon them. The first is the scenario of the judgment day, which provides space to play and reflect on “virtual eschatology” (2010, p167). Secondly the reality of inescapable violence within RPG games, Hodge links this to the violence narratives of the bible, asking why Christians cheer David slaying Goliath, but recoil in horror when a child starts killing zombies with a game controller (2010, p169). The third video game trope Hodge refers to is that of ultimate victory, this is viewed as an experience of protoevangelism, a sign of hope and good news which triumphs in the end (2010, p169). Hodge moves to link games and religion, through three regular game functions, the fulfilment of fantasy; the expectation of living with mystery and ambiguity; and the numinous that gives an experience of transcendence (2010, p170-5). Hodge concludes

When the concrete and the numinous are combined, they create a very strong and plausible way to understand God, life, religion and a gamers’ place in the world.

...

It is not a traditional model for understanding God, but a new mode and path in which God is discovered through virtual extremities and alter egos (2010, p175).

North Carolina at Dreensboro. Unfortunately it due to release dates, it is out with the scope of this thesis to deal with this major contribution to the literature.

In *Godwired*, (2012), Rachel Wagner, Associate Professor of Religion at Icahtha College, sets out to map the similarities between new media and religious experience. She notes the centrality of story in religion, and computer games ability to tell stories in new ways (2012, p52). These new ways allow us to play with stories, linking ritual, stories and games (2012, p74). Wagner conceptualizes virtual reality as sacred virtual (2010, p97), looking at the way our religious identity is “shaped and transformed” (2010, p99) through virtual engagement, before considering virtual communities and the idea of sense of belonging (2012, p143). This allows Wagner to tackle the issue of evil and video games. Wagner poses the question, is violence in virtual arenas actually violence? Wagner conceptualizes “procedural evil” (2012, p162). This concept asks if when doing evil acts in computer games, does the violence only exist in the virtual? She analyses this from three perspectives, the magic circle concept, procedural rhetoric and forbidden play. For Wagner, the magic circle concept of Dutch play theorist John Huizinga, opens up a space of liminality, (2012, p165). The Magic Circle is an idea based on Huizinga’s theoretical understanding of games creating a space within the normal world that is a “consecrated space” (Huizinga, 1955, p9). Play creates a functioning playground that is part of; yet, separate from the normal world, to play in.

The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds, i.e. forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world. Dedicated to the performance of an act apart (1955, p10).

Wagner questions if the game being played stays within the magic circle, or if that liminality permeates into real life through the use of ritual, finding the concept is ambiguous (2012, p167). Procedural rhetoric suggests the idea that computer games are processes and as such the process may persuade the players actions by only presenting one ideology to guide through gameplay (2010, p167). While the idea of forbidden play questions how much our embodiment of the action, as a player within a game, feeds a real life desire to carry out inappropriate actions (2010, p171).

Wagner builds a case for sacred spaces, (such as cathedrals), to be sacred only by human construct and as such when replicated virtually in a game, no definitive answer can be reached over the scared nature or otherwise of the space (2012, p176). This creates room for games to live in the space between reality and the virtual, which brings us back to the similarity between ritual and games. One of the most important similarities is that games and rituals are both fundamentally interactive: People perform games and rituals (2010, p179). Wagner links the re-enactment aspect

of a computer game based on a real life school shooting to the ritual of the mass. Asking if the ritual aspects of the mass have real life moral functions, can the games virtual re-enactments of an evil act then also be considered to have moral functions? For Wagner the largest consideration here is in the outworking of the agency that the player brings.

The difference between the software's intended trajectory and the players experience following that trajectory may be the difference between an engaged, immersed, procedural replay of the murders and a disengaged player's response to those murders - a response which could be celebratory, disgusted, angry, curious, or puzzled (2012, p184).

Wagner summarizes that this boils down to the interplay between variables, "agency, performance, intents and behaviour" (2012, p185). That if we cannot quantify the effect on a real participant then the question of the morality of that action boils down to the player. Their performance and intention is the key (2012, p185-6).

3.2 Theology's engagement with agency, praxis & play

Theology's engagement with popular culture can be seen through its engagement with the concepts of agency, praxis and play.

3.2.1 the role of agency

Within theological thinking *agency* is conceived in terms of human action and its interaction with the Divine. Agency is a theme that has been explored within recent theological writing on youth ministry¹². Andrew Root, Associate Professor and Carrie Olson Baalson Chair of Youth and Family Ministry at Luther Seminary and Blair D Bertrand, PhD candidate at Princeton Theological Seminary and youth worker, writing in *The Theological Turn In Youth Ministry*, (2011), edited by Root and Kenda Creasy Dean, provide an analysis of youth ministry with regard to agency. Their task is to outline four models of how young people experience and meet God within a youth ministry setting.

The first model they outline is the Neo Aristotelian. In this form of youth ministry young people are viewed as fundamentally engaging God in their innate passionate action. God reacts to the passion

¹² The differences between youth work and youth ministry are discussed further in section 4.

shown by young people. In this outworking, best summed up by the writing of Kenda Creasy Dean, Professor of Youth, Church and Culture at Princeton Theological Seminary, the model centres on involving young people in the virtues and practices of the church, in order to provide a venue for meeting with God (Root & Bertrand, 2011, p222-4).

The second model they term Critical Social Theory. This theory views young people as fundamentally oppressed and assures them that the point of meeting God is not in describing the world but in attempting to change it. Using the approach of David F White, Visiting Assistant Professor of Youth and Education at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. Root and Bertrand, point to White putting youth ministry in conversation with Marx and Freire, battling the societal constructs of adolescence and consumerism, which is where young people can move beyond their oppression, moving to a space of God inspired actions where God is met (2011, p227-8).

The third model is termed the Pragmatist Approach. The pragmatist approach views young people as fundamentally in need of ethical conversion. It is concerned with emphasizing cultural enquiry and change behaviour as a result of this conversion, asking the young people to align to the kingdom enquiring of the church tradition and utilizing the bible as a guide for behaviour (2009, p230-1). Root and Bertrand identify the writings of Chap Clark, Professor and Chair of Youth, Family, and Culture, School of Theology at Fuller Seminar, as shaping this approach.

The fourth model is Kierkegaardian Existentialism as evident in the writing of Root. In this model young people cannot act in order to meet God through passion, or critique or self-improvement. Young people are fundamentally existentially challenged by the tragic reality at the core of human life. For Root, the location of meeting God is in the facing and articulation of the impossibility of life. There we meet God's spirit who can negate the negation (2009, p233-4).

All four of these approaches correlate human agency with the work of the divine, engagement coming as a result of human action. For youth ministry, proselytizing seems to have been replaced with an experimenting around intentional active engagement for the young person. Each of the views above tasks youth workers with providing space for the young person to be active and responsible for their activities within a faith context.

3.2.2 the role of praxis

The term Praxis is particularly associated theologically with liberation theology, and one of its key proponents, is Professor of Theology, University of Notre Dame and Dominican priest Gustavo Gutierrez. Gutierrez, in *a Theology of Liberation*, (2001), explores the relationship between the ideas of praxis and conscientization, a concept developed by Paulo Freire.

The praxis on which liberation theology reflects is a praxis of solidarity in the interests of liberation and inspired by the gospel. (Gutiérrez, 2001, p23)

It is built on a radical friendship and sharing of life with the poor. Without this there cannot be the love for the poor that is the condition for authentic liberation. It challenges the existing powers.

Dutch Dominican theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, located the liberation of the poor in the struggle between an internal understanding of religious change and a desiring for social change. In *God is New Each Moment*, (2004), Schillebeeckx details that change has to be both personal and social. The believer changes themselves and society creating an eschatological way of living, despite the big social structures and power relationships still having a hold upon the believer.

The community of believers is a model for what ought to happen later in the world. In the bible personal conviction and working for a new social structure goes together.

...

Change can never, in Christianity be simply and exclusively inner change. (Schillebeeckx, 2004, p102)

Luke Bretherton, Associate Professor of Theological Ethics and Senior Fellow, Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke Divinity School, in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, considers issues of class, hierarchy and Christian social order in the context of the Eucharist. Rooting the praxis of the community of believers in the sharing of the peace during the Eucharist. Bretherton points to Galatians 3 where the community shows that it does not discriminate on ethnic, sexual, political and economic lines (Bretherton, 2010, p330). Here social difference is put aside and a space of equality envisaged. This raised a question of

How do we relate the perfect and harmonious peace established by Christ that we iconically embody in sharing the peace to the conflictual and unjust form of the earthly peace that we encounter in this age, before Christ's return? (2010, p330).

For Bretherton the social and political theories of class are distinctively representative of the earthly peace that then can be contrasted against the kingdom work expressed in exchange of the peace (2010, p331).

Bretherton's analysis of the class system focuses on themes of power and inequality. This allows Bretherton to view class as firstly a means of production, secondly as means of distribution of resources, and thirdly as method of consumption. This casts economics as the discipline that enforces class (2010, p335). In contrast the Church is a central location of new social citizenship.

...the church is itself a polity or *res publica* that forms and socialises human bodies in ways that are very different from those of the modern nation state and either a capitalist or a centrally planned economy (2010, p335).

Bretherton points to the church as a location of worship. Worship is a "contradiction of class conflict..." (2010, p335). Worship exists as work "outside the capitalist economy" (2010, p336) with a subversion of social orders that exist outside of worship. Bretherton warns that class could still affect worship, challenging a view of worship as a tool that could represent a real danger to capitalism (2010, p338). Bretherton points to the sign of the peace as addressing this issue.

The sign of the peace makes visible the otherwise hidden divisions of class while simultaneously gesturing towards their transcendence. In making the invisible visible, the sign of the peace ritually unveils the hidden powers still at work in the congregation, making them subject to the authority and judgment of God's Word (2010, p338).

Within worship and its ritual of the peace, we get to deal with class, tempering its effects and realities. We find a space of praxis.

3.2.3 the role of play

In the late 60's, early 70's a brief play theology movement appeared with several theologians including Hugo Rahner, David L. Miller and Jürgen Moltmann publishing books on theology and play. In Hugo Rahner's *Man at Play*, 1967, Rahner, former Dean and President of the University of Innsbruck, attempts to highlight play to a society and church about to be revolutionized by the idea of leisure time. He opens up play as a work of the spirit; a work that is foundational to our being.

For play is a human activity which engages of necessity both soul and body. It is the expression of an inward spiritual skill, successfully realized with the aid of physically visible gesture, audible sound and tangible matter. As such it is the process whereby the spirit "plays itself into" the body of which it is a part (Rahner, 1967, p7).

Rahner theorizes that man must play in order to imitate the incarnation of the logos as best he can. The player who plays will always be aware of two things.

The first is that existence is a joyful thing, because it is secure in God; the second, that it is also a tragic thing, because freedom must always involve peril (1967, p26-7).

This inward balancing of joy and tragedy is the spiritual practice that reveals the suspension of the soul between heaven and earth (1967, p28), and allows men to become a child in God, playing “to the end with laughter and perseverance the game of his earthly life” (1967 p36-7).

Associate Professor of Religion at Syracuse University, David L Miller, in his book *Gods and Games*, (1970), views play as a different way to engage in and understanding the Trinity. For Miller the theology of play needs to reawaken theology, it needs to renew. The language of theology would need to change; thereby the term Theography may be a better moniker than theology of play. Miller through this use of language tasks play with marking where God goes. Play is revelation, drawing a map to where the Spirit is.

(Theography)... would think of resting on the first day of the week rather than the seventh. Leisure, contemplation, holiday and play do not come at the end of work. They are the bases of all life. Theography would prefer Mary to Martha, the former being one who sees the practicality of the impractical, the value of playing around (1970, p152).

Jürgen Moltmann, Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology, University of Tübingen, establishes in *Theology of Play*, (1972) that,

The creation is God’s Play, a play of his groundless and inscrutable wisdom. It is the realm in which God displays his glory (1972, p17).

Moltmann separates the play of God from the play of man, (Moltmann, 1972, p18). Whereas God’s play is creation, the play of man is similar but it is a derivation of the play of the creator (1972, p18). The play of man has a liberational aspect to it.

Play should liberate, not tranquillise, awaken and not anaesthetise. Liberating play is protest against the evil plays of the oppressor and the exploiter. Thus play seriously and fight joyously! (1972, p113).

For Moltmann this liberation is not the 2-week holiday that is closely tied to authority and labour (1972, p9). This liberation is a means by which the powerless can playfully see and disengage from the present system of life dominated by economic functions of work (1972, p13). Moltmann views play within the realm of politics. It is an aspect of God’s glory, bringing freedom and real life to the oppressed.

Since this late 60’s-early 70’s time theological writing on play has been rare. Robert K. Johnston, Professor of Theology and Culture, Fuller Theological Seminary, in *The Christian at Play*, (1983),

decries the lack of theological work on play (Johnston, 1983, pix). Johnston argues for the balancing of work and play can be a prophetic gift that the church gives back to society, mapping a space where play and work are in conversation with each other creating a complete man (1983 p143). Johnston issues a call to church that has forgotten how to play to rediscover the biblical play imperative (1983, p144).¹³ It is notable that Johnston's PhD thesis was writing in 1970, in the timeframe of the three references above, and that this book is a continuation of his thesis, an exploration of theology and play.

Up to this point we have considered why theology should engage with popular culture, outlined and have drawn on the church/sect distinction as a way of illuminating how churches have historically related to popular culture. We have also signposted Tillich's notion of the Latent church presented Niebuhr's five methods of theological engagement with popular culture, and explored an updated model through the work of Lynch. We have also considered the history of Christian Ethics and how this relates to technology and theologies engagement with three relevant concepts, agency, praxis and play. It is now imperative to examine where theology today interacts with communities and young people

3.3 The subjective turn

This section will look at what researchers have found when studying the religious and spiritual lives of communities and young people in both the UK and the US, presenting a brief look at anthropology from theological and psychological points of view, before finally sketching out some historical facets of the development of spirituality in the US and the developing New Spirituality movement.

The Spiritual Revolution by Heelas and Woodhead, (2005), investigated the spirituality of residents of Kendal, focusing on the role of spirituality and religion within the town's contemporary society. Researching a defined geographical community brought a definition of spirituality based on the observed experience of the lived life of people within Kendal. The researchers found a differentiation between 'life-as' and 'subjective-life': Life-as is explained as being a life being lived in

¹³ Play has also been used as an aid to Christian education within the work of Godly Play, <http://www.godlyplay.org.uk/method/> and Messy Church <http://www.messychurch.org.uk>.

relation to a higher authority, which requires deference and conformity to received norms, such as existing traditional religion. Life-as is a system of communal sacrifice, where followers submit to higher forces for meaning, goodness and truth (2005, p31). Alternatively the subjective-life is described as where the self becomes sacralised, facilitating experiences of the sacred dimension of its own inner unique life (2005 p5). With spirituality being embodied as activities that develop “the cultivation of unique subjective-lives” (2005, p6). The authors borrow the term ‘subjective turn’ from Charles Taylor to illustrate the difference between religion and spirituality. Religion that pointed to life-as had been left behind to a spirituality that was subjective-life within the wider culture of the town (2005, p75).

This subjective turn was also discovered in *Buried Spirituality*, (2005), by Phil Rankin, Fellow in the Spirituality of Young People, Sarum College. Rankin’s study was a detached youth work based series of conversations with 64 groups of young people around the UK. A subjective turn within the responses of the young people was detailed in Rankin’s research. This subjectivity is expressed in considering big spiritual questions (2005, p76) and in giving answers with high degrees of uncertainty to those questions (2005, p43). Spirituality is not certain but is being changed and reviewed in the light of each considered experience (2005, p77).

Both Heelas & Woodhead and Rankin indicate that this subjective turn points to life needing a pivot to anchor around, for Rankin this is to do with the space which provides opportunity for reflection (Rankin, 2005, p80), while for Heelas and Woodhead, this is manifested through activities which “help people live in accordance with the deepest sacred dimension of their own lives...” (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005, p7). This space and activity provide a different way of engaging and thinking about spirituality which is beyond the model that has found its expression within the traditions and practice of the Christian church. This different way is relational, and focused on the individual (2005, p98-99).

The findings of Heelas & Woodhead, and Rankin, seem to correlate with *Soul Searching –The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, (2005), which detailed the findings of the National Study of Youth and Religion by Smith & Denton. Christian Smith, Professor of Sociology at Notre Dame, and Melinda Denton, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Clemson University, investigated the religion and spirituality of the lives of American teenagers by conducting a

nationally representative study of American youth. Smith & Denton found that 8% of American teenagers aged 13-17 answered that the phrase, “spiritual not religious” was very true for them, whilst 46% answered somewhat true (2005, p78). While this would seem to correlate with the studies of Rankin and Heelas & Woodhead, the research team felt that when balanced with other questions in the study this finding was actually false (2005, p79). “Most teens literally did not understand what it was we were asking about” (2005, p78). Smith & Denton point to this being explainable as young people developing a Christian faith which is not as definite as it once was, but assert that this move is still within the realm of Christian experience.

Smith & Denton consider this move of Christian experience is embodied within a conception of God that the authors term “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” (MTD) (2005, p162). For the authors this is the dominant religious belief form of American young people. This belief structure could be explained as follows,

- 1 – A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
- 2 – God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the bible and by most world religions.
- 3 – The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself.
- 4 – God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to solve a problem.
- 5 – Good people go to heaven when they die (2005, p162-3).

This MTD sits in between the formal organized religion, and an individual belief structure, creating a new space where organized religions themes such as grace or honour have been discarded (2005, p169). For churches and organized religion, Smith points out that MTD is replacing Christian beliefs, leaving Christianity only tenuously linked to the historical religious tradition of the same name.

... Christianity is either degenerating into a pathetic version of itself or, more significantly, Christianity is actively being colonized and displaced by a quite different religious faith (2005, p171).

What this change to Christianity hints at is that spirituality and Christianity could be anchored on the same pivot point. This raises the question of this pivot point. Is it naturally inherent in each human? The World Council of Churches (WCC) 2005 paper *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology* gives us the following affirmation,

Human beings are created to be in relationship not only with God and each other but with the whole of creation, respecting and being responsible for all living creatures and the whole created order (World Council of Churches, 2005, p15).

Or as former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams puts it,

In order to find the pivot of our identity as human beings, there is ... one all-important conversation into which we must be drawn (Williams, 2000, p138).

These affirmations point to a life in constant connection. Connecting with God, humanity, and the whole of creation, to respect and to be responsible based upon a centrality of relationship with God. A relationship that brings with it responsibilities and power. Williams, further points us to an understanding of life as a pivoted existence, revolving around the conversation that must be had. Both the statements from WCC and Williams affirm a position of spirituality being a universal inherent part of being human. Rankin points out that this echoes the work of Hardy and his work to establish spirituality as being biologically a predisposition that is universal to all mankind. Rankin then points out that if you accept Hardy's premise, then any formulation of spirituality has to be big enough to cover those who would say they do not have any spirituality (Rankin, 2005, p11).

US youth development psychologists, Richard M. Lerner, Robert W. Roser & Erin Phelps go a step further arguing that,

Arguably spirituality and religion are the only mental and behavioral characteristics that are distinctly associated with humans. ... These attributes may be the key characteristics that make humans human (Lerner, Roser & Phelps, 2008, p7).

If spirituality is inherent to being human, as pointed out by theological anthropology, Williams, and the youth development psychologists, a case could be made that this subjective turn is a rejection of traditional models of dealing with this pivot point, rendering the sacraments as relics of a bygone age. This allows for the spirituality movement to be viewed from within a western protestant viewpoint as an individual haunting by the Holy Ghost visited on a generation who live in a society that has developed beyond religious observance to an existence that is largely religion free. This Holy Ghost movement would make space for entry into the conversation Williams points to above, without the need of mediation by existing religious structures.

This question was partly investigated for non-church attending young people within CFB youth work practice, in *The Faith of Generation Y*, (2010) by Sylvia Collins-Mayo, Principle Lecturer of Sociology at Kingston University, Bob Mayo, former Director of the Cambridge Centre for Youth Ministry, Sally Nash, Director of the Midlands Centre for Youth Ministry & Christopher Cocksworth former Principle of Ridley Hall, Cambridge. The writing detailed research with young people

engaged within CFB youth work context between 2005-2010. The researchers wanted to investigate how engagement with CFB youth work would raise the young people's consciousness of Christianity, ultimately seeking to answer the question what interests young people in Christianity?

The researchers found that young people were adopting a nominal Christian identity (Collins-Mayo, Mayo, Nash & Cocksworth, 2010, p52), for the researchers, this could be explained in three ways, either by a view of England as a Christian nation (2010, p53), or infant baptism (2010, p53-4), or through the religious school system (2010, p56). Secondly they found interest in Christian youth work was sustained by Christianity being important to life and society (2010, p61). Thirdly the young people were interested in Christianity for the help it would give when making decisions, as a source of moral guidance for living (2010, p66).

For the researchers' the question of the good life was key. The researchers pointed to a neo-Aristotelian ethical viewpoint as this lens would reveal how the faith of the young people would be practically applied (2010, p71-2). They identified that participants involved with the study lacked a community that had an ethical framework that could be applied fully to the lives the participants were living. Friends and family were key points of reference but young people's primary ethical tool was living life with authenticity, being true to oneself as the guiding principle. Ultimately the young people ended up with a self-directed code of ethics relying largely on their own intuitions, feelings and experience. The participants tended to be quite pragmatic and self-reliant in their approach to living (2010, p72); lacked a purpose but had replaced this with plans (2010, p73); the Christian youth club functions as a moral community (2010, p76); and that families and friends provided the primary ethical guidance. Families and friends also provided some of the hardest ethical situations to cope with (2010, p79), leaving young people using authenticity as the overarching guiding principle (2010, p81). In this context the researchers suggest that,

Maybe ethics is the new spirituality. (2010, p82)

This suggests that the pivot point within life can inhabit relationship with the divine, spirituality and ethics. The place of ethics suggests that ethics and spirituality are of similar essence. Provoking the question what is this movement called Spirituality?

3.3.1 Spirituality investigated

Leigh Eric Schmidt, Professor of Religion at Princeton University has written on the history of the spirituality movement in the USA in *Restless Souls – The Making of American Spirituality* (2005). Schmidt writes on the historic factors that have contributed to the development of American spirituality, drawing out the key components that embody spirituality. Schmidt pinpoints the development of spirituality, through the transcendentalists of the 1830's to emergent spirituality after 1910 (2005, p14). Schmidt presents a view of spirituality from 1910 as being,

Individual aspiration after mystical experience or religious feeling,
The valuing of silence, solitude and serene meditation,
The immanence of the transcendent – in each person and in nature,
The cosmopolitan appreciation of religious variety as well as unity in diversity,
Ethical earnestness in pursuit of justice- producing reforms or 'social salvation',
An emphasis on creative self- expression and adventuresome seeking (2005, p12).

The key elements of spirituality which he identifies from this development are: the transformation of mysticism and spirituality from obscurity to prominence (2005, p57-58); the revamping of the seventeenth century notion of seeker from a heretical religious action (2005, p229-230), to one of the key motifs for progressive spirituality (2005, p268); development of the cultivation of an inner light (2005, p253-255); and, the sympathetic appreciation and appropriation of the resources within other religions, which creates an eclectic spirituality or “global religious exchange” (2005, p138).

Within the UK the movement that has embodied these key elements is the New Spirituality movement, which has been written about by Gordon Lynch in *The New Spirituality*, (2007). Lynch argues that new spirituality has worked for this subjective turn to be embodied by a progressive spirituality outworking from a wider milieu (2007, p8), identifying the movement as being a broad alliance of similar if different bodies, who are operating with a wide set of concerns and political issues that lead to a centralizing of aims towards the development of a new spirituality (2007, p22).

Lynch outlines four imperatives of a new spirituality. First, to find new ways of religious thinking and new resources for spiritual growth and wellbeing that truly connects with people's beliefs, values and experience in modern societies (2007, p23). Secondly, it aims to develop spirituality as being free of patriarchy (2007, p25). Thirdly, an engagement between religion and contemporary scientific knowledge, especially spirituality and scientific cosmology (2007, p29). The fourth element is a strong focus on ecology, understanding the relationship between humanity and the wider natural order (2007, p35). Lynch develops this model of spirituality, differentiating the new

spirituality from religion. The New Spirituality paradigm is divided into vertical and horizontal spirituality. Vertical spirituality describes the divine as an ineffable unity, the design source of the universe and its evolution. The divine is “within the material and emergency of the universe itself” (2007, p43). Alongside these vertically dwelling God like figures, Lynch describes horizontal spirituality as sacralisation of nature that views the divine within nature, it also sacralises the self (2007, p55). Our horizontal connections with nature and other humans are strong expressions of the divine. Arguably, the stronger divine exists in nature and the weaker divine behind nature, (2007, p54). This outlined model of spirituality being divided into vertical and horizontal, gives existing religious practice a space, while acknowledging the same action could be provided separately.

Within atheist humanism, through the work of Peter Sloterdijk, Professor of Philosophy and Aesthetics at Karlsruhe School of Design, and Philosopher and Author Alain de Botton, the role of practice or repetition is valued as a pivot. Both writers seek to answer the question what are humans actually getting from religion? Both answer this puzzle by focusing heavily on practice. De Botton’s project, *Atheism 2.0*, (2011), aims to replicate the functions of religion but stripped from religious beliefs. His argument is that we should steal the good parts of religion and claim them as profane, replacing religion with culture (2011). Concentrating on the religious themes of community, festivals and renewal, de Botton finds,

Our soul related needs are ready to be freed of the particular tint given to them by religions – even if it is, paradoxically the study of religions which often holds the key to their rediscovery (de Botton, 2012, p15).

Sloterdijk writing in *You must change your life*, (2013), is more aggressive towards organized religion wishing to reveal its very existence as myth (Sloterdijk, 2013, p5). His chosen method of revelation is strongly linked to his concept of humans as creatures of practice, “the human in training” (2013, p10). Sloterdijk views this practicing life as expressed through the idea of the planet of practice, where a life of practice is refined by culture (2013, p109). Sloterdijk points to culture being a process of refinement.

This section has examined some research into the religious and spiritual lives of communities and young people within the UK and the US, has taken a brief look at anthropology from theological and psychological points of view and finally, has sketched out some of the historic development of

spirituality in the US and the developing New Spirituality movement, with a final move addressing atheist humanism.

3.4 Spirituality discussion.

The tracing of theology's historic engagement with popular culture shows how theology has developed a range of tools and thoughts, from the in or out stance of sect or church, through Niebuhr's five categories, to Lynch's four methods. The claim here is that theology as a discipline is suited to investigating and dealing with popular culture in a way which is open, equitable and looking for discussion without seeking to be the dominant voice within that conversation. If theology is open to hosting this, is the wider culture open to having this conversation with theology? With church attendance numbers perceived as being in decline, is theology the appropriate host? The work of Heelas & Woodhead, and Rankin suggest that spirituality is still a key theme in wider culture and young people. There is interest within the spiritual questions that theology is built upon engaging with.

Smiths and Denton's work deserves to be commented upon. The findings are very interesting but are obstructed by the dismissal of participant's answers to how true the phrase "spiritual not religious" was them. The suggestion that participants do not know what the question means comes across as betraying a negative view of the participants. This interpretation of the participants understanding caused doubts to surface when the assertion that the participants are just following a different form of Christianity is made. This seems to contrast Smith and Denton's statement that MTD is ushering in a new replacement form of Christianity. It is not made clear if MTD is a new form of Christianity which is acceptable or is this a new form of religion? This is unfortunate as the work on the MTD is a significant contribution to understanding the way young people think of God.

Emerging from this discussion, many of the theories investigated can be considered as utilising open or closed comparisons, as illustrated in table 1. What is distinctive about this comparison is that each writer is hitting at the heart of something different. The function of the writing is to portray a narrative of binary choices within the understandings of their topics; this binary interpretation is worth noting.

Theorist	Closed	Open
Cobb	Sect	Church
Heelas and Woodhead	Life-as	Subject-as
Smith & Denton	Implied orthodox understanding of God	Moralistic Therapeutic Deism
Lynch	Vertical spirituality	Horizontal spirituality

Table 1. Open / Closed comparison

One of the questions raised by this section is whether spirituality and faith has the same stuff at their core essence, as implied by the concept of human existence having a pivot point, the idea that there is something life is hung and revolves around. This pivot point is central to what sets humans apart, and is inherent to life itself. The division made by Heelas & Woodhead, between life-as and subject-life; and by Lynch's explanation of vertical and horizontal spirituality, would seem to argue that formal religion and spirituality are the same side of a different coin. While this is an issue unlikely to be settled by this paper, the writers here are very suggestive.

The new spirituality view casts humans as the subjective beings who relate to an intelligent designing divine essence, but connecting in a stronger way with nature or with other human beings. Sloterdijk and de Botton suggest that humans communicate this connection through practice with culture. This is confirmed by the finding of Heelas & Woodhead who found that this turn to spirituality had changed wider culture. Rankin found that spirituality is tied up with questions of an existential nature. Smith and Denton characterise the influence of spirituality on young people in the US as a turn to the individualistic, viewing the divine as moralistic and separate to everyday life.

The designation of ethics as spirituality would seem to be an acceptable interpretation from the new spirituality viewpoint. The theological literature has shown us a map through divisions of sect and church, the consideration of the theonomous revelational aspect of the latent church, and the correlation of popular culture and theology. This points to a space where a consideration of what is good, ethics, can be a cause of revelation, it can critique from a position of equity, prompting the question does ethics and theology share an essence. The theological attribute of God being Good goodness implies a moral task which links to the ethicist's prime investigation of the good (Grenz, 1994, p93-5). While different questions, the essence of both tasks is very close; as such the

relationship between theology, ethics and spirituality is worth investigating further. This would leave us with ethics as the new spirituality within the lives of young people, active in giving guidance on how to live as best you can. This gives room to question how does youth work deal with this relationship. One way to answer this is through a closer look at youth work.

4. Youth work

This section will introduce youth work by defining the term youth work, and provide a literature review of the history of youth work within Scotland, and Scottish Executive/Governments policy developments since Scottish devolution. We will examine the divide between youth work and youth ministry, engaging with research into CFB youth work within Scotland. Finally outlining a model of community engagement and a recent CFB challenge to the idea of relational youth ministry. This will define the sphere of theoretical writing that informs the first question of this study, how do those active in the youth work task, define youth work within Scotland?

4.1 Youth work: a definition

Youth work theorists Tony Jeffs, visiting lecturer at the University of Durham and Mark K. Smith, Research Fellow, George Williams College, are key theorists within UK youth work. In *Youth Work Practice*, (2010), they have pointed to five dimensions which hallmark youth work practice;

Voluntary participation,
Based on education,
Focusing on young people,
Fostering association, relationship and community,
Being friendly, accessible and responsive while acting with integrity (Jeffs & Smith, 2010, p1ff).

For Jeffs and Smith, youth work is where young people choose to become involved with the youth workers. Youth work has an educational element, building on links to closely related areas such as Informal Education, Social Education, and the developing field of Social Pedagogy. Youth work is an age specific activity considering the needs, experiences and contribution of young people. Finally youth work seeks to build relationships, communities and associations. Jeffs & Smith also comment upon a moralising element that is historically part of youth work practice.

Youth work has come to be characterized by a belief that workers should not only be approachable and friendly; but also that they should have faith in people; and be trying, themselves, to live good lives (2010, p3).

Howard Sercombe, Professor of Community Education at Strathclyde University, assesses existing definitions of youth work from an ethical perspective in *Youth Work Ethics*, (2010). Sercombe offers this definition of youth work,

Youth work is a professional relationship in which the young person is engaged as the primary client in their social context (Sercombe, 2010, p27).

For Sercombe the key to youth work is a professional attitude, whether the worker is employed or a volunteer. The youth worker is committed to the young person as the primary focus of the work, and the social context of the young person is the sphere of reference in which the work takes place. This is important, as it is robust. Sercombe's formation provides a basis for a youth work code of ethics to be developed; the adoption of this code of ethics is integral to the conferring upon youth work the status of profession.¹⁴

Kerry Young, a former associate of the Youth Affairs Unit at De Montfort University, in *The Art of Youth Work*, (1999), asserts that youth work is centrally focused on moral philosophy.

My fundamental assertion is that youth work is an exercise in moral philosophy in the sense in that it enables and supports young people to ask and answer the central questions of self... (Young, 1999, p2).

Youth work is unique in one respect, its purpose. Not in its content provision, not in the age group it works with, nor in its methods, it is in its moral philosophising function. Danny Brierley, in *Joined Up: An Introduction to Youth Work and Ministry*, (2003), assesses that youth work is a process of agency and empowerment for young people.

Youth work is not something done to young people but rather a process young people choose to engage in, in order to assume more control over their lives, (Brierley, 2003, p7).

This leaves us with youth work as a voluntary educative activity, which is focused on young people and functions within their context. It is focused on the self, providing tools and space for moral reflections. It is an engagement that allows the young person to gain agency and power within their lives.

¹⁴ This move to drive Scottish youth work to become a profession has been facilitated by the report *Development of a Code of Ethics for Community Learning and Development*, 2010, by Peter Taylor and Howard Sercombe, http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/files/CLD_Code_of_Ethics.pdf and has been matched by the development of a voluntary professional membership body <http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/Home> for Community Learning and Development practitioners within Scotland. Youth work within Scotland is a constituent part of Community Learning and Development.

4.2 A brief history of youth work in Scotland

The history of youth work is long and inextricably linked to the history of social action by churches and faith groups (Sercombe, 2010, Clyne 2012, Coburn and Wallace 2011). In a manner similar to other social innovations of the time, the chance to care socially and physically for young people was tied up with evangelical opportunity for churches and CFB groups. The ragged school movement was an opportunity for working class children to get a free education in the 4r's (Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Bible study.) George Williams founded the Young Men's Christian Association in 1844, making it the first dedicated youth organization (Brierley, 2003, p30). Uniformed organizations came slightly later with the Boys Brigade, started by William Smith in Glasgow in the year 1880 (Coburn & Wallace, 2011, p3). Following this the Girls Guildry was a Scottish development for girls that was formed in 1900, which became part of the Girls Brigade in 1965 (The Girls Brigade, 2014). Baden Powell's first Scout camp in 1907 (The Scout Association, 2014) and *Scouting for Boys* was published in 1908, and this development led to the establishment of the Girl Guides in 1910 (Coburn & Wallace, 2011 p3-4).

Annette Coburn, Lecturer, Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, University of Strathclyde, and David Wallace, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, University of Strathclyde, write in *Youth Work in Communities and Schools*, (2011), to illuminate the development of youth work within Scotland starting in 1863, with the Most Rev Arthur Sweatman's paper to the Social Science Association of Edinburgh. The paper describes and advocates for club provision for youths, calling for,

Recreation, companionship, reading instruction, and all of a pure and healthy kind (Sweatman, 1863).

The morality of the young men was of prime importance to Sweatman. It is striking how much the language of this 1863 article resonates with the language and position of Sloterdijk in section 3.

Strathclyde Regional Councils 1984 policy document *Working with Young People* expressed this morality, but moved it to perhaps a more palatable position for the statutory context, a position of personal development.

Through this process it is hoped that young people are exposed to a number of experiences all of which will contribute to their personal development. Only in this way will youth provision become responsive to the varying needs and views of those it seeks to effect... An important aim of youth work therefore should be to offer opportunities for critical and responsible

participation among the rising generation (Strathclyde Regional Council, 2002, p183).

Statutory youth work aims are expressed as a provision of activity that is both hope filled and messy.

Coburn & Wallace outline the socialist influence on Scottish youth work from 1894 with the development of Socialist Sunday schools; Tom Anderson founded the first of these in Glasgow (Coburn & Wallace, 2011, p4). The authors map a path through the parallel development of pieces of youth work and the expanding literature that dealt with the age of adolescence influencing youth works growth and constitution. The authors plot points including; the construction of adolescence in the early 1900's; the inner city deprivation research of the Chicago School of Sociology, which gave rise to a narrative of young people as delinquent; the research from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in the 1970's, particularly its work on class as a formation of subculture and identity; pausing at the development of youth as a period of transition, which is less reliant on age as a signifier of staged development (2011, p4-5).

Through the developments outlined by Brierley and Coburn & Wallace, there is a distinct and conscious movement away from religious motivations being the main driver of youth work, towards the main focus of youth work being political aims and social actions. This division of youth work is represented by three different sectors carrying out youth work: government agencies; religious based projects; and 3rd sector charity agencies.

4.2.1 Scottish youth work policy

Under the *Scotland Act* 1998, youth work became a devolved matter. The Scottish Executive, (officially referred to as the Scottish Government since August 2007), formed YouthLink Scotland as the youth work agency for Scotland. This has led to policy developments that were separate to the rest of the UK.

The first major publication of this devolved youth work context was the *Step it Up* report, (2003), produced in partnership by Strathclyde University and The Princes Trust. *Step it Up* attempted to

first define the purpose of youth work, and secondly provide a framework for measuring the performance of youth work within Scotland. Youth work is defined as,

The central purposes of youth work are educational and are concerned with the personal and social development of young people (Milburn, Rowlands, Stephen, Woodhouse, Snieder & McIntyre, 2003, p11).

The key move this report makes is towards measurable and demonstrable outcomes of youth work. Therefore the report introduces the phrase 'effective youth work'. Detailing that effective youth work is designed to achieve specific, measurable and demonstrable outcomes in its work with young people. The purpose of effective youth work is to,

- Build self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Develop the ability to manage personal and social relationships.
- Create learning and develop new skills.
- Encourage positive group atmospheres.
- Build the capacity of young people to consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control.
- Develop a 'world view' that widens horizons and invites social commitment (2003, p12).

The second key publication was the Scottish Executive's *Working and Learning Together* (2004). This document laid out the policy blueprint for Scottish youth work, repositioning youth work within the newly formed Community Learning and Development (CLD) strategy, leaving behind the previous way of working, Community Education.

We see Community Learning and Development as central to 'social capital' – a way of working with communities to increase the skills, confidence, networks and resources they need to tackle problems and grasp opportunities. We want Community Learning and Development to bring together the best of what has been done under the banners of 'Community Education' and 'Community Development' to help individuals and communities tackle real issues in their lives through community action and community-based learning, (Scottish Executive, 2004, pvii).

The aim of this repositioning was to enable the creation of "a more socially just Scotland" (2004, p11). Within this new framework, national priorities for CLD were formed, in particular for young people,

- Achievement through learning for young people.
- Engaging with young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain a voice, influence and a place in society (2004, p8).

This policy change had a major effect on statutory youth work provision and partnership-working opportunities for partner projects.

YouthLink Scotland followed the publication of these documents by publishing the foundational

Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work, (2005). This small document defined the nature of youth work, and also confirmed and reinforced the purpose of youth work from *Step It Up*. YouthLink proposed that youth work has three essential definitive features.

Young people choose to participate.

The work must build from where young people are.

Youth work recognizes the young person and the youth workers as partners in a learning process (YouthLink, 2005, p2).

The statement includes a section on age range stating that the youth worker would work with the 11-25 year old age group and further pointing out that 11-18 would be the primary focus for youth work.

2007 saw the publication of the first strategy document specifically for the youth work sector from the devolved administration *Moving Forward, A strategy for young people through youth work*.

Our long term vision for youth work has two main elements: For young people in Scotland able to benefit from youth work opportunities which make a real difference to their lives; and a youth work sector equipped and empowered to achieve ongoing positive outcomes for young people now and in the future (Scottish Executive, 2007, p7).

Moving Forward focuses on promoting youth work as an actor within the wider policy agenda. The document sets out priorities for the youth work sector across Scotland.

Developing qualities such as self-respect, self-reliance, self-confidence, responsibility and a good work ethic in young people – young people taking their place and making a difference in the world today and in the future; **Developing life skills**, particularly communication and social skills; **Being listened to and being able to influence** provision of youth work opportunities and other services and policies which affect them; and Ensuring the **inclusion of all young people** regardless of background, race, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation (2007, p20).¹⁵

The publication of the Scottish Government's *Valuing Young People*, (2009), summed up the work under the Get it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) policy and how changes could be made for youth work agencies to support this framework. The GIRFEC policy is an attempt to ensure that in life every child has the support necessary to create a level of wellbeing that would "allow each child to grow and develop and reach their full potential" (Scottish Government, 2009, p10). It also reinforces youth works place under the Scottish Governments policy Curriculum for Excellence, which is a key document for reshaping the education sector within Scotland. *Valuing Young People* references National Outcome 4 of Curriculum for Excellence as key for youth work.

¹⁵ Use of bold in context

Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens (2009, p11).

Valuing Young People details youth works place within the nine pillars of support for every child.

These pillars are,

- Curriculum for Excellence practice;
- Supporting transitions;
- Youth-friendly health services;
- Services for young people;
- Preventing offending by young people;
- Information and accessible youth-friendly services;
- Youth work opportunities and approaches;
- Young people's voice and communications;
- Workforce development (2009, p13).

This solidifies youth work within Curriculum for Excellence practice. Significantly this puts youth work, where the young person is the primary client, on the same footing as other work with young people, such as prevention of offending work, where the primary client may not be the young person. This removes youth work from being the primary way to work with young people, to become one approach amongst many from a policy perspective.

Recently the Scottish Government has published the National Youth Work Strategy 2014, *Our ambitions for improving the life chances of young people in Scotland*. This policy has two main thrusts; primarily it seeks to engage with provision from the youth work sector by resourcing the workforce. Secondly it seeks to firmly integrate youth work within formal education. While historically youth work has bounced between education and social work, this document confirms the integration of youth work to the education theme within previous policy documents.

Steve Mallon critiques the Scottish youth work policy thrust in relation to CFB youth work in *Moving Forward Together*, (2008). Mallon, former Associate Secretary of the Mission and Discipleship Council, Church of Scotland, questions why the church, and faith-based youth work in general, had been forgotten by Government (Mallon, 2008 p51). Questioning if this faith-based absence is due a lack of confidence from the church (2008, p41-42)? Mallon ultimately concludes that these policy documents have opened the door for CFB youth work to engage with policy and contribute to the youth work task.

...the Church of Scotland is in a position to offer something to the achievement of good outcomes for Scotland's young people along with other agencies engaged in this work. Its recent history and experience of declining numbers of young people may have dented its

confidence and have allowed it to be forgotten as a significant player in the youth work sector by Government, other policymakers and perhaps even by itself, but its continued work around Scotland and its significant numbers of young people and volunteer workers involved in its youth work provision suggest that it should try to re-engage with government and other bodies about the work it is doing with young people (2008, p51).

4.4 A brief history of Christian Faith-Based youth work in the UK

This section will look at four key texts in the development of CFB youth work in the UK, assessing the engagement of youth work with technology and wider culture in order to map the development of the sector.

CFB youth work split off from the main thrust of youth work during the 1950's as the state took a lead in developing youth work along social and political lines (Sercombe, 2010, p31). This left CFB to develop its own methods and culture of youth work. Early CFB literature ranges from the How-to-Do-It style youth work handbook to the challenging memoir by an experienced youth worker. And there are significant gaps in the literature (Doyle & Smith, 2002). It is noticeable there has been a lack of focus on publication and writing from within the Scottish CFB youth work sector. This lack of focus on writing and publication has left the field of critical thinking and engagement within Scottish CFB youth work as under developed, ensuring key publications in the UK context are important for Scottish CFB youth work. These texts have included, *Christian Youth Work* by Ashton (1986), *Growing Up Evangelical* by Ward (1996), *Joined Up, An Introduction to Youth Work and Ministry* by Brierley (2002), and *Youth Work After Christendom* by Pimlott & Pimlott (2008).

Mark Ashton writes as the secretary of the Church Youth Fellowships Association in *Christian Youth Work*, (1986). Ashton addresses the idea of adolescence and how the church can respond (1986, p10). Ashton point out the dual nature of young people, being seen as desirable (1986, p14) and also a problem (1986, p15). Ashton finds adolescence a good and normal part of life (1986, p52). His ultimate aim in writing is to allow the youth worker to be freed from any model or method of evangelism that was current.

To work in obedience to Christ in the small and obscure ways that the kingdom of God often comes into our world, (see the parables of Matthew 13) (1986, p134).

When analysing young people's engagement with culture, the author guides away from sensationalist claims about the effect of TV and video (1986, p41), presenting the change from a society of readers to a society based on getting information from the TV (1986, p43), finishing by considering the role of fantasy and escape which the TV provides and doubting the role of advertising (1986, p44). Ashton leaves us with a picture of young people glued to the TV, yet this cultural engagement is promoting diversity within the young person's life (1986, p45).

In *Growing Up Evangelical*, (1996), Pete Ward, Senior Lecturer in Youth Ministry and Theological Education at King's College, London, assesses that evangelical Christianity had been successful in working with young people and this relationship has dominated how evangelical Christianity has subsequently formed itself (Ward, 1996, p9). This led to a view of young people as desirable (evidenced by employing a youth worker), but then the same young people being interpreted as being a threat when they enter into church (1996, p2), leading to the establishment of an evangelical Christian subculture of young people (1996, p11). Ward considers that this subculture could become a step towards genuine engagement with wider culture.

Our separate festivals and events may be places of encouragement but they also need to be launching pads for genuine dialogue with the wider culture (1996, p220).

Brierley writes on the growing dualism between secular youth work and sacred youth ministry, in *Joined Up, An Introduction to Youth Work and Ministry* (2002). Brierley calls for a joint approach based on a reading of the incarnation as presented by Jesus Christ (Brierley, 2002, p191-192). While he does not deal directly with technology, with his views on engagement with wider culture he echoes Ward, advocating youth workers and ministers to engage and be active within wider cultural activities. However he nuances this with a belief that youth workers need to engage and listen to the perceptions of young people on culture (2002, p139). Listening functions as a revelatory activity that illuminates culture and the viewpoint of the young person.

Pimlott & Pimlott, in *Youth Work After Christendom*, (2008) write from both a practitioner perspective, Nigel Pimlott is National Youth Work Development Advisor for Frontier Youth Trust, and academic perspective, Jo Pimlott is Assistant Director of the Midlands Centre for Youth Ministry, St John's College. The book aims to outline the way CFB youth work in the UK has

struggled to adjust to a post-Christendom¹⁶ age (Pimlott & Pimlott, 2008, p3-7). They point to changes CFB youth work needs to make in order to adjust to this new age, including its use of technology. This developing technology is both aimed at young people, and used significantly by young people; the negatives of this targeting is apparent to youth workers and parents (2008, p118). But the positive viewpoint needs to be advocated, and a binary pro or anti-technology stance needs to be moderated by the key question addressing “How technology could be used more effectively to resource work with young people post-Christendom?” (2008, p118). Pimlott & Pimlott suggest a contextual assessment leading to the compiling of a technology plan would give room for considering what technology is helpful for the youth worker and the young person, ensuring the technology is appropriate for the work planned (2008, p122).

What we have seen is CFB youth work has moved from a space where it is wary of technology, through forming its own subculture, to engaging with wider culture through listening to perspective of young people, to deliberately selecting, engaging, and reflecting upon technology.

4.5 Youth work vs. youth ministry

Howard Sercombe in *Youth Work Ethics* addresses this topic. Sercombe's examination of youth work ethics and proselytizing is short but illuminating. While tracing the history of youth work back through religious organizations within most Western countries, Sercombe explains how theology as an exploratory schema was dominant (Sercombe, 2010, p31). As we move forward on the timeline into the 50's and 60's, this theology is moved from a position of primacy to one of equality, adjusting to be in line with political and social analysis.

The move away from theological justifications for intervention was accelerated by partnerships with the state, the doctrines of the separation of church and state generally required government supported youth work to be secular, at least on the surface, (2010, p31).

While the work of proselytizing is a related activity carried out by religious organizations. Sercombe importantly points out that this conversion seeking activity is not the only or primary activity of CFB organizations (2010, p32). He argues that youth work with a religious intent can be regarded as youth work but not all work with young people done from a faith perspective is youth

¹⁶ Post Christendom is a term applied to the time after the Constantinian era has ended, and Christianity finds itself moving from a position of dominance to a position lesser import. (Pimlott & Pimlott, 2008, p37)

work. Distinguishing between youth ministry and youth work,

...It is absolutely legitimate for the young person's spiritual life to be one of the questions we pursue in the youth work encounter; not telling the answers or to tell them what they should believe (because youth work is not about telling), but to listen, to assess, to clarify, to contribute and, if required, to refer (2010, p33).

Pimlott & Pimlott, writing about CFB youth work specifically point to examples such as the Hot Chocolate project in Dundee. The Hot Chocolate project, operated from within the church, seems absent of a proselytizing activity while developing values and principles of enabling young people to grow, to develop, to be involved, to explore and to be supported (Pimlott & Pimlott, 2008, p78). For Pimlott & Pimlott this is one of the keys of post-Christendom youth work.

It is focused on witness not control; journeying not settling; mission not maintenance; movement not institution, (2008, p78).

The question of youth ministry vs. youth work debate is contested. For Sercombe the difference lies within the practice of the worker, (the youth worker seeks to listen, and the youth minister seeks to tell). Ward in *Youthwork and the Mission of God*, (1997), doesn't consider a difference between the terms, as the key to good youth work is an ability to be flexible in approach (Ward, 1997, p4). Across one week of youth work, one volunteer could fulfil both roles at different times and in different contexts. Perhaps even with the same young person.

Allan Clyne, a PhD candidate at Strathclyde University and youth worker, has published research into this issue. Clyne published a study of CFB youth work *Towards an Understanding of Christian Faith-Based Work with Young People: The Methodologies and Purposes Underpinning Christian Work with Young People in Scotland*, (2012). In this article Clyne provides results and analysis of research carried out with 110 CFB youth workers in Scotland, using quantitative methodologies. Clyne explores several aspects of their work, including their purposes, aims and values. The study started by asking CFB youth workers to describe their job title. The range of full time and volunteer participants were given the choice between; youth pastor, youth minister, youth worker, youth leader, youth and family or other. 45 of the 110 respondents said they would be called youth worker, 6 indicated youth pastor and 4 choose youth minister. Clyne points out that this indicates that the CFB youth workers should adopt a methodology closely aligned with that discussed in the work of Jeffs & Smith or, Sercombe's listening function if they are youth workers as opposed to youth ministers (Clyne, 2012).

The first part of the main research focused on Clyne asking methodological questions of the youth work practice of the participants. To investigate this, he provided six methodological statements that could be categorised into three approaches; *Informal Education, Curriculum through Praxis* and *Received Perspective*. In the results of this part of the study, 40 of the 85 respondents indicated they used a *Received Perspective*, defined as a perspective handed down from church leadership to youth worker, who then hands it down to young person. Conversely 11 of the 85 indicated they used an *informal education* approach, (2012, p29), aligned to the definition of youth work provided by Jeffs & Smith above. Clyne's second main research task was to examine the aims of their work with young people. Utilising an amended categorisation of CFB aims from the work of Carole Pugh, Clyne sought to categorise the responses on aims into three categories. Each category has its own purpose and values as detailed in table 2. Clyne found that of the 58 participants, who responded to this question, 27 had *Conversion as Purpose*, 19 had a *Broader Perspective* and finally *Christian Relational Care* had 12 respondents.

Category	Purpose	Values
Conversion as purpose	To tell young people about Jesus. To meet the needs of the young people.	My living faith in Jesus. Bible truths.
A Broader Way	To improve the quality for life for young people in disadvantaged social and economic circumstances.	Every person made in the image of GOD i.e. having a spiritual capacity.
Christian Relational Care	Help young adults to grow in confidence and self-awareness. Encourage the participation of young adults in their local parish	Listening, Empowerment.

Table 2. Categories of Christian Faith-Based youth work aims (Clyne, 2012, p33-6)

Clyne finishes by unifying both parts of the studies in a multi-dimensional table. Both axis reveals that the *Received Perspective* methodology intersection with *Conversion as a Purpose* is the largest methodology and motivation of CFB youth workers. Whereas the intersection of the methodology of *Informal Education* with the three categories detailed in table 2 provides the lowest three areas of response (2012, p37). Clyne is careful to point out that the sample ranged from full time employee to youth work degree holders to volunteers who help out for an hour each week, as such a range of views will be represented. It is also striking that the figures show a clear peak for the *Conversion as Purpose* intersection with *Received Perspective* methodology, while the other 43 youth workers answered across the board, showing CFB youth work is a broad spread of values, aims and methods. This variety shows,

All the respondents are operating within a Christian Faith perspective—the 'reality' of the Christian faith is important to them at a foundational level and are woven into their practice

in intricate complex and diverse ways that are not easy to affiliate with any one methodology of practice, (2012, p40).

...
Perhaps the challenge that is faced by youth workers is not to overcome a faith/non-faith divide. Perhaps the task for youth workers, from whatever background is to endeavour to pursue its unique calling to support young people, through their social, emotional, and spiritual development, (2012, p43).

This range of approaches is also prevalent within two models developed by Griffiths and Wells for CFB ministry engagement outwith the church. The Griffiths model is built on one-off transient encounters whereas Wells model is one of long term community engagement. Both are built on studies in Christology.

4.5.1 Griffiths challenge to relational youth ministry

Steve Griffiths, former director of the Centre for Youth Ministry at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, in *Models for Youth Ministry*, (2013), questions if the current interpretation of relational youth ministry is actually of practical use? (Griffiths, 2012, p2). Griffiths questions the nature of Christian youth ministry, asking if it is built on a lazy construct of Christology (2013, p3), this has led youth ministry to cede power to the young person within the relationship (2012, p3). Creating a long-term model of youth work that is unfaithful to scripture, impractical for a three-year youth ministry contract and leaves youth ministry impotent when dealing with the spirituality of young people (2012, p4). Griffiths interprets Christ as having a “hit and run” ministry (2012, p5). Arguing that Jesus dealt in Kairos time rather than Chronos time (2012, p7-9). Griffiths tackles this issue by introducing a reinforced Christology to youth ministry that focuses on the one off relationship (2012, p14). This change of focus for CFB youth ministers from relational to “Hit and Run”, from quantity of time to quality of time, from long term focus to short term focus is a vital question for youth ministry to examine.

4.5.2 Wells model of community engagement

Anglican Priest and Visiting Professor at Kings College London, Samuel Wells in *Living Without Enemies*, (2011), outlines four kinds of community engagement. For Wells a combination of these approaches to social engagement are necessary to move towards a theory of embodiment based on a study of Jesus life. Wells presents the four kinds of social engagement as Working For, Working With, Being With, and Being For.

Working For is the conventional, professional model, where one assumes that the other is the problem and that you yourself are bringing the solution.

Working With is more like community organising where everyone brings their skills to the table to address the problem.

Being With is where you don't focus on a problem, and you don't necessarily bring your skills, but you relish the other side for their own sake.

Being For is where you orientate your life to advocating for the other in such a way that doesn't require face-to-face contact of any kind (Wells & Owen, 2011, p23-26).

Wells views the categories of Being With and Working With as the long-term model of engagement used by Jesus. The category of Working For he assigns to the last week of Jesus life in Jerusalem, he considers the three years of Jesus active ministry to be Working With. Wells argues that the 30 years Jesus spend Being With people before commencing his ministry was key to his subsequent ministry. For CFB youth work this time given to different styles of engagement is vital to consider in light of Clyne's findings above.

4.6 The role of play within youth work

Play in youth work is a relatively unspoken term. Of the literature within this research, play has been conspicuous by its absence. Play has been associated with the youth worker as entertainer model of youth work/ministry. The youth worker using the entertainer model is seen as a dilettante. Nash in *Christian Youth Work in Theory and Practice*, (2014), points to the links between wisdom and playfulness. Presenting a reading of Proverbs 8, which sees wisdom as both playful and maternal. For Nash this offers a contrast to the cerebral image of pursuing wisdom and the model of entertainer.

So in pursuing wisdom we are building on our capacity to play ... If we can see wisdom in the image of the child, then it underscores the primacy of play in wise living ... as Christian youth workers this playfulness may be something that characterizes our ministry but looks very different from being an entertainer (Nash, 2014, p18).

The slim volume *Dodgeball Theology*, (2012) by Blair Spindle, the University Pastor at Southern Nazarene College, is one of the only current considerations of youth work, theology, play and imagination. For Spindle play and fun are essential but often one of the first things to be ejected within a serious youth ministry.

Resist the temptation to remove play from the curriculum. Imaginative youth ministry proudly sounds the call of deep play to the world and the church. Spirituality and play are not mutually exclusive. Depth and fun are not opposites. Often these elements are best when paired together (2012, p33).

Spindle goes on to outline the goal of imaginative playful youth ministry as "wholeness in life", (2012, p42), it is founded on voluntary participation and creates a moment in time (2012 p49), it is alive with joy (2012, p73), and reflective of the dance of the trinity, (2012, p81). For Spindle a theology of play is necessary within youth work.

I've realized that youth ministry is good at flashy programme, high energy outreaches, stellar mission experiences, and amazing Thursday-night-camp alter calls, but youth ministry is often deficient in the call to contemplative, deep, lasting, joyful, passionate relationship and conversation with the living Christ... We have to take time for authentic leisure...this is the place of true joy. This is a place of play and replenishment (2012, p105).

4.7 From theory to practice

Having examined the relevant theory and studies carried out within a Scottish youth work context we will use this theory to inform the research process and interpretation of research findings as detailed in chapter 5.

5 Research findings on youth work

In this section we will consider how research participants define youth work for their practice, investigate the role of play within youth work and examine the influence of funding and outcomes upon the youth workers. Assessing where youth work practice is on the informal/formal education continuum before reacting to Griffiths challenge to relational youth ministry, Wells model of community engagement, and the professionalisation of youth work. This will answer our first central question, how do those active in the youth work task, define youth work within Scotland?

5.1 Practitioners definition of youth work

In order to assess how youth work is using computer games, the foundational task is to define what youth work is for each worker. This has a revelational aspect, revealing the foundations for the investigation to build upon. The interviewees were clear that youth work primarily is a work of supporting growth and development within a young person.

We aim in our drop in youth clubs, to provide a safe space where there are leaders who can provide a good role model for the young people, a space for them to be listened too, and space for the young people to grow and develop as their own individuals where they are not judged by the staff and the other young people for who they are (Interviewee 1).

You've got to get that relationship in place, so you're finding out where the young person is in their life and what's going on with them, and finding ways you can support them to move on in their life to whatever it is they are interested in (Interviewee 12).

This support role was carried out within a number of spheres; it was identified in numerous ways within interviews, as detailed in table 3 (below).

Six interviewees referred explicitly to supporting religious motivations within their work.

Personally I try to interact, live with, engage with, young people in order to help them. I suppose the correct answer from [my employer's viewpoint] is help them grow personally, socially, spiritually. Then I guess to be with them to be a positive face? To show them Christ (Interview 2).

If it's particularly Christian youth work, establish their relationship with God and work out who they are. And everything that we do should in some way point towards that (Interview 6).

Supportive activity mentioned during interviews	Participants
Listening to young people.	1, 3 & 11
Providing good role models.	1
Building relationships.	4, 11, & 12
Intentional engagement by youth worker.	6 & 13
Assessment of young people's needs.	8
Process of assessment discerning.	9
Spending appropriate time with each young person.	11
Getting alongside young people.	13
A focus on the process not product of the youth work.	14
Openness to change that is double sided.	13
A non-judgemental attitude.	1

Table 3. Participant responses detailing the support function of youth work

While other interviewees spoke of helping young people develop spiritual awareness, (interviewees 4 & 13). Interviewee 3 spoke of “a voluntary opportunity for young people to explore the gospel”. Only two interviewees spoke of Christian proselytizing as an explicit part of their youth work. Interviewee 14 spoke of their projects religious aims inhabiting and embodying their work on other subjects such as anti-sectarianism. Within this sample seven interviewees were employed directly by churches or charities with religious aims. The six who mentioned religious motivation were employed by six of these religious projects.

Beyond the supportive function the processes of youth work were deemed to have effects such as building resilience, (interviewee 1); conscientization, (interviewee 5); character formation, (interviewee 4); achieving young people's goals, developing the self-confidence of a young person and building up the competences of a young person, (interviewee 8); building on the strengths of a young person, (interviewee 7); and providing space for a young person to build their identity, (interviewee 13). These effects were positive and desirable.

Build on their strengths from whatever point of their life that they come in, and you say it's a partnership. You work as a partnership with the young people that you meet, you cannot just force it; it has to be a partnership and voluntary (Interview 7).

Interviewee 3, 7, 11 and 14, all pointed to the voluntary nature of youth work. For these interviewees' youth work is a voluntary activity for young people to participate in a partnership between the youth worker and young person, where both are equal and both are open to change

within the process. For interviewee 11, the young person leads within this process. Interviewee 2 makes a specific mention of living with youth people that reflect an understanding of an incarnational imperative.

When considering the definition of youth work only one interviewee mentioned any of the Scottish Governments strategy documents for youth work, the *Curriculum for Excellence* document when answering this question. Other foundational documents from within Scottish youth work such as *Step it Up, Working and Learning Together, Moving Forward, A Strategy for Improving Young Peoples Chances Through Youth Work*, and YouthLink Scotland's *Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work* were notable by their absence.

One interesting issue raised within this defining conversation was the issue of safety. This was address by several of the youth workers, including providing a safe space for young people, and a space for building community together.

We also, create spaces across the community. Although It's about three places really, where we do informal stuff, informal education, where we put Christian volunteers alongside young people, with the aim of creating community, and to some degree exposing young people to Christians who are perfectly normal people, who love to have fun and care for one another (Interviewee 3).

One interviewee specified the physical space they worked from as the site where youth work and community building happened, (interviewee 9). One interviewee based their work outside a physical base working on the streets and reclaiming spaces for play that the community was not using, (interviewee 15).

5.1.1 Play within youth work

The role of play within youth work was a point of discussion within the interviews. For all the interviewees, play was something that was necessary and definitive about youth work practice, with the exception of interviewee 4. The linkage of play and building relationships was evident from across the interviewees, with thirteen responses linked to play and relationships directly. Interviewees 1, 2, 3 and 7 drew out how play affected young people being able to connect to staff,

Play offers young people who are not necessarily wanting to connect with the staff a space when they can be involved in something and have a sense of belonging, without having to make that something that's widely known (Interviewee 1).

Interviewee 2 spoke of how play provides a space for adults to actually engage in conversation with young people. Overcoming shyness on the part of the youth worker.

It's probably as beneficial for leaders as it is for young people. A lot of leaders are shy, in order to go up and strike a conversation, or if it was just the manic running about it's harder to build that relationship. But if you're playing a game together, then your focus is grabbed (Interviewee 2).

While interviewee 1 and 12 spoke of how play encouraged connections with staff. This was specifically evident for a young person who may be new in the youth work context, (interviewee 1). For interviewee 12, play allows young people to see youth workers in a different light, as someone who plays. Interviewees 1, 3 and 10 spoke of play as way of levelling power interactions between young people and youth workers. Play had the same levelling effect for the power interactions between young people and their peer group for interviewees 2 and 3.

... but actually, also, we just like to have fun, fun together and we just like to share experience and games offer that, and can be a bit of a leveller because who has the power in the game? Well it's depending on how the game works because it could be anyone in the room. It kills off any, especially if you're doing any youth work in school, it can be a great way of eschewing the idea of "I am in charge and you must do what I say". The classic child / adult model in schools (Interviewee 3).

The place of play and its interactions were viewed as having a strong role within the development of social skills for the young people involved in play. For interviewee 3, one of the games they played provided a functional structure to start this developmental process. Two interviewees picked up the role of play in developing teamwork, specifically building trust amongst team members, (interviewee 1), and equalising levels of participation along with developing awareness of self and others, (interviewee 10). For interviewee 7 the role of play is foundational to learning, relationship forming, and developing the social skills of the young people, that brings balance to the power dynamic between youth worker and young person.

The whole play thing, for instance the pool table is a great tool. Come in, play pool, that's where you build your relationship up, you start talking about things and if you don't have that you've not got a relationship, you've not got any groups, you've not got anything going on. The relationship is very, very important. We have that with the pool and the table tennis. It's the chance and they'll come ask you do you want to play table tennis? Because they want to talk to you about something. So you'll go and play table tennis and you'll speak about something and then something will come out of that (Interviewee 7).

As this sense of belonging was built upon, play creates safe space for young people to engage and be

young with each other.

You see on a Friday night when they come in, it's two hours of safe space for them. They just revert to these little kids and half the time you're just like "Aaaargh ... love you". But a lot of the time you just think that's what it is, it is a safe space. Where you're actually not having to worry about 2 million things that are going on with family and the rest of it (Interview 6).

Interviewee 6 brings out the ability of youth work to use play to provide safe space to be children again and regards space to enjoy being young as a basic human right for young people. Interviewee 1 spoke of youth work giving permission for young people to play, and interviewee 14 contrasted youth works use of games, with the speed at which young people are expected to grow up.

Concluding that play which remembers that young people are young people, "will be awesome and it will be good for your soul" (14). The space for play confirms a sense of being cared for and in some cases loved (interviewee 1).

For interviewee 10 this space of play is crucial to the formation of alternative ways of being, opening up a foundational questioning of human existence.

It's about it being ok to not take everything too serious all the time. It's about switching off from it, and then when you switch off from it, you can learn in different ways. That's when it's, you know, all about your imagination and making up an imaginary world but basing it on how you like things that work in the real world, what you would transfer across to your imaginary world. You know that's when I see the scope of play in this type of work (Interviewee 10).

This imaginative experimenting, a gentle revolution, was solidified by enjoying the process, play at its core is very enjoyable. Play, for interviewees 3, 4, and 14, was a keen part of learning within youth work, where the school classroom-learning model was contrasted and subverted by youth works use of play. Interviewees 10 and 13 both viewed the role of play as being something that provides a contrast to the current way you were thinking. Interviewees 4, 10 and 14 spoke of creating a playful fun atmosphere for learning to contrast previous negative experiences of school. Interviewees 11 and 13 spoke of learning being facilitated through play given the way young people embody play and learning within a full engagement state. Interviewees 5 and 9 spoke of how play keeps learning in the youth work process.

Play is really valuable because it takes away the pressure of the result and it just keeps in the learning of the process (Interview 5).

This contrasted greatly with the response of interviewee 4.

I'm not sure actually I've always thought of the word play, actually. I am aware of the theory of play and learning through play. I have only ever seen it apply to primary school at the oldest actually. So I've never heard it in the context of youth work I'm sad to say (Interviewee 4).

For interviewee 4 the work that they do with young people was formal, and as such play wasn't a factor within that work. Interviewee 4 did utilise a playful attitude to the work, detailing how the project endeavoured to make the formal learning situation more fun using ice breaker games or providing sweets on the table to contrast with school. Ultimately this was a voluntary programme, and they considered that if the experience was not fun then people would not return.

No one mentioned play being inherently spiritual or having a religious function. Interviewee 3 expressed that the role of play was an attraction into CFB youth work.

5.1.2 Funding and outcomes

One major force within youth work practice is funding. Thirteen of the fifteen interviewees said their projects were part funded by charity funds such as The Robertson Trust or the National Lottery. These projects include third sector organizations, churches and statutory bodies. Eight projects took funding from local statutory sources and seven took funding from national statutory sources. Seven projects provided their core funding base by internal funding, these seven projects would be classed as CFB projects. Only one project spoke of trading, using a social enterprise model, to generate funds for their work. This funding base is important as it comes with agreed outcomes for the work that is funded, which created a need to explain the work of the organisation within the stated outcomes of the funding grant.

[The funding] has some very specific outcomes about sectarianism. So that is formal and that works. But what we try and do, and it doesn't always work ... is try to draw them together so that our informal outcomes of building communities, of reinvigorating worship, of peace and justice issues, that are the values of the [employing agency] fit alongside when it comes to other things (Interviewee 14).

The outcomes that interviewees 2, 7, 8, 11, 12 and 15 spoke of were based in local and national government funding strategies. Interviewee 12 specifically mentioned the *Curriculum for Excellence* policy framework in relation to outcomes. Only one interviewee, 13, spoke of a context that required no formal outcomes associated with their work. Interviewee 4 spoke of youth work within a work skills programme. In this programme the young person would be given a score based on soft and hard employability skills at the outset, and progress would be measured on an ongoing basis giving results that could be plotted on a skills development graph.

When a person first starts with those we go through an assessment with them. We get to

know them for a couple weeks and assess them based on things they need for a job, say core skills like reading and writing, confidence and social skills. It's out of 100 and you get a score at the start. The idea is you gradually see an increase as they spend time with us ... which is completely subjective (Interviewee 4).

In contrast to the outlined system above, Interviewee 10 detailed their work being process driven, based on the young person, as such the outcome was based on going through the process rather than specific outcome targets.

Within these two responses, of interviewees 4 and 10, we see the difference between Community Learning and Development and Community Education illustrated. While Community Education was centred on the process, consequently youth work was also focused on this process. Community Learning and Development intently focuses on the outcome that the process brings about. This change from process to outcome has accompanied a policy shift to integrate youth work into a stronger relationship with formal education processes and methodology, such as deliverability and the framework to measure and assess effectiveness within youth work. While interviewee 4 has a very formal context of work with young people it is questionable if this is a youth work process? Given the definitions of youth work as discussed above, this diverting of outcomes for funding is a significant issue.

The way youth agencies quantify learning and outcomes as per funding agreements were varied. Interviewees 1, 11, and 12 spoke of awarding young people specific qualifications. Interviewee 12 spoke of how this was managed in partnership between the youth work project and a local further education college. Interviewees 1, 3, 7, 8, 11, 12 and 14, spoke of using pre-existing frameworks of general qualifications to award young people with certification through the Dynamic Youth Awards or the Youth Achievement scheme. Interviewee 1 spoke of embodying a stealth approach to this certification.

Ask a young person and they're all to do with play. Ask a staff member and the majority of the time there is an outcome associated with it. We do an awful lot of stealth education around here because young people don't like outcomes, they don't like learning, all these kind of things are associated with very negative connotations (Interviewee 1).

Interviewees 8, 11 and 12 also mentioned this approach to certification. The challenge to this approach of certificating learning comes from interviewee 10,

Does that not identify and quantify a deficit; therefore by achieving the certificate only then, do you achieve recognition of those particular social skills. If you don't have the certificate does that not then, maybe, leave other people feeling like they don't have those skills? (Interviewee 10).

5.1.3 Informal/formal education continuum

One of the key aspects of youth work is its educational nature. Although regarded as informal learning, the educational aspect of youth work is increasingly being subjected to formal learning outcomes and assessments. The interviewees felt that youth work was informal by nature but the tensions of formal education were clear. Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 13 spoke of youth work being mixed in approach. Youth work needed to be context dependent (13). Interviewee 3 spoke of youth work being informal when on its own terms, but when operating under the terms of formal education, in a school context, or under an evangelical organizational management or a church Sunday school, youth work had to be more formal in its approach, methodology and assessment. Interviewee 2 also spoke of youth work being informal but that this informality was an access point to becoming part of a formal Christian education programme of bible study and discipleship. For interviewee 2 moving from the informal to the formal was a youth work aim.

The difference in approach from each project was notable, illustrated by the divide between interviewee 11 and 15. One project is a pioneering formal education organization; the other is a pioneering informal education organization. For Interviewee 11 the youth work was based on a model of education being a deliberate, intentional action on behalf of the young person and youth worker.

We try and track progression through setting personal targets and recognizing achievements (Interviewee 11).

For interviewee 15, play has a revelatory role. The practice this worker is involved with is based on young people engaging in play on the streets, reclaiming waste ground as safe space to play in and on, and using Human Rights legislation to shape the approach of the youth work.

The work we do increases confidence and self-esteem through play. It's about creating a safe environment to play and take risks (Interviewee 15).

While both projects differ in their approach to working with young people both projects provide formal training opportunities for young people to become youth workers within their organisation.

5.1.4 Griffiths challenge to relational youth ministry

Interviewees 1, 2, 4, 13 and 14 all agreed that what was needed was an approach to youth ministry

which embodied both an ability to act in a “hit and run” capacity and also in a relational capacity. Interviewee 1 gave an illustration of how long-term relationship building led to facilitating one off opportunities for young people. Interviewee 2 questioned if someone walked into the open youth club provision operated from the church hall, would a young person leave knowing the workers were Christians? Interviewee 5 detected a cultural awareness of the person of Jesus Christ which provided the basis for youth ministers to open conversations and have a base level understanding to perform “Hit and Run” youth work from. Conversely interviewee 13 considered Griffiths analysis of relational youth work to be missing the mark

...and that relational youth work isn’t just about you creating a relationship between you and the young person. But about fostering relationships between them and the other people that are there, and that can become a broader thing when it comes to working with communities (Interviewee 13).

Some of the interviewees questioned the validity of the comparison of CFB youth work with the ministry of Jesus. Interviewees 5, 12, and 13 questioned if the itinerant nature of Jesus ministry created dissonance for the comparison with youth work in Scotland.

Jesus travelled. He didn’t stay in one place for very long, and the disciples he had with him, it was very much relational work. So for a youth worker that is located in one place it’s hard for me to focus on the single interaction. And it’s likely I’m going to be having more than that (Interviewee 14).

5.1.5 Wells model of community engagement

For interviewees 6, 10 and 11, Wells community engagement model was applicable to youth work, with interviewee 6 viewing youth work as Being With. Interviewee 10 viewed youth work as Working With, and interviewee 14 viewing youth work as on a sliding scale between both the Being With and Working With positions outlined. Interviewee 6 picked up on the changing power dynamic within Being With a young person, questioning was this an opportunity for shallowness within the youth work relationship. Interviewee 14 picked up on the issues of professional and personal boundaries within the category of Being With young people. Interviewee 10 linked Working With to youth work with professional standards, pointing out that youth workers should not in normal life be doing youth work style activities with young people who are not relatives, also assessing that Working With allows young people to negotiate the parameters of the relationship. This negotiation was ongoing and an active part of youth work.

10 - But you can renegotiate the rules anyway. So you may have a particular event that you are going to, or whatever, and you may use all core rules, but there might be other cases that you need to stick to, or something that you may be a bit more lenient with.

Researcher - And that can be negotiated case-by-case, as things come round.

10 - So one example we went to Alton Towers. And I get such a fright on the ride that I said the word "Fuck" in one extended two-minute scream. And this is hilarious, and you know, I'm not going to be disciplined for it, everybody just had a laugh, I had a laugh because I got such a fright, but you know I swore, and that was, that, I'm a human being and I think they like that element of it (Interviewee 10).

In this section we assessed how participants define youth work for their practice. Examined the role of play within youth work, and the influence of funding and outcomes upon the youth workers. Investigated where youth work practice is on the informal / formal education continuum. Considered Griffiths challenge to relational youth ministry and Wells model of community engagement. Before briefly hearing thoughts on professionalism within youth work.

5.2 Youth work discussion

This section will consider both the theory of chapter 4 and the participant's responses from the above section of chapter 5.

Putting together four definitions of youth work from chapter 4, Jeffs & Smith, *Step It Up, Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work* and *Get it Right for Every Child*, we can say that youth work focuses on young people and encourages the fostering of association, relationship and community. Youth work is friendly, accessible and responsive while acting with integrity. Youth work takes place in a context where young people choose to participate. Youth work builds from where the young people are and recognizes the young person and youth workers as partners in a learning relationship. Youth work is inclusive of all young people, based in education and is a learning relationship. It can be evaluated against these central educational purposes by looking at personal and social development. In particular the building of self-esteem and self-confidence, and the development of an ability to manage personal and social relationships. Also where youth work has created learning and developed new skills and where positive group atmospheres have been encouraged. This evaluation could also include building the capacity of young people to consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control while also developing a world view that widens horizons and invites social commitment. Other qualities to be developed include a good work ethic and communication skills. This statement defines youth work for Scotland, its nature, its priorities,

and what measurable difference it should make. Sercombe's definition is shorter, within his examination he addresses these points, but looks for what is significantly different about youth work as many of the points made above could also be claimed by social work or formal education. His short definition of youth work is tightly focused on what youth work can reasonably claim as a unique selling point. Sercombe explains youth work starts with the young person. That's whom the work is for and about, that's where difference is measured, within the social context of the young person.

Examining the responses of the participants to the question what is youth work? The responses that were received could be categorized into youth work nature, youth work priorities, and what difference youth work makes and can be seen in table 4.

Youth work nature	Youth work priorities	What difference youth work makes
Intentional engagement. Listening to young people. Providing good role models. Building relationships. Spending appropriate time with each young person. Providing space to build identity. Voluntary engagement by young people. Space of equality between worker and young person. Young person leads the process. Safe space for young people.	Supporting growth. Supporting development. Assessment of the needs of young people. To show them Christ. Voluntary opportunities to explore the gospel.	Building resilience. A growing conscientization. Spiritual awareness. Character Formation. Setting and achieving goals. Competences of the young person. Building on the strengths of the young person. Establish a relationship with God.

Table 4. Youth work definition from participant's responses

This grouping of responses reveals that when asked what youth work is, some of the responses

match clearly with the contemporary theory within Scottish youth work, yet other aspects don't match up. Intentional engagement could correlate to Sercombe's professional relationship, although professional and intentional are different. The word professional implies a relationship that is grounded within a code of ethics, offering expectations of how this will be managed and operated. The word intentional implies the work carried out will not be accidental without giving assurances about the quality of youth work. While Sercombe is definite and provocative in his use of the word professional, the participants in the study were less committed to a word like professional. Interviewees spoke of building relationships but none qualified what the relationship was or what the relationships goals were in the manner of Sercombe. The lack of a qualification for the type of relationship that would be built within the responses of the participants is interesting. It was noteworthy that interviewees didn't describe youth work as educational. The primary way youth work is understood in theory is as an educational process. It was implied that youth work was educational through the use of reference to learning, but the lack of mention of this basic conception, that youth work is educational in nature is noteworthy. Does youth work have a lack of confidence when it comes to making definite strong statements about its aims, methods and purpose?

It is also noteworthy that several interviewees spoke of youth work as providing safety or a safe space for young people. The viewpoint of the young person's world being unsafe is concerning. It is interesting that safety, as a concept of youth work provision or function, is absent from within the policy document formulations that govern Scottish youth work.

These same policy documents from the The Scottish Government have the effect of widening the youth work sector. Traditional youth work method and practices are being put alongside youth justice work, or the work with young people from a health perspective. While this seems inherently sensible, the question of what is youth work is at the core of Sercombe's work. The interviewees rarely spoke of about direct religious motivation or religious practice within their youth work. This was interesting as CFB youth workers make up more than half of the participants within this research. The lens offered by Clyne may help interpret this finding. Clyne's research points to the term youth work being applied within CFB work as a generic term for anyone who works with young people, as opposed to a specific way of working. As such when Clyne asks about methodology and aims and purposes the responses he receives seems to illustrate a misunderstanding of the youth work term. Youth work, Clyne finds, covers a multitude of roles and

positions along the intersection of CFB youth work methodologies and aims and objectives, this contrasts with the clarity from Sercombe. The question that Clyne's findings raises for further investigation are focused on the uses of the term youth work by CFB youth workers. Is this misuse of the term a deliberate act or a misunderstanding of the terminology? If so why is this the case?

One example of this lack of clarity revolves around the role of play within youth work. Play is inherent to youth work but little examined. Fourteen participants used play in their work, and it seemed core to the building of relationships between young person and youth leader, to the levelling of power dynamics within this relationship and also acting as a revelational agent within the youth work process. This utilization of play is interesting as reference to play was absent from the responses within the defining of youth work conversation. The participants offered no reason for this, but the work by Nash may point to a perception of youth work as playing with young people being a phrase with negative connotations. Whereas Nash considers play as bringing wisdom, converting playing with children from a negative to a positive. This is an important shift of understanding what play is and how it interacts with the youth work task. More research on play and youth work is necessary.

While play is under considered, the role of funding is a large consideration. The participants within this research project have reflected on the role of funding in influencing what youth work is. With funding from statutory and charity sources now being involved in financial arrangements of most agencies, the worker has cause to consider if the primary commitment is to the young person or is the primary commitment to the agencies aims and objectives, and a need to ensure the meeting of funding objectives. While this is realistic and pragmatic, the question has to be asked of the benefit of this arrangement. Seven participants indicated that all funding came from internal fund raising, or parent CFB sources. From the research of Clyne we can see that around 40% of CFB workers are working under a Received Perspective methodology. While this simplifies the relationship with the funder, (do what they tell you to do), it does create an ambiguity of aim and priority for youth work. This is troublesome, as good youthwork needs a solid foundation to build upon.

The consideration of an informal/education basis for participants is notable. Participants are rejecting the dichotomies that are used to abstract and analyse youth work, providing nuanced answers, choosing to provide examples and answers that reflected context and the expectations

upon both young person and youth worker. The introduction of youth work into schools is a key mechanic for a wider relationship with formal education. Youth work within schools becomes more formal and structured within that physical space. For youth work within a youth club setting the informal approach is taken. This is significant as it points to an awareness of method and consideration of context, which was absent from the responses to the definition of youth work question. This allows youth work to partner more with formal education, while retaining its difference, allowing a conversation to develop between methods and approaches. This conversation can be beneficial to both participants.

The foundational framework put forward by Griffiths for CFB workers is one that may prove to be problematic. It seems strange to discount the 30 years before Jesus started his ministry. The second problem is that it further divides youth work and youth ministry. While in the light of Clyne that could be useful, on the ground the ability to fulfil a number of roles as the context demands is valuable. Contrasting this would be the approach of Wells that fits within the corresponding open method of Church. Wells model of community engagement shows a way to do ministry that is based on Being With people. As a model it is remarkably applicable to CFB youth work, allowing for clarity of engagement, and clear linking with the ministry of Jesus. While Wells model maintains space for proselytizing to play a role, his community engagement model is much more in sync with the understanding of Post Christendom youth work from Pimlott & Pimlott. It also corresponds better to the critical responses of the participants to Griffiths work.

6 Game studies

This section will explore of games studies, the academic study of computer games. Examining the history of computer games and game playing hardware, outlining how game studies views computer games and considering the role of failure within computer games. Before investigating formations of ethics relevant for youth work, computer games and theology.

6.1 A brief history of computer games

James Newman, professor of Digital Media at Bath Spa University opens his book *Videogames*, (2013), by introducing us to the first debate surrounding computer games; when were they first created? Was the first computer game 'Starwar' created by Steven Russell in the labs of Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1962? Newman points to the other contender, 1958's 'Tennis for Two' (Newman, 2013, p1), using this conversation over the first computer game as an example of the contested nature of the wider conversation around computer games ontology. Jesper Juul, Associate Professor at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts - The School of Design, asks us to think of computer games as part of the category of games rather than as a distinct contemporary modern art form. In *Half-Real*, (2011), Juul places computer games in a sub branch of a wider ludic storyline which goes back some five thousand years. Citing the discovery of the game Senet, a game from which we derive Backgammon and Parcheesi, in the tomb of Hesy-re dated as 2686 BC (Juul, 2011, p4), Juul links that discovery to the current day where Backgammon and Parcheesi are played commonly on computers. Both Juul and Newman provoke one of the foundational discussions around these games. What is a game? Are computer games actually games?

Both Juul and Newman present a basic analysis of what each computer game has in common, yet the definitions, both original (Juul) or borrowed (Newman) have left behind the actual content of the game and focus on the medium itself. Juul's formation is a classic definition of what a game is.

A game is a rule-based system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are negotiable (Juul, 2011, p36).

Both definitions favoured by Juul and Newman permits the linkage of computer games to the wider ludic narrative. Frans Mäyrä, Professor of Hypermedia, Digital Culture and Game Studies at the University of Tampere, Finland, links the trouble over defining what is a computer game to the specific math's and logic abilities which computers exhibit within their programming. In *An Introduction to Game Studies, Games in Culture*, (2005), Mäyrä points out that Alan Turing used the game of chess to demonstrate what a computer could achieve.

A game of chess with its 64 squares and a limited set of movements is, despite its complexities for humans, a relatively easy challenge from a mathematical and computing perspective (Mäyrä, 2006, p39).

Game playing then has been an integral part of computing history. But with early computers in the 1950's taking up large amount of floor space due to their size and costing prohibitively large sums of money, game playing was a minor activity for number of years (2006, p56-7).

Mäyrä points to the development of the IBM clones in the late 80's as a key development of making gaming affordable. He maps the history of dedicated gaming consoles for the home, illustrating that the game playing agenda had swung from PC based games, to dedicated consoles (2007, p61). The consoles were benefiting from the advancement in computer hardware and were delivering game experiences beyond what a 'normal' home computer of the time could deliver (2007, p93). This switch allowed for the development of generations of dedicated game playing machines. In TV based consoles, Nintendo released Super Nintendo Entertainment System (1990), Nintendo 64 (1996), Game Code (2001), Wii (2005) and the Wii U (2012). Sony released PlayStation (1994), PlayStation 2 (2000), PlayStation 3 (2006) and the PlayStation 4 (2013). Microsoft didn't enter the console manufacturing business until 2001 with the Xbox, Xbox 360 (2005) and the current Xbox One (2013). Microsoft assumed the place of the Sega Company who had until the early 2000's been a major console provider. In hand held/portable gaming Nintendo's Game Boy has developed through several models over the 1990-present timeframe with only Sony's PS Vita (2011) for major competition. Also over this time frame the advances in hardware development have made PC gaming both possible and relatively affordable to the mass market.

The competition for both PC and Console gaming has come from the development of game playing on mobile phones and tablet computers. The availability of applications to run on the operating systems of smart devices has shifted the focus of gaming from consoles and PCs to handheld multipurpose computers, leading to the development of what Juul calls "*A Casual Revolution*" (Juul, 2010, p5-7). Wherein casual gamers are the majority players of computer games in society.

Video games are being reinvented, and so is our image of those who play the games. This is the moment when we realize that everybody can be a video game player (2010, p2).

Hardware advances have also had an effect on games. The competition between manufacturers of Wii vs. PlayStation vs. Xbox, when matched with advances in computer hardware specifications has allowed for computer game technology to develop bigger games, wider story narratives and worlds that you can get lost in, resulting in console games regularly requiring over forty hours of gameplay to complete one story (Juul, 2010, p13-14). This casual revolution leaves us in the midst of a change of emphasis. Computer games are wider stylistically, numerous and available at multiple price points from free to £50, and being played on a range of devices including a PC, a £500 dedicated console, and a mobile phone.

6.1.1 Game studies history

Games studies is interested in the space between the game and the player, and the conversation that takes place between the game, the player and the contexts of both the game and the player (Mäyrä, 2008, p2). Game studies are a relatively new academic field. Game studies takes “a multidisciplinary approach and focuses on games and related phenomena” (2008, p6). Its recent rise in popularity academically, is linked with the rise of digital games as a cultural force, although the study is not restricted to any technology or medium specifically (2008, p6-7). Key developments in the field include the development of research publications, conferences and associations such as the Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA), the DiGRA conference and the International Simulation Gaming Association. In addition the development of games studies journals, *Games in Culture* and the *Journal of Game Development* (2008, p5). Academically it has been suggested that even though game studies has an interdisciplinary approach to learning using instruments from literature, arts criticism, anthropology, psychology, sociology, geography and history, game studies should move into its own field of academic study known as Ludology (2008, p8-10).

Mäyrä points out that the study of computer games is inherently concerned with game culture systems. It takes a viewpoint of semiotics, and sees the game culture as a system of meaning (2008, p13). Within this schema, playing is put forward as a method of comprehension. Playing is valued as a method of discovery. The ability to be able to explore, yet not to understand what's going on when you start the process, but to learn by interacting, by trying, by doing is the heart of computer game play (2008, p14). Mäyrä puts forward that to engage with this semiotic analysis, there is a

core division that has to be made between two layers of game play.

Layer 1 is “core or game as gameplay”. These are the core actions that facilitate play, the rule system or actions that are credited to add to the constituent of the score level.

Layer 2 is “game as representation and sign system”. Importance falls on things that include, the graphics, the audio, and the narrative that are all engaged with by the player (2008, p18).

This opens up game studies from being a study of the core game, which is in essence a rule system, to engaging with the artistic side of the game, allowing for games and gamers interactions with both layers to be the subject of study. Implied within this understanding is a viewpoint of games as coming within a wider arts and cultural movement, popular culture (2008, p21).

6.2 The role of play

James Newman, assesses computer games coverage in the popular media and finds that computer games has few advocates, they are attacked as a solitary medium, a medium lacking creativity, a sign of being unproductive, and a hamper to literacy (2008, p5-6). Which provokes the question why do people play at all? Newman considers that,

...videogames provide a complex and varied suite of materials for gamers that encourage flexible and creative play, talk, discussion... (2002, p15).

In order to investigate these materials we will examine the role of failure within games, and the practice of save-try-die-reload.

Juul in *The Art of Failure, An Essay on the Pain of Playing Video Games*, (2013), points to a basic paradox at the heart of playing computer games.

1. We generally avoid failure.
2. We experience failure when playing games.
3. We seek out games, although we will experience something that we normally avoid (2013, p2).

Computer games are not generally fun to play. Games are inherently exercises in identifying inadequacies in players. Games point out this inadequacy but also provide a compulsion to learn and grow and overcome that inadequacy (2013, p7). Playing the game is demonstrably hopeful; you are investing “Time and self-esteem in the hope that it will pay off” (2013, p14).

Failure forces us to reconsider what we are doing, to learn. Failure connects us personally to the events in the game; it proves we matter, that the world does not simply continue regardless of our actions (2013, p123).

Within computer games, play offers up a space where we can struggle with our inadequacies, imperfections and our place in the world (2013, p124).

One gameplay practice that tackles this failure is the save-try-die-reload mechanic. The mechanic is rooted in saving your progress before trying a hard passage of game play. Then if you die as a result of the hard gameplay, you restart from the save point (Newman, 2005, p84). Newman points to this being at first a problem with game design. The player should never get stuck therefore the design of the game is faulty in not providing a solution to the issue (2005, p85), adding that if the implications of gameplay cannot be felt, then the game cannot function as a space to rehearse choices (2005, p85). Newman reflects that as games have developed the challenge of games has changed, and now exploration can be the main play mode. Exploration by utilizing a game map or walkthrough guide lessens the challenge of the game, and perhaps the feeling of being lost in the game. This calls for a re-evaluation of the save-try-die-restart mechanic as an enabling process within play (2005, p85).

In this section we examined contested nature of some key issues within computer games studies. Investigated the place of computer games within a wider ludic history, considered definitions of what is a computer game, and key hardware developments associated with computer games. Mäyrä has provided us with an understanding of Games as a system of meaning before assessing computer games and play.

6.3 An intersection of youth work, computer games and theological ethics

In this section we investigate ethical thought within computer games by examining a recommendation regarding computer games from the International Committee Red Cross. We assess the ethical context within youth work, and the ethics of computer games, before a theological ethical application within computer games.

Computer games are often linked to negative behaviours (Ferguson 2007). One powerful voice for positive use of computer games comes from the International Committee Red Cross (ICRC). Authors Ben Clarke, Associate Professor, University of Notre Dame Australia, and former adviser at the Civil

Society Relations Unit, ICRC, Christian Rouffaer, adviser at the Unit for Relations with Armed Forces, Division for the Integration and Promotion of the Law, ICRC and Francois Senechaud, the head of division for the Integration and Promotion of the Law, ICRC, write to ask if computer games could change the way wars are fought in the future, while also influencing current conflicts.

Beyond The Call of Duty, (2012), explores if an application of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) into game design could make a positive change to the ethical behaviour within real world warzones? Computer games offer a portrayal of war where the player is active (Clarke, Rouffaer, Senechaud, 2012, p714). The authors argue that playing a torture scene in a game may not lead you to go and commit the same act in real life, but they do find it conceivable that after playing a torture scene in a game, you will find torture in real life battle zones acceptable (2012, p717). They point to computer games being used as recruitment tools by the American Army, and a higher number of game players than average amongst new American Navy recruits (2012, p718). They make an example of the use of computer game controllers to guide drones to remotely kill enemies or destroy targets and briefly consider if this a sign of the virtual world crossing directly into the real world. The soldier uses a game controller, watches the action on a monitor, the killing or destruction is shown on the screen, yet the visceral effects of killing a person or destroying their property is absent. Real life is destroyed virtually (2012, p719).

The authors point to a Swiss study that identified the depictions of violations of IHL within computer games.

The same study found that direct attacks against civilians not directly participating in hostilities were frequently depicted. The victims – mostly hostages or civilians present in a village –were not mere incidental casualties: they were directly targeted. In only one game was this conduct punished. Indeed, failure to comply with the principle of distinction occurred in various games. One instance is the use of munitions, including tank shells and cluster munitions that are indiscriminate in their effects when deployed in densely populated areas. In *Medal of Honour Airborne*, weapons that do not discriminate between combatants and civilians on the ground are deployed in airborne operations in urban areas (2012, p726).

The papers viewpoint is not that violence shouldn't happen nor are they asking for computer games to be regulated.

Players who act out combat roles should face the same dilemmas and challenges as real combatants do. Characters who break the rules in video games should be subject to penalties and punishments as real combatants (2012, p735).

The authors conclude that the way to ensure players enjoy the game; but that the ethical understandings of the humanitarian message is put across is for game designers to build in the IHL or IHRL and their consequences. The aim is not to ruin a player's experience, but to ensure that boundaries are in place. For the author's computer games is the perfect medium for this practical ethical application.

Those who have doubts about the importance of video games for the dissemination of humanitarian norms need look no further than the size of the video game industry; the limited awareness of IHL and IHRL among players of video games and the general public; the large number of military personnel recruited through video games; and the higher than average rate of video game play by serving military personnel (2012, p737)

This argument points to computer games having an ethical role, influencing and changing real life behaviour positively. In order to see if this is the case we need to assess three factors for our study, the ethical context of youth work, the ethics of computer games, and a theological perspective on these ethics.

6.3.1 the ethics of youth work

Youth work is an inherently ethical process; its historical roots in Christian evangelism, social action and civic moral formation have created this basis. Youth work is a process where youth workers and young people engage together for sustained meaningful relationship. It is an active process that allows for moral philosophizing. This happens through a voluntary engagement between the young person and the youth worker. This is based on values such as honesty, openness, trust, respect, and reciprocity that are non-judgmental. Sercombe suggests that the key ethical question to be answered by youth work is,

...In terms of the vulnerability that youth workers address in the kind of transformation that youth workers seek (Sercombe, 2010, p22).

Sercombe identifies that the key objective of youth work is justice, addressing the injustice of young people being excluded from taking part within the societal "common wealth" (2010, p22). The youth worker views a young person not as a problem, or a criminal, or as a potential adult. The

worker views young people in their social context and asks questions of the situation such as, where are young people excluded from this community? (2010, p21). Youth workers are never ethically neutral; they always have to balance a moral view of the good, welcoming young people into the common wealth and wider communities (2010, p23).

Sercombe suggests that an appropriate ethical stance for youth work is a conversational approach between the three main streams of ethics, a consequentialist framework, a deontological framework and a virtue based ethics focus. For Sercombe, part of the youth workers remit is to have a working knowledge of these three ethical frameworks, to be able to assess the context and apply the appropriate framework to the situation while keeping in balance the workers own ethical perspective (Sercombe, 2010, p44-53). Peter Hart, a PhD candidate at Durham University, has analysed the ethical practice of four youth work situations within the UK as part of his research, (2014). Hart divided them into secular and CFB youth work practice locations, finding 2 secular and 2 CFB. Hart observed that there was a difference between workers in secular youth work practice and workers in CFB settings, assessing that the workers from secular agencies used a deontological approach to the work, based on an observation of rules being applied and a disregard of the outcome created by the application of those rules. From the CFB youth workers he found a virtue based ethics approach was utilized predominantly (Hart, 2014, p7-8).

Sercombe describes how codes of conduct are applied within youth work agencies with high turnovers of staff or large numbers of untrained staff and volunteers. This description outlines one way of understanding Hart's finding that the workers from secular agencies had a more deontological approach to the work.

Over time, the preference that many managers and administrators have for neatness can mean the informality, spontaneity and egalitarian style of youth work becomes increasingly constrained and rule bound, and that the interests of young people fade in favour of the prerogatives of the agency (2010, p68).

This raises the question of the ethical approach The ethical approach favoured by the management may not have great outcomes when implemented by the worker despite fitting with the aims and objectives of project they work for. For Sercombe the answer lies in being active on this issue, encouraging the youth worker to negotiate an agency wide ethical code of practice or renegotiating any existing policies (Sercombe 2010, p67-8). Sercombe goes on to analyse four different ethical codes from the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and North America. He finds that there are significant similarities to the codes:

- The centrality of young people. A youth workers primary duty is to them.
- Tackling the excluding of young people from being heard, from participating and being fully included.
- Youth work practice should avoid discrimination and tackle discrimination against young people.
- Youth workers need to be continuously developing and aware of their limits, with openness to asking for help.
- Collaboratively work with other professionals.
- Strict confidentiality.
- Care for boundaries around the youth worker & young person's relationship, especially sexual relationships.
- Working to facilitate and grow young people's capacity to make choices.
- Take account of the social context.
- Youth work is always political in part.
- Youth workers need to be conscious of their own values and consider how those are expressed in the work.
- Safety is a key part of choosing a youth work location (2010, p61).

From within this ethical context of youth work, the ethics of computer games are to be considered.

6.3.2 the ethics of computer games

This section examines a model of computer game ethics as proposed by Miguel Sicart, considering his use of a joint approach using Virtue Ethics and Information Ethics.

Viewing the act of starting the game console as a deliberate ethical action is the first move in computer game ethics as identified within Miguel Sicart's 2009 book *The Ethics of Computer Games*. This book is the first major ethical treatment of computer games. Sicart, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Computer Games Research, IT University Copenhagen, is aiming to provide an ethical framework based on viewing computer games as moral objects, and those who play as ethical subjects (Sicart, 2009, p2).

The experience of a computer game is the experience of a moral object by an ethical subject. Thus the gaming experience is not only ethically relevant but should also be analysed by philosophy and game research (2009 p5).

Sicart takes a structuralist viewpoint of the computer game and its ethical interactions. Sicart doesn't view all computer games as relevant for ethical treatment. The games that are relevant are games where the design of the rule system forces the player into facing ethical questions "or where the rules themselves raise ethical issues" (2009, p49). It is in the mix of both the game play rules and the game world that create behaviours which players pick up on and "constitute the ethics of

computer game design” (2009, p59). Sicart views computer games as inanimate objects. They are unable to have any inherent ethical quality until you start playing (2009, p63), unlike other mediums, computer games only come alive when interacted with (2009, p64).

Sicart designates games as processes (2009, p64). He argues that the game is a designed object therefore has understandable inherent ethics. The rule structure of computer games distinguishes computer games from analogue games. You cannot negotiate new rules with computer games; the rules are imposed upon you (2009, p27). This has a power element to the relationship that creates the player as subject to the processes that are in the game. Playing computer games is an act of subjectivization (2009, p63). This Sicart identifies as giving computer games an ergodic quality,

A game is ergodic because it has built-in rewards and punishments for successfully experiencing it. These procedures are those rules that can be applied to evaluating the players’ experience (2009, p66).

This ergodic nature is best expressed in interaction; it is key to the process of ethics within computer games. For Sicart play is,

Engaging in an experience based on the controlled subordination of the player to a game system of rules and the virtual world it provides – that is, engaging in a world that is not *real* (2009, p44).

Sicart argues that the ethics of computer games would be best dealt with from an approach combining both virtue ethics and information ethics. The virtue based ethics approach provides Sicart with,

Answers for the ethical issues in video games relating to players, player behaviour and the role and importance of ethical practice alone or with other players in the context of the game (2009, p143).

While information ethics,

Intends to redefine the scope of computer ethics with a new understanding of the ethical processes that configure computing systems (2009, p143).

Virtue ethics allows for the act of playing becoming the object that ethics is applied to,

It defines players as virtuous beings who make gameplay choices informed by their practical wisdom, guided by the presence or absence of a number of player-specific virtues (2009, p111).

The practical wisdom or ludic phronesis is the ethical working knowledge a player builds up in playing games over time. It provides the background to determine the player’s actions in game and stopping the player from automatically committing acts that the person external to the player finds

unethical (2009, p113). For Sicart this process is part of a hermeneutic circle that he adapts to show the effect upon a human of becoming player within computer games (2009, p117). The circle moves in four stages. The circle resets to stage one when the next game is started, allowing each new gaming experience to be entered into as Player Subject while retaining an increased repertoire of ludic phronesis.

Stage 1 – Player as Subject –

The player interprets the affordances and constraints of the game as necessary boundaries that have to be accepted in order to become a player, and so she does (2009, p117).

This is an uncritical engagement with the game, the choice made to play is not ethically informed, but it creates a player subject who is “conditioned by the game systems ethical affordances” (2009, p118). Sicart points out that the person playing the game is not a dumb terminal, wiped of all its programming when the power is turned off, but “that subject comes from a cultural self and from a previous tradition of playing games” (2009, p118).

Stage 2 – Individual Player – In this stage the player plays the game and ethically reflects upon that game. Sicart points to the use of ludic phronesis, to provide a process from which to have an internal or individual reflection on the game and ethical questions which the game poses. Using a process of flow or ecstasy¹⁷, the player-subject separates from the moral-self, allowing for a self-critical conversation between both sides.

The experience of the game is not unidirectionally system to player, it is a dialogue between the system that imposes restrictions and affords behaviours, and a player who reflects upon those (2009, p119).

Stage 3 – Community Player – This stage takes the reflection on the ethics of the game into the game community. This can be demonstrated by playing with others in the same location or virtually, by visiting game websites, by watching, posting or commenting upon video online. It is in the context of these communities and interactions that,

...the player enters an interpretational dialogue, participating as one among many who create the ethics of a game. The individual player and her reflection upon her own subjectivity under the rules of a game can be modified by thinking as a part of a community, thus the importance of the community in the configuration of the individual player’s ethics and the game as experience (2009, p120).

¹⁷ Flow is discussed more fully in section 6.3.5 Flow & Doubling

Stage 4 – Subject External to the Game – For Sicart the ethics of computer games cannot be easily separated from the existence of a moral being in the world outwith the playing experience.

There is a player subject who is evaluated by a cultural, embodied, moral being who has accepted the rules of a game, thus becoming a subject but never losing its presence. Being a player is also being evaluated by who we are as moral, embodied, cultural beings (2009, p121).

Sicart applies this to computer games

The virtue ethics perspective on the ethics of computer games puts players in the centre of the picture by expanding the presence and importance of ethical norms and experience with the ludic phronesis, the capacity to morally interpret the act of playing from a perspective derived from the previous experiences and belonging to a game community (2009, p126).

Some of the issues Sicart identifies in this approach lie in the cycle's reliance on community.

Computer games communities are generally made of an elite who play the game, often active membership of this game community requires Internet access, the ability to buy the game in the first place, and the time to partake within the community. As such the morals put forward as community ethics may just be a norm for a small subset of game players (2009, p127). For Sicart this ethical treatment is general enough that it can be applied to any player playing a game.

Sicart moves to apply information ethics, to analyse the ethical issues that are associated with the use of computers and associated equipment.

Information ethics is a radical perspective on computer ethics that takes into account the nature of computing as well as the presence of human and software agents in digital environments (2009, p128).

Sicart outlines three key concepts in information ethics, the concept of data entities, the concept of the Infosphere, and the conceptual use of levels and gradient of abstractions. The concept of the data entities designates that a moral agent (the player) is a data entity. But this theory allows for data entities to include artificial data entities. Working in an agent/patient model, where sometimes the player will act as the agent, and the computer game, (a different data entity), will be the recipient of that action acting as the patient. These data entities as actors/patients and their mutual relations live in an ecological environment that is conceptually referred to as the Infosphere. The Infosphere is the context of all these interactions (2010, p128-9).

The Infosphere is a key concept in information ethics, since it makes clear where we can find data beings, how their relations constitute their ontology's, and what can harm them (2010, p129).

The ability to apply a level of abstraction is important; as it provides a way to control some of the variables involved in the model to ensure the correct data entities are considered in the Infosphere (2010, p129). This means it is theoretically possible to apply a layer of abstraction that designates a computer game playing experience as an Infosphere. Once you have abstracted the experience as the Infosphere it is possible to ethically consider the data entities within this sphere. Data entities include the moral actions of the player; these actions would be regarded as data entities. Some of the data entities in this computer game playing experience example could include,

The product, the developers, the servers and their technology, the players, and the online resources (2010, p129).

For Sicart, information ethics approach has two key crucial elements. First, the distributed responsibility model gives room for more analysis. The designer creator, the computer operated characters in the game, and the player are equally responsible. The player or agent is responsible not just for playing the game but for the creation of the game and maintaining the wellbeing of the game, as is the game community (2010, p138). Secondly this distributed model acknowledges that games can be unethically designed. The game design may apply systems that are unethical. As such the player or agent may struggle to act ethically within the game (2010, p139). What information ethics provides for Sicart is a useful analytical theoretical tool, yet he identifies some limitations, namely its theoretical nature. As a new formation it is under developed requiring testing and strengthening. In particular Sicart identifies issues with the use of the Infosphere concept (2010, p142).

Given the weakness identified in the virtue ethics approach and the information ethics approach Sicart presents an approach that combines both in order to negate these weakness. The model provides an ethical theory for analysis of computer games based on the interplay between three subjects,

A designed moral object, moral experience derived from that object, and the moral agent that experiences the game (2010, p144).

Considering a designed moral object, Sicart observes that functionally games are ergodic in nature, and players start by subjecting themselves to that nature. Bad game design is an ethical issue which needs considered. Games that are ethically inconsistent could damage the moral being of the player, (2010 p143-4). That has an effect upon the moral experience derived from that object.

An ethical game experience is one in which the player, a body subject that exists and

experiences the game system, can interact with that system as a moral agent; an experience that allows for the players ethical behaviour, interpretation, and, in the best possible case, contribution to the value system of the game experience (2010, p145).

Players have a repertoire of computer game skills and a ludic phronesis that needs to be brought into conversation with the moral object and the experience derived from that object. The player has agency here in this relationship; she is involved and active (2010, p146).

A player uses ethical reflection, phronesis, and her creative stewardship to evaluate her actions in the game, an ethical reflection that is part of her own previous experience as a player, as an individual, and as part of a larger cultural community of players (2010, p147).

Distributed responsibility allows for this analysis by using the ecological approach of information ethics, as well as the communitarian values of virtue ethics. It accounts for the player as body-subject. It deals with the large community of agents within the process of playing. Not treating each layer or data source as separate from the others (2010, p148).

The goal of research on the ethics of games is to identify an issue, establish the network of game elements involved, and map the different degrees of affectedness and responsibility. That overview of the weighted network of ethical responsibilities in a computer game is what constitutes the distributed responsibility of that game (2010, p148).

In this section we have examined Sicart's model of computer games ethics. Investigating the game as ergodic, the use of ludic phronesis, the mix of virtue effects and information ethics, the application of the hermeneutical circle, and the analysis of data entries and their interactions with the abstracted Infosphere, with a final brief presentation of Sicart's joint ethical approach.

6.3.4 Christian Ethics approach to computer games

The treatment of violence and ethics within Charlene Burns chapter in *Vice City Virtues*, (2011), is one of the first serious engagements with this topic. Burns, Professor and Chair of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, published the paper Could Digital Gaming be 'Good For The Soul'? Ethics, Theology and Violent Gaming in *Vice City Virtues*, 2011, an edited collection presenting a consideration of morals and ethics within violent computer games. Burns contribution is one of the rare examples of the theologian publishing a theological consideration of computer games within the wider game studies discussion.

Burns argues that digital games are potentially spaces within which positive moral agency can be

fostered, based on an analysis of theological virtue ethics (Burns, 2011, p69), beginning this task by differentiating out theological ethics from philosophical ethics. For Burns theological ethics maybe considered a deviation on the ethics of Plato or Aristotle, but in its methodology it challenges the philosophical ideas of virtue within those ethical approaches (2011, p73).

Theological ethics is about the ongoing process of character formation and transformation such that our humanity becomes a reflection of the Divine in whose image and likeness we have been made (2011, p74).

The questions of the good are not automatically assumed as a common knowledge shared by all agents or society. Yet the theological ethicists is aware of the cogency of human agency, and its need for training and help in order to make those good actions, characterized by this narrative,

Traditional ethics asks, “What ought I do?” whereas Christian ethics requires that we ask, “As a creature made in the image of God, What kind of person should I aim to be?” (2011, p75).

This questioning asks how virtue ethics fits within the wider narrative of the agent within a faith community and history. Burns builds her theological ethical considerations on the work of Sicart, pointing out that his work designates the player as a moral agent, the player brings with them their background and knowledge of morals and ethics (2011, p76). For Burns, this ties in with the work of Wells, who argued that the faith community is the space where virtues are shaped through the practice and rehearsal offered by improvising within her own community what it means to be Christian in the light of this larger communal narrative (2011, p77). This moral background and virtue knowledge is where a childhood within a faith community brings influence on the player and their actions. This background knowledge of community norms and acceptable behaviour provides an internal critique for the player (2011, p78).

The use of the psychological concept of doubling allows Burns to instigate a separation of the player self from the moral self (2011, p80). This separation suggests that computer games provide a space where young people can improvise and rehearse actions that the moral self would abhor (2011, p81). Burns suggests ten questions that provide a framework for ethical examination of computer games:

1. What moral challenges are offered to characters in the game?
2. What opportunities are there for reflection on the impact of one’s choices within the game environment?
3. How does game design reward or penalize actions considered to have moral implications in the non-virtual world?
4. In what ways does a game encourage psychological doubling?
5. Are there in-game experiences that encourage awareness of doubling?
6. Can the game be re-played making decisions that lead to different outcomes?
7. How does the game content challenge stereotypes or reinforce them?

In addition, asking the following questions about use of religiosity in games can illuminate the ways overt religious content might counter intuitively undermine development of mature moral decision-making capacity and spiritual expression.

8. Does the game content include religious ideas and representations?

9. How do religious images and/or themes function in-game?

10. What kind(s) of religiosity is (are) implicit in these representations? (2011, p83).

For Burns applying this questioning framework allows the young person to ask questions of their actions outside the religious community but within the narrative of that community (2011, p85).

Burns considers that allowing for active moral consideration within games contributes to adopting a consistent ethical approach in everyday life (2011, p85).

The ethical models for Sicart and Burns rely on the psychological concepts of Flow and Doubling.

6.3.5 Flow and Doubling

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, Professor of Psychology and Management at the Quality of Life Research Centre at Clairmont Graduate University, originated the psychological concept of flow. For Csikszentmihalyi flow is a space where experience is at its optimum, balancing of the level of action and the players ability to act; with the amount of skills (or the persons assumed level of skill) to respond to the challenge (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989, p816). As the repertoire of skills becomes stretched, then player learns new skills and new ways of dealing with the challenge. First to meet the challenge, and secondly to build upon the repertoire.

Flowing from one moment to the next, in which he is in control of his actions, and in which there is a little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, between past, present, and future (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p34).

Sicart uses flow to separate out the player-subject from the moral-self creating space for a self-critical conversation utilising doubling in stage 2 of his hermeneutical circle.

Robert Jay Lifton, lecturer in psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, has explored the psychology of Nazi doctors at prison camps (Lifton 1986, p418). As part of this research he outlines the doubling process. Doubling is where the self is divided into two functioning wholes. These wholes can act independently of each other but one whole is always ethically responsible for the actions of the other. Lifton presents us with five characteristics of doubling.

1. A dialectic between two selves in terms of autonomy and connection.
2. Doubling follows a holistic principle.
3. Doubling has a life-death dimension.

4. Doubling functions for the avoidance of guilt.
5. Doubling involves both an unconscious dimension and a significant change in moral consciousness (1986, p419).

Lifton continues emphasizing that this ability to adapt and double is at times something that can be lifesaving. He states that the other whole can be life affirming, but at the same time warning in the right context, it can “embrace evil with an extreme lack of restraint” (1986, p420).

For Burns the concept of doubling provides a way to understand the difference between the avatar and the projective identity. Burns argues that playing an avatar in role-playing games is actually a process of active doubling for players. She points to the ability of games to provide virtual worlds for the trying out of various moralities, and argues that this “strengthens the player’s capacity to resist doubling in the destructive sense outside the gaming environment”(Burns, 2011, p82).

Young people have less trouble holding the virtual and real worlds apart than we expect because in gaming they repeatedly exercise the neural pathways that allow us to distinguish between fantasy and reality (2011, p82).

By examining ethical thought within computer games and within the International Committee Red Cross proposal, assessing the ethical basis of youth work within which we apply computer game ethics. This was augmented theological ethical engagement with computer games and the concepts of flow and doubling. It is important to discuss this theoretical underpinning before moving to the responses of participants in the next chapter

6.4 Computer game & ethics discussion

The first question posed in this review asks what is a game, is it a part of the historic tradition of games or new media? It seems logical to claim that computer games are an extension of an existing popular culture item onto a new technological format. The definition of what a game is seems to promote this viewpoint, as does the binary logic form of computers ontology.

The development of the hardware from a massive machine to a small plastic device for the pocket in 50 years is remarkable. It is now arguably easier, lighter and quicker to carry a computer application version of a card-based game, than carry the pack of cards to facilitate the same gameplay. This technological advance has facilitated different types of games being developed for

different devices. Mobile phone or tablet-based applications respond well to games that are powering the casual revolution of Juul, *Candy Crush Saga*, (King, 2012), being a prime example whereas long form narrative epics or open world games are primarily developed for console and PC.

It is important to take on board the view of computer games and culture as a system of meaning. This is important as it opens up the computer game for use within youth work as space where young people can engage in making changes.

The division of layers one and two, by Mäyrä; layer 1 being core gameplay, layer 2 being game as representation and sign system; opens computer games to the questions, why do we play? What does it mean to play? What does it mean to fail? In Juul's answer we see the direct linkage to a space where existential realisation is achieved, that humans matter, and we practice to get better. That we may not be able to save the game brings computer games back to our central context, the subjective turn. Juul's consideration of failure doesn't offer any direct spiritual insight, yet his practice and repetition explanation is very close to the understanding of self-improvement that is put forward by Sloterdijk. Yet Juul moves us beyond the atheist humanism self-improvement. Juul points to our experience being about failing, this experience of failure is inherent within humans. But there is drive to engage with that failure, something about it is attractive. This draws us back to the conversation of Williams; that failure is about the pivot point within life that anchors who we are. We play, when we play we fail, we try again and return to a failure state. We pivot around this experience.

The questions raised by the International Committee Red Cross paper offer a tempting glimpse of the power of computer games. Can computer games change the face of the war zones? Does playing an action in a game make the action more acceptable in real life? What is the divide between the virtual and the real? In the face of one of the worst sights humanity has to offer, war, computer games are being offered as a powerful tool to change attitudes and behaviours. At the time when humanity is at its most raw and fragile, the practice of playing computer games can be an effective agent for change. The argument that playing a computer game torture scene will make torture in battle situations more acceptable falls down at its basic premise. Outrage at human rights abuses within the previous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are front page news, not accepted generally as

permissible despite current and previous generations of computer games offering this style of gameplay. Where the argument has strength, is in its claim that adoption of the rules and consequences of behaviour contrary to IHL or IHRL would change behaviour. Many young people grow up learning the rules of sports through computer games. They learn tactics and what is acceptable and what isn't. This basic knowledge informs their play in the actual sport. War is not sport but war does theoretically have a rule structure and game developers should apply that. Although it should be pointed out that playing a game with no such implementation makes that experience ethically bad due to a bad game design, not a bad player.

Sercombe rejects the need to categorise and confine youth workers into one ethical viewpoint. Instead Sercombe's viewpoint takes into account the multifaceted nature of youth workers everyday jobs. This view allows for an honest reflection of the ethical approach of youth workers. It views the ethics of youth work as a delta. It allows for change from one model to the other while allowing for the worker to remain committed to the young person primarily. It is noteworthy that what underpins the clear youth work definition Sercombe provides is a recognition of the range of contexts and models necessary to achieve that strength.

Sicart's joint ethical approach is something worth noting as it provides youth work with a way to understand computer game ethics. The designed moral object implies that has to be designed ethically. It must provide spaces for rules, for rewards and punishments. If the game is designed ethically, the game cannot abuse its ergodic nature. The moral experience derived from that object shows that games should be willing to engage in the game system as an entity, contributing to the values of the game. The moral agent that experiences the game, the player, has agency, ludic phronesis and a duty to take care of the game and the game community. This reciprocal relationship designates clearly how youth workers should be thinking about games, which games could be ethical or used ethically within a youth work context.

It is noteworthy that Hodge finds the main motivation to play the game is narrative from the young people's point of view. But when we consider the important issues surrounding computer games, Hodge finds the significant issues are sacred space, gaming community, and strong emotional reaction. There would seem to be a major distance between the game narrative as motivation and

the three significant issues outlined. White calls for computer games to provide a new model for theology.

When the concrete and the numinous are combined, they create a very strong and plausible way to understand God, life, religion and a gamers' place in the world (Hodge, 2010, p175).

New models will have to be found. Hodges work interacts well with Millar's thoughts on a theology of play in *Of Gods and Games*. Miller introduces the term Theography that, in recognition of Hodge's work could be appended with the prefix Ludic in offer to explain exactly what new things computer games are doing for players, an act of ludic Theography.

Rachel Wagner's contribution brings us back to a discussion of where the virtual and real life crossover into a liminal space with each other. People perform games and rituals, where is the ontological difference? Is play an act of liminality? Wagner's conclusion of "the player performance and intention being the key" (Wagner, 2012, p185-6) is revealing. If the Red Cross drone example outlined earlier is used as an examined, by virtue of using a game controller and watching action far away on a screen cannot compare to the real world actions of training for military service, flying to a foreign country, being briefed on what you are doing by commanding officers, and putting that plan into place. While the graphics of games remain abstracted to a state that demonstrably is virtual, the liminality between virtual and real is large, leaving the player in no doubt which side of the liminal they are operating on.

Tying religious ethical knowledge of norms and expectations into the ludic phronesis of the player is a cogent move by Burns. If ludic phronesis is a form of practical wisdom then the theological phronesis of a childhood within a Christian Faith-Based community is closely related. Burns ethical framework of 10 questions is relevant, but needs some simplification to be of practical use.

6.5 From theory to practice

This chapter has provided a literature review of games studies, the academic study of computer games, assessed with the history of computer games and game playing hardware, briefly considering how game studies views computer games and considered the role of failure within computer games. There was an examination of ethical thought within computer games, exploring a proposal by the International Red Cross. Investigating contemporary Scottish youth work ethics

and Sicart's joint approach to computer game ethics. Theological reflection brought us a model of theological ethical engagement with computer games. This provides us with the theoretical underpinning to investigate question 2 of this study, how do youth workers within Scotland use computer games?

7 Findings – computer games

This chapter will investigate the responses of the participants to questions of computer game ethics and explore some of the influences upon the hermeneutics of computer games within youth work, engaging the participants in conversation with the theory and youth work reflections contained in the previous chapters. In doing so the researcher will address the second central question of the study, how do youth workers within Scotland use computer games?

7.1 Computer game ethics and spirituality

When asked if computer games could be ethical, eight interviewees (3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 14) said yes. Interviewees 4 and 6 said it could be, while other interviewees didn't answer the questions directly. On the question 'could a game contribute to spirituality' interviewee 3 said "no". Thirteen of the participating youth workers were open to the idea that computer games could be used ethically, but sought to qualify that viewpoint.

...it certainly raises the discussion about what is or isn't ethical which is not necessarily something people agree or see completely eye to eye on, but your opening up the discussion for the young person to explore their own values in that safe environment ... (Interviewee 12).

Interviewee 15 spoke of games as being based on making decisions and solving problems.

Interviewee 7 pointed out that they would be reticent to put too much responsibility on computer games to carry out this ethical task. For interviewee 5 computer games are just about pressing buttons, therefore the ethical considerations are not necessarily linked to a narrative, 5 astutely asked if computer games provide a different set of ethical questions to engage with.

It's not necessarily that games are ethical or can be ethical. It's that they are a different set of questions (Interviewee 5).

The ethical questions were rooted in the experience of the young person; interviewee 7 spoke of young people not being a blank page but having a level of ethical value that is pre-existing, emanating from the home environment. Youth work needed to engage with that pre-existing basis of the young people's ethical being. Interviewee 5 spoke of needing to provide the correct context for games to work. This context had to provide room for the youth worker to challenge and engage the young person playing the game, interviewee 11 added. Interviewee 1 commented that this context and space requirement for the worker would require a substantial time commitment in

order to facilitate the intended ethical reflection. For interviewee 1, computer games were a low usage part of the youth work provision. Interviewee 11 reflected some of this usage as being hardware based commenting that in their practice locations, PC based gaming provided more openness to ethical considerations than console based games.

I think even being on the PC allows for a young person to be swapped in between different things. On the PC, that can be different games, that can be social media, it can be the little bit of learning that you can associate with games as well. I can imagine is more challenging for a young person to learn or to do an activity sitting at a PlayStation than it is if you've got a young person sitting at PC (Interview 11).

Several interviewees spoke of games having an ethical dynamic. For interviewee 13, playing the game allows the virtual to enter into the real world. Creating the context for an ethical dynamic that interviewee 13 viewed as polarizing.

Because in many ways they will find out the ethical dynamics of it very quickly. And if they get it great, they'll get that game they will keep playing it. If they don't then it'll sit on the shelf, ignored for the rest of eternity (Interviewee 13).

Interviewee 14 pointed to games that have built in morality systems as a key gameplay mechanic. This mechanism rewards for good actions and punishes for unethical actions. Interviewee 2 felt the primary way to use computer games for ethics/spirituality would be to use them as an example to contrast with a Christian worldview in order to demonstrate the difference to the young people.

Only interviewee 15 felt that games were unethical. Interviewee 15 held the opinion that computer games are inherently and structurally unethical. This was due to computer games creating immersive experiences of the virtual. This experience was solitary and a rejection of the facets of real life. Ethics in 15's view are what you do and how you engage with real life. By promoting a withdrawal from real life playing, games themselves are inherently a cultural form of unethical practice. Although disagreeing with the premise of interviewee 15's argument, interviewee 14 did lend some context to this view, suggesting that this use of computer games was the result of,

... a mixture of the interpretation of the community, and the reality of the community being too dangerous. They weren't playing outside, and it wasn't this thing of young people don't know how too. They were being actively encouraged by their parents not to go outside. So that the main interactions were through online gaming and stuff like that. And actually getting them out was a hurdle in and of itself. And actually creating space for them where they could be doing something else within those contexts, the priority was playing pool and doing things like that together rather than coming round. Because a lot of the time they will have big consoles at home anyway (Interviewee 14).

For interviewee 6 the games that promote ethical thinking are games based on survival and choices, for 6 this type of game was primarily a one-player game and as such would not be appropriate within the youth work context. Interviewee 6 spoke of actively disliking computer games; interviewee 10 also shared this dislike.

7.2 International Red Cross example

Interviewee 8 wondered if the application of a “shoot now, go to The Hague for trial at the end of the war” style mechanic of the IHL or IHRL would be implemented as a part of the game you could skip. Computer games usually apply a system of bypassing various elements such as video cut scenes or long drives, would a bypass mechanism be put in place for this punishment? Interviewee 8 further questioned whether too much realism within a computer game, would annoy players.

Whether it would have the effect on people I don't know. And people play computer games for fantasy. You know what I mean. You should be able to tell the difference between real life and fantasy (Interviewee 8).

Interviewee 10 wondered if by delaying the ethical judgment upon an action, it was missing the ethical learning within the experience.

Surely the ethics are to do with the learning that takes place before you do the action or what takes place during it. It's not a constructive experience to be punitive with that (Interviewee 10).

Interviewee 11 wondered if some young people would be unable to make the links the Red Cross claim, appealing to the role of the game community to facilitate the communication of that message.

One thing we spoke about earlier was working with young people to help them make informed decisions. That really is the basis of what you're trying to do and obviously includes the gaming community. With games, that's through your engagement, you're moderating of the game, and making sure young people may be accessing some games that are on that line of being acceptable, it's still reiterating the main elements of it (Interviewee 11).

For 11 the problem would be finding a balance within the implementation of rules. If the response to this paper was the development and application of a punishment mechanic, a rule whereby if you break the rules your character dies and then respawns, would the use of this mechanic provide a deliberate disruption to the gameplay experience, leading to frustrated gamers and provide a hindrance to the sales or use of game? Interviewee 12 thought the application of real world consequences would promote the divide between the virtual and real life in the minds of the young

people. This is a divide that 12 found to be lacking with some young people.

I think that's an aspect from young people as well, they think if it's out there and they can access it it's got to be okay. Like you're telling somebody that that something is inappropriate and they're like, "well how can I get on it then, if it's inappropriate I shouldn't be able to get onto it?" (Interviewee 12).

7.3 Computer game hardware

For the interviewees a wide range of considerations came up when discussing the choice of computer games. Committing a violent act or shooting people within computer games was viewed as key reason for not engaging with certain computer games for interviewees 1 and 3, although interviewee 3 choose to deliberately not acknowledge if such a game was played within certain contexts.

Interviewee 3 spoke of their game choice as an ad-hoc system that was constantly being negotiated by the youth workers in each context. Although they stated that in general the project would use the guidance of the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) age rating system which appears on game boxes, and that shooting or violent games were not to be played in project, interviewee 3 considered that actually this was the lazy option for them as a youth workers to adopt. It lacked integrity as it was based on a principle of keeping things easy for everyone. Rather than deal with the issue, or proactively engage with it, the priority was that of avoidance. They were also concerned with the ethical practice of putting in front of children very expensive hardware as play things, and wondered if for all the efforts and expense within computer game provision was there shallowness within the depth of reflection that could be achieved with young people. This dynamic of not wanting to deal with issues was also reflected by interviewee 1 whose project banned playing games which include gameplay mechanics such as stealing cars or committing violent acts so as not to engage with ethical discussions around these issues. Interviewee 1 did point to an ethical consideration of promoting millionaire footballers with young people in an area where being a footballer can be seen as a ticket out of urban deprivation. Interviewee 9 picked up on the theme of access to games and hardware having financial implications out with the youth work setting¹⁸.

¹⁸ Office national statistics infographic shows the percentage of adults without internet access for the First Quarter 2014, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access-quarterly-update/q1-2014/info-internet-usage.html>

When discussing game choice, interviewee 15 had said they did not use games within their work. Interviewee 9 also didn't use games as part of their work. This was an intentional decision by the project. Although young people did use the Internet connected PCs to play Internet flash based games within the youth work context. In this situation an older generation of hardware combined with a lack of access to consoles contributed to a strikingly low level of computer game playing.

Which computer games hardware do you use?	
Apple iPads	2
Microsoft Xbox	5
Nintendo Wii	8
PC	5
Sony PlayStation	5

Table 5. Computer game hardware utilised within youth work settings

Of the thirteen remaining interviewees, ten said they used consoles as detailed in table 5. All thirteen interviewees mentioned using computer games within an open youth club setting. Interviewee 3, and 14 mentioned using computer games in other settings, a dedicated regular computer game based event; and an irregular LAN party respectively.

Within my work at the moment the only place where they are used is on a Friday night ... and they are only one of the things that are on offer. So we have got an Xbox and a Wii. But nobody ever plays the Wii any more on a Friday night. And usually its football games and that's it (Interviewee 6).

Two interviewees mentioned using large screen projectors to display games for young people within the youth club setting. Interviewee 2 spoke of a physical leader board for keeping note of game points within the youth club context, also recording the team draw for a FIFA tournament night, copying the style of the World Cup draw, filming the draw as live, and posting the video on the YouTube website for young people to watch.

Interviewee 2 held the perspective that the young people they worked with only used two types of games, football and shoot-em-ups. Interviewee 13 deliberately rotated the availability of game types and hardware to provide a balance of game choice and methods of interaction, *SingStar* with

microphones, dance games with Nintendo Wii controller, football game with normal game controller.

The guys on the *FIFA* will very rarely go onto the *SingStar*, but on Friday there the girls were loving it. Sort of matching every dynamic of youth group to what's there. Because I think people will assume that computer consoles that's a boys thing, but there are a lot of games out there that really engage girls, your *SingStar* your *Just Dance*. That may be stereotypical, but they are the ones that seem to come across well in our youth group (Interviewee 13).

Interviewee 12 mentioned that they had consulted with female young people about game choice before any purchase of games is made.

12 - If we had been asking young people in the past for games they would like to see coming in, I know amongst the girls, it was games like *the Sims* they were asking for, the more reality simulator ones. And all play with the ones that are dress up, or doing hair and you see more of that.

Researcher - Oh right. Okay

12 - It's not across the board, the girls play *Minecraft* as well and *Battlefield* and whatever else and *Track Mania*. And the app games and social media (interviewee 12).

For 12 female young people are often neglected by computer game provision which is viewed as predominantly a male domain. Interviewee 7 provided an example where boys were encouraged to take part in a dance game. It was perceived that males dominate computer game play within youth clubs, by interviewee 6. Interviewee 13 considered that meeting the youth work aims of the project was best facilitated by ensuring computer games were not divided up along gender or age group lines by default. When asked if they had considered dividing game provision by age, 13 commented that the provision of older games would be detrimental towards one of the key development aims of the club, a community between the younger & older young people.

Five interviewees said they would use the PEGI age rating system as a primary guide to the appropriateness of the games for play. This system gave clarity, and provided guidance when parents were querying the appropriateness of available games within the youth work context. This tough questioning was also mentioned in relation to volunteers and their perception of the games being played in youth clubs. Interviewee 3 experienced questioning of their game choice from volunteer youth workers within the youth club context. By using games with a low PEGI guide age, the games provided are easy to approve of. Interviewees 3 and 6 spoke of the home context being unhelpful, as parent would often buy 18-rated games for young people to play in the home. This caused disappointment when the young person engaged with the youth work context and that game is judged inappropriate. Interviewee 5 spoke of the realistic position of youth workers racing

to the bottom age group.

... I said “we need games for the young people” so we bought Mario Kart or whatever just to be a token game for them to play. But again there was no investing in who they are, so, exchanging who we are. You know you can’t run a youth club without knowing what is needed in that area and that community and so on, and I think that applies to video games (Interviewee 5).

Three interviewees spoke of looking for inappropriate content within games in order to assess game appropriateness. For interviewee 12 and interviewee 14 this included playing the game or play observation to determine the content of the game. This method seemed prevalent in projects where the young people could bring in games from home. 14 commented that youth workers would not use a film they hadn't seen before with young people, yet often this was the case with games, making the rating system more important to game choice. Only interviewee 7 spoke of consulting with parents over game choice.

7 - ... And we are like, no that’s not happening, you will not be getting zombie games. We consulted with the parents and the majority of parents were quite happy with them playing *Call of Duty* and stuff like that as long as the volumes down.

Researcher - As long as volumes down? That’s quite interesting?

7 - Aye, which I thought was a bit... Aye, that’s, that’s, (pauses), We try not to put *Call of Duty* on anyway for the younger ones, but definitely not *Grand Theft Auto*. It’s just violence for the sake of violence (interviewee 7).

7.4 Internet provision and computer games.

Several projects spoke of issues around the provision of Internet access and computer games. Of the interviewees who used the Internet for computer gaming, there was a constant issue of moderation. The games available for play needed moderation, one project due to not having internet filters on the internet link, blocked access to Massive Multiplayer Online games, (interviewee 3), and one project only allowed gaming as associated with Facebook, (interviewee 9). Of those who didn't allow access, moderation was the key concern expressed. Although notably interviewee 8 spoke of denial of Wi-Fi access to online games with the aim of encouraging wider peer interaction within the youth club setting. Details of this Internet access are contained in table 6.

	Yes	No
Does the project provide internet access?	11	4
Is this accessible to young people?	6	5
Is this accessible for gaming use?	5	6

Table 6. Internet access in youth work settings

7.5 Computer games as the context for social skills development

Seven interviewees spoke of youth works current use of computer games as a way to support social skills development. Interviewee 1 spoke of games fostering teamwork, interviewee 3 spoke of increased peer interaction while interviewee 2 coloured computer games as tools to help build relationships. Interviewee 4 offered the illustration of two young people who engaged with the youth work project through computer games,

So, one was referred to me as a suspected selective mute. Biologically and anatomically he could speak, he just couldn't of confidence, out of knowing what to say, and stuff. The second person referred... he just didn't have enough experience socially. So what we have been doing with that, is, within, playing online games with them online. So we have been playing, Borderlands 2 is a good example; it is a four player cooperative game. So him and three youth worker's get-together, just in our houses, all in our respective houses. And play. The trick with this is, where the youth work comes in, is that we have the headsets turned on and we encourage them to converse and to plan ahead (Interviewee 4).

Interviewee 9 spoke of games being played by one young person as an aid to concentration while working as a team within a larger project. For interviewees 3 and 4 using computer games as a tool between youth workers and young people was vital. Interviewees 1 and 4 mentioned computer games created a context where young people could take the lead within the youth work practice, inverting the normal power dynamic of adult - youth relationships. One of the key things computer games had facilitated within the project of interviewee 10 was the development of young person led funding bids for computer game hardware. Interviewee 14 identified how using computer games, one of the primary media sources that young people used to view the world, led to a connection based primarily on a realization that games reward curiosity. Interviewee 1 commented

One of the things around computer games that is fantastic in a relational model is that it gives the young people the chance to be the expert ... The majority of young people are able to come in and particularly show myself, and other longer in the tooth staff members, how to do something. It gives them the sense of 'I can do stuff' and 'I'm valuable' and so there is a self-worth that comes from the knowledge, so that if I'm still not good at school subjects I still can relate. The relational stuff that comes from that, starting off a relationship from a console game and being able to do that (Interviewee 1).

For Interviewee 2, computer games marked an access point to engage in relationship with young person, but “in no way is it part of our in-depth strategy, but, you know”. Interviewee 2 expresses a viewpoint where computer games could do a defined job but proper youth work happens outside this defined computer games context. For the young person, youth work uses computer games functionally as attraction to attendance, leading to engagement. Interviewee 3 pointed out that advertising computer games as part of your youth work is used as short hand for “come hang out and have fun”. Interviewee 14 gave an example where a youth work context gave young people the space to experience game play as they had heard of it, describing using a PC based Local Area Network (LAN) games session.

And the guys loved ... the interaction, you know, the culture that they'd involved in, part of online, they would hear about that, but didn't actually have the opportunity to do that themselves. I mean living in high rises, there isn't really the kind of spaces to allow for something like that, but you know, even just the act of doing it together. Putting it together, seeing it as a project as well as a thing. It's good. And basically spending the night playing Team Fortress and Counterstrike from dusk to dawn. It's an horrendous but beautiful experience, in different ways (Interviewee 14).

Youth work's use of computer games was primarily about values and skills development for interviewee 14, highlighting a small group within their project that uses computer games as the primary tool to develop themes of politics, spirituality and morals with young people.

7.6 Flow and doubling

Within discussion of Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow interviewee 6 spoke of flow negatively, considering a young person in a flow state would hinder the initial relationship building function of the computer game. This meant flow was something not to be encouraged within a youth work setting. Interviewee 13 concurred pointing out that the use of computer games in their context was deliberately fast paced to help with club dynamics. For interviewee 10 the state of flow is a space that unconsciously excludes others. Interviewee 14 addressed this exclusion, questioning if young people use the youth work setting as safe space to come and opt out of engaging? Youth work provides a context where it was acceptable to opt out and relax. For interviewee 7 computer games were a tool that could provide chill out space when a young person was getting “het up”.¹⁹ By using computer games in this way, the young person was given a break from the youth work environment, in order to calm down, and was invited to reengage with the club environment ten or

¹⁹ A Scots informal adjective meaning angry and agitated. “Her husband is all het up about something”

twenty minutes later. Interviewee 7 identified that this flow time, meant young people took some time to readjust to the normal club context, continuing, that flow carried a danger for youth workers who could switch into a flow state and lose an awareness of the rest of the room when playing. Interviewee 8 identified a natural state of flow that a young person utilises within a youth work setting while playing a computer game.

... there's a wee guy, we call him [nickname] 'cause he is so good at getting diamonds in *Minecraft*. And you can just see him sitting there, and he just knows, he is not even having to think about. He is just intrinsically finding this stuff, he knows where it is, what level to go to, what technique to use, and you can just see, he's kind of, just Zen. You know what I mean? I can see that totally (Interviewee 8).

For Interviewee 5 flow is connected to freedom and creativity at a deep level. Interviewee 11 considers this is something that is positive but also has some danger within it.

You do see people getting in a zone. And getting young people to sometimes do something other than gaming can be a challenging. Preferably with games like *Minecraft*, we always encourage regular breaks, no matter what the activity is at the computers. There is an element of young people who all they want to do is gaming (Interviewee 11).

Flow relies on Ludic phronesis, a repertoire of skills and conventions, interviewee 5 was surprised that a group of young people who game regularly found it easy to distinguish between the virtual and real. The computer game had a layer of dissonance that provided a layer of abstraction between reality and the virtual.

So, all these young people are mature enough to recognize that it's a different thing, and they've learned that (Interviewee 5).

Interviewee 5 contrasted this with the gamification²⁰ of life, using the example of the recruitment policies of the Armed Forces. Interviewee 5 questioned if young people had considered why an outside voice was trying to say life is the same as computer games?

But there is this influence from outside saying "No, it's exactly same thing." And then you see the adverts you can look up YouTube, all the Territorial Army adverts are shot like video games, from a video game like perspective (Interviewee 5).

There was a direct correlation between the outside voices telling you there is a link, and how people perceive this link. Interviewee 5 used an example of the relationship between the number of CCTV cameras within Glasgow city centre and how much fear of crime people felt within that geographic area. They questioned if this outside voice was speaking for another agenda.

²⁰ Gamification – is the name for the application of game design principles “to a number of situations in the regular world in order to motivate us: examples include designing educational games, giving employees points for their performance, giving shoppers points for checking in at specific locations, awarding internet users with badges for commenting on website posts and so on.” (Juul, 2013, p10-11)

7.6 Policy, worker, young people.

Interviewee 3 commented that part of youth works use of computer games, and game choice was a product of a time difference between young person, worker, and project policy. They assessed that young people are five years ahead of the worker, and ten years ahead of policy setting.

7.7 Computer game selection

In table 7 below we see that the most popular games are *Minecraft*, (2011), by Mojang, *Mario Kart*, (1992-), Nintendo, and *FIFA*, (1993 -), Electronic Arts. It is interesting to note that the three games used most by youth workers have PEGI age rating well below the teenage age group of young people, at 7+, 3+ and 3+ respectively. Interviewees spoke of how games were used. *FIFA* was mentioned as a tool to tackle sectarianism, a way to discuss racism, and space to reflect on behaviour and rules. The *Bioshock* series of games by 2K games, (2007-2013), is mentioned as a game series with large spaces for ethical work to take place, this game series has an 18+ rating. The games that the interviewees felt had lots of ethical potential were *Minecraft*; *Black and White*, (2001), EA Games; *Guitar Praise*, (2007), DigitalPraise; *Elder Scrolls*, (1994 -), Bethesda Software, including *Skyrim*; *Myth - The Fallen Lords*, (1998), Eidos; *War Commander*, (2011), Kixeye. All of these games with the exception of *Minecraft* and *Guitar Praise* are rated at 16+ or 18+ by PEGI.

Some games were considered to be absent of ethical space or opportunity. *FIFA* for some interviewees was considered to be free from ethics as was, *Borderlands*, (2009) 2K games; *Starcraft*, (1998) Blizzard Entertainment; *Call of Duty* series, (2003 -) Blizzard entertainment; *Tomb Raider* series, (1996 -) Eidos. Games such as *Wii Zumba*, were considered to have little ethical content, while games like *SingStar* and *Just Dance* were considered to be generally ethically neutral, although interviewee 13 pointed out that some of the overtly sexualized body movements performed, or some of the song lyrics created space for ethical choices and reflection on the part of youth workers. Interviewee 2 commented similarly

2 - The one thing that worries me more than the violence is a sexualisation of stuff, that's another thing I been conscious of in the choosing of games. I think our culture is just so overly sexualized and it's not as good because it's degrading, not just the woman but the kids. Like if

we are working with guys, like, practically all of them are going having prostitutes, and that's what's exciting. Similarly we used to play *SingStar* as well as *Just Dance*, and the reason we stopped, was because all the new music videos there's folks traipsing around in bikinis, and stuff, and like that's not a, not a ... ,

Researcher - That's not real life?

2 - [agreeing noise], we changed to *Just Dance* because of that, so I think that side of it is a worry, the violence I am not that concerned about maybe I should be but I'm not as concerned about.

Mentions of game	Game title	Opinion indicated
9	Minecraft,	Positive
7	FIFA,	Positive
6	Grand Theft Auto,	Negative
4	Mario Kart, Call of Duty,	Positive Negative
3	iPad Games, Candy Crush Saga,	Positive Negative
2	Wii Fit, Dance Games, SingStar, Violent Games, Skyrim, Just Dance, Facebook Games, Farm Hero Saga,	Positive
1	Four Pictures, Wii Zumba, Wii Dance, StarCraft, Borderlands 2, Black and White, Bioshock, Bioshock Infinite, Guitar Praise, Mario Bros, Kinect Sports, Kinect Dance, Tony Hawks, Pokémon, Yu-Gi-Oh, Skate, Warhammer, War commander, Angry Birds, Roblox, Wheelchair game, Maths Skills games, 8 Ball Pool, Track Mania, The Torture Game, Tone City, Flow, Call of Duty - Battlefield, Temple Run, Guitar Hero, Rocksmith, Risk, Buzz the quiz game, Halo, Flappy Bird, Time Splitters, Counterstrike, Team Fortress, Assassins Creed, Plants vs Zombies.	Mostly positive, Negative - Wheelchair game, The Torture game, Call of Duty - Battlefield. Halo

Table 7. Computer games mentioned by participants during interviews

7.8 Community building interactions

Interviewee 3 spoke of how computer games are aiding building community. For them this had a practical outworking with older young people becoming leaders at the youth work project. The young people maintaining the hardware, run the youth work event and moderate the game behaviour. This created real world answers to virtual conflicts with their peers and moderated online behaviours.

So in our rules it says no griefing²¹. And the kids are like “I just love griefing, that’s rubbish.” But this is a concept, and there is a whole ethical thing in that, because it’s not “don’t do this, don’t do that”. It’s actually there is this concept of “griefing” which is about how you treat others but it’s not got firm parameters, and with the age group we’re working they really struggled with that. I mean, “Are you griefing him?” Howls of protest and the whole real / not real debate comes up again (Interviewee 3).

What interviewee 3 points to is a community struggling in an engagement with the virtual, and defining the liminal space that meets the real world. Where does one virtual action have an effect within the real world? These liminal actions instead of drawing a dissonance for the player, actually solidifies the effect of the game. Making the division between virtual and real fuzzy.

7.9 Computer games and certified learning

Interviewee 11 and 12 both use formal education certification within their youth work and apply this certification to their use of computer games, this had led to young people not only playing games but also developing their own computer games.

That, in terms of time commitment, is more than achievable within a drop-in youth session. That’s definitely the model and definitely the start for a young person taking an engagement with learning, it’s not forced, it is not every time you come into the session you’re having to do something. It’s more trying to get it from them... into what their interested in, “What’s that you’re doing? Is that *Minecraft*?” how can we develop certification around *Minecraft*? (Interviewee 11).

Interviewee 12 spoke of how certification had laid the foundation for learning other skills, whether that’s with hardware, perhaps maintaining or operating servers, administrating access and dispute resolution. For them there was also outworking of game playing within making videos, animations, music creation which is a by-product of playing computer games.

We try to encourage that as well. We use a local website and any creativity that comes out a youth session we deliver, we publish young people’s work on this website, so the website at the minute contains games, animations, creative images, bits of music creation and you’ll find videos, different videos of different *Minecraft* worlds and so forth (Interviewee 12).

²¹ Griefing is the term within computer games communities for actions designed to deliberately bring grief to another player. Within *Minecraft* this could include modifying or destroying another players creations without permission, within *Call of Duty*, it could be deliberately killing another player character using friendly fire.

7.10 Computer games and money

Interviewee 14 questioned the role of money within current computer games. For interviewee 14 *Candy Crush Saga* and free games in which you pay a premium to advance quickly through levels, or buy lives and game items, had become a computer game equivalent of financial transactions such as online betting or payday loans. A full price computer game with additional Down Loadable Content (DLC) was also viewed with distain, the structure of paying £50 for an incomplete product, is for interviewee 14 illustrative of a wider issue of knowledge and being streetwise.

14 - ... even though our young people are in some ways the most computer literate generation because they have this experience. The more and more, they are further and further away from actually how it works. You know, from when I was PC gaming in 90s, you had this understanding how you actually, you know, of opening files, using a bit of MS-DOS, and that wasn't showing off, that wasn't being kind of ..., it was just how you kind of used those things,

Researcher -That's just what you did to make things work.

14 - So you had a kind of understanding of that, and now because everything, even if it's consoles or PCs, everything is packaged through a user interface to make it the easiest. They have so little understanding of the things that go into it, you get it in the final almost, packaged form. Or even building the hardware that goes with it, cause that's where raspberry pi has been so successful. Cause actually says this is guts of a computer and how you put the thing together. Which is fascinating for most people who've never put one together. They go "oh really, is that what it does." You have to go to Maplin for new things, oh right ok, as opposed to just buying it off Amazon. It's an interesting world we're in and I suspect we are not going to see the end of it (interviewee 14).

7.11 Fear around computer game use

Interviewee 3 illuminates for us that external considerations around computer game choice can often be based on fear.

So the challenge for us, is for us with the *Minecraft* thing. With the accounts and stuff, is how much are we meeting young people where they are at and how much are we pulling young people into something they're not at? In a sense you end up at the, I was going to say lowest common denominator but that's a value judgment itself isn't it? You end up in a situation where you are ... you're kinda validating stuff that parents in particular might be really upset about, and the loud parents who know how to access power and know your management committee, know to write to the committee. So, there is a whole lot of tensions there, but what youth work ends up being is lovely and false and never really meeting people where they are at, but actually pretending 99% of young people are here [in a good place] and "Why are you young person not in that place?" It's just, terrible (Interviewee 3).

In this example it is the fear of complaining parent, it is the fear of a critical letter to a committee; it is not an evaluation of the game, it is not an assessment of where the young person is. It is a

judgment of the perception of the game to other adults. These other adults can make life tough for the worker.

Interviewee 11 also spoke of fears around the online communication that games facilitate. Often games provide the ability to communicate with other users over the Internet using headsets with microphones. While the benefits of this have been outlined above, interviewee 11 spoke of a real safety concern in this aspect. Interviewee 1 spoke of having to stop this online communication as young people were making racist comments to other online players, and abuse was becoming prevalent within its usage. For interviewee 12 this fear and concern had to be balanced.

For me certainly working with some of the young people it is a daily occurrence. When their talking about something that happened on Facebook, on the phone, or in a game, and you're just asking the question do you know that person? How do you know that person? How have you been in contact with that person? Do you know who they are?

...

Its giving them the power to make that an informed decision, though, we're not coming in saying don't be friends with that person. Just be aware that they may not be who they say they are and if there's anything untoward is going on... (Interviewee 12).

7.12 Inappropriate games for youth work

During the interviews one game was considered as completely inappropriate for youth work. Interviewees 1, 7, 8, and 13 spoke of *Grand Theft Auto* as inappropriate. For interviewee 1 this game required too much ethical discussion within a youth club setting, rendering the game unusable for the youth work context. For interviewee 8 *Grand Theft Auto* gives sight to the nasty Hobbesian unpleasantness of life.

Its real life that they don't need to see, this side to the world. And it's a fantasy and it's a real kind of unpleasant. There's probably some right horror games out there, but they are so niche you're probably not going to end up playing. Your main one for young people that we have is *GTA* (Interviewee 8).

Interviewee 3 spoke of *Halo* and *Call of Duty* as games that required an informed judgment call on behalf of the worker. They judged that the games were acceptable in some contexts but unacceptable in others. Interviewee 12 spoke of the young people's engagement with a PC based Mafia themed game called *Tone City*,

You know it quite an interesting concept, one of the games we mulled over, and in terms of access was *Tone City*. You had that element of violence & mafia arms. Then you had the other element to it that was having a career making money, you had an option in the game to go study. Using an option in the game to go become a doctor. So you have two sides to the game

there ... just so happened that it just about outweighed that educational element of the game given so much negativity on the other side of the game (Interviewee 12).

7.13 Changing computer games for youth work

There was a divided opinion on the question of deliberately changing computer games to provide a better fit with youth work practice. Interviewee 6 felt that games needed to have a combination of narrative, choices and opportunity for shared group experience in order to make computer games more youth work friendly. Interviewee 9 felt that games needed to take on a gamification approach to formal learning in order to become youth work friendly, providing an example of guitar playing,

I don't know what stage it is at, but it's proper *Guitar Hero* with real guitars. That something that is interesting to me. *Rocksmith* or something like that? Basically they've managed to build a guitar in such a way that it can detect which note you're playing and it can teach you to play guitar while you're playing games at the same time. So they're teaching you the proper riffs and the proper chords in real life. I'm pretty sure it's an actual guitar they use with strings and that (Interviewee 9).

For interviewees 7 and 8, computer games didn't need changing, youth workers view of computer games need to change fundamentally. Youth workers have misunderstood the relationship that youth work has with computer games. For interviewee 7 youth work is based on using whatever engages a young person as a tool to engage in learning that contrasts strongly with a formal approach to education. Similarly,

It is the same as a pool table. You know, it's not the game that's the main thing it's the working roundabout it. It's an engagement tool, it could be any game, as long as it's not *Grand Theft Auto*, and if you are a strong enough youth worker, you can get whatever conversation you're looking for, the kind of stuff you're trying to get from games (Interviewee 8).

7.14 Computer games as moderator of emotions

For interviewee 11 young people play games and get emotionally involved, this affects the young people deeply. From this deep involvement, young people are reluctant to move to a different activity. For interviewee 1 computer games function as an emotional release valve. The emotional reaction that the game evokes maybe outweighs the appropriate reaction for losing a virtual game of football. For them this shows games are tapping into something deeper.

It's also where society allows you to be angry. If you go and break a tree in the park, or go and take down lampposts that is seen as very negative behaviour. But if you are given a space where you can shout and scream about the crap that's in their lives, then it gives them that

opportunity (Interviewee 1).

Interviewee 5 spoke of young people to using computer games as a reaction to the rest of life, providing a counter cultural space for expression.

And I think this honestly explains young people playing video games through the night, because they don't have any more time to do good things. So I would say that's a huge part of that, it's like trying to live this life that you want to live outside. I can't imagine how depressing it is to live in school with all your time accounted for but say one day I'm gonna finish this and do whatever I want. And you finish it and then you realize it's not that easy and you need to work towards something (Interviewee 5).

For interviewee 12 this seemed to be something that could also be a strand of computer gaming that appealed to those who struggled with various issues, they used the example of the computer game playing ability of a young person with dyspraxia.

Interviewee 13 took a different line, wondering if the experience of the 1, 5 and 12 represented an urban/ rural divide. They felt that within their project this emotional function had been absent from the usage of the computer games by the young people they worked with, concluding that for their market town youth work project, small group work and relational youth work carried out this function.

7.15 Computer Games Discussion

The lack of an explicit linkage between ethics and spirituality for workers is interesting. The theory suggested in chapter 3 is that ethics is the new spirituality, with the linkage not being made by the youth workers; the implication is that youth work does not do spirituality. It would be speculative to offer a reasoning why, but the historical linkage of Christianity and youth work may be a factor. This is even more interesting as a significant number of participants are employed by CFB projects. All participants embraced ethics, but there was no explicit linkage to spirituality of any kind. By using ethics as its contribution to the spiritual growth of the young person, youth work negates any dealings with spirituality. Computer game ethics then contribute to the spirituality of a young person, but this contribution is without youth work being a deliberate actor within the process.

Several interviewees commented that the games that are most ethically rich are single player games. Sicart presents case studies that apply his ethical framework to single player games,

Bioshock, multiplayer games, *DEFCON* and MMO games *World of Warcraft*. While for the youth workers the ethical games are experienced in solitude. Sicart's model makes use of the game community, it actively involves others and seeks contributions from other players to help make the game ethically good, and takes responsibility for the ethics of the game experience, as revealed in the Infosphere concept.

Several youth workers use the PEGI system as guidance for games instead of assessing each game for suitability. Since 2012 PEGI has been the legal age guidance system applying to computer games in the same way as the British Board of Film Classification's ratings are legal age guidance for film releases. The PEGI system gives clarity, as legal certification; PEGI's opinion is inherently stronger than arguing from your own position. Yet this has encouraged youth work to engage in a race to the lowest aged rating in order to provide safety for the young people, safety for the worker and safety for the project. This safety negates any ethical considerations. It is hard to find a game rated at the lowest age group 3+, which is a constantly ethical experience, therefore in order to engage ethically with games, the youth worker is going to need to consider carefully and work on arguments for the game choice, and the hardware they have. The consideration of what games are inappropriate for youth work is an interesting dilemma. The *Pokémon* series, (1996-) Nintendo, is rated by PEGI for age 7+. The narrative of the game is based on capturing wild animals and training them to fight against each other for human sport. Animals are contained in pokéballs that appear to be smaller than the physical size of the animal for ease of transport by their trainer. Using PEGI as a system does not answer the questions of what is appropriate for the youth work situation. Is a game based on capturing wild animals and training them to fight against each other suitable for youth work? Wagner suggests that it comes down to depending on the player's perspective and experience.

The successful consultation with parents on computer games by interviewee 7 is to be commended. The choice of games now available to the young people is mediated by the youth project from a list constructed by young people and approved by parents. The question that this raises up is the parent's permission for the young people to play the *Call of Duty* game as long as the sound is down. The PEGI guidance rates this game as an 18+ for extreme violence, violence towards defenceless people & strong language. It is quite amazing to see this being played in a youth work context by 12-14 year olds. It is also noteworthy that parents felt the issue was the noise of the game rather than the graphics or game violence.

When considering inappropriate games for youth work the *Grand Theft Auto* series of games was selected as being the most inappropriate game by participants. So inappropriate that it would not be discussed within a youth work context. Yet this contrasts clearly with the ethical assessment of the game that Sicart provides for *Grand Theft Auto IV*,

As players, we have the ethical capacities to interpret the game and the decisions we make in it as a part of the process of creating our subjectivity. This means that we will understand the game as a simulation, as a process in which our values relate to the values encouraged by the game. That means that the ethical player of *Grand Theft Auto IV* will build values based on the values of the game: values that imply, ultimately, that Niko has to be a criminal. Of course this could be interpreted as an argument for considering *Grand Theft Auto IV* a reasonably unethical game: ... But that's where *Grand Theft Auto IV* becomes a true ethical masterpiece. As players, as ethical agents, our ludic phronesis acts as the evaluation method of the appropriateness of our actions and values. We think, and play, as ethical agents beyond being players, but also as cultural beings. We play as body-subjects. That's why playing *Grand Theft Auto IV* becomes an exploration of meaning and purpose, of values and actions (Sicart, 2010, p104-5).

There are many reasons to avoid games that could provoke ethical reflections. Of those outlined by participants, it is noteworthy that the primacy of community building between young teens and older teens was used as a reason not to provide older games for older young people to play, even though those older games may provide rich ethical content. The response that computer games that provoke hard ethical questions would be avoided is perhaps the most revealing. Youth workers are not willing to commit to supporting and facilitating the ethical discussion which computer games provoke. Could the reason lie within interviewee 1's point that it takes a substantial time commitment to use computer games ethically? When you are in a youth club with 4 staff and 35 young people finding time to invest in order to use computer games well is a big commitment. Is it taking the lazy option providing a game like *Mario Kart*, filled with fun driving and cartoon violence, so the youth worker doesn't have to ethically assess and discuss the violent acts of *Grand Theft Auto*? The *Mario Kart* style game is short and sharp providing room for lots of participants in a short time frame, and it can relatively self-manage. There is no dispute from the virtual experience of driving a small cartoon go-kart, which spills into real world arguments. The harder option would be more intensive for the youth worker and young person, while perhaps not involving the participation of as many young people. The use of computer games as crowd control is a fair usage.

It allows for the engagement of young people with the game and provides space for the youth worker to work with others. But it renders games as impotent ethically. As an experience it is about keeping people amused. Without the novelty factor, the computer game loses interest for young people. As such the crowd control method is counterproductive for young person and worker.

The saddest responses were those that indicated a fear around computer game choice; the fear of parents complaining, the fear of answering that complaint to a management committee. Great decisions are never made on the basis of fear. It appears that for youth work computer games are a fight they do not want to have.

The Red Cross example indicated several ways that computer games could be changed, in order to achieve a humanitarian benefit, by incorporating a real life law within the games design. Participants seemed unable to conceptualise what changes would make computer games better for youth workers. The Red Cross example does show that changes can be made to use computer games to inspire a particular change. Games such as *This War of Mine*, (in development), 11bit studios, and *That Dragon Cancer*, (2014), Ryan Green, tackle subjects such as trying to live in a war torn city, and caring for a child who is ill with terminal cancer. These are games youth work can use well. Perhaps games are adjusting to become better for youth work without youth works engagement.

One of the noteworthy points that emerged from the participants was a use of computer games to allow young people to emote. Youth workers had interpreted the role of the computer game not as something that zones you out from your emotions, but as a tool to engage and release the emotions of the young person. Allowing anger, joy, shouting and screaming in a way that was safe for the young person. This is interesting, as the concept of doubling or flow needs a conscious space to question you. Yet the sense from the youth workers is that this is an automatic response from the young people to playing computer games within a youth work context. Using a flow state within youth work was not given a definitive yes or no. Some youth workers viewed flow as something that isn't helpful for youth work, with flow seen as being an obstruction to community participation. Flow is also seen as something youth workers can use to calm a young person down, and the time taken to get into a flow state can be variable. While doubling was not seen as something that was actively happening with current youth work computer game usage. As this

separating of the moral self from the player self is the second ethical move, it points to computer games not being used ethically by youth work currently. It is unclear if youth workers felt that doubling was a helpful thing to happen within a youth work context or not, but it would be reasonable to point to the results of the flow conversation and suggest these results may be replicated.

Using computer games as a tool to relate young people to youth workers is significant because it indicates that computer games are being used to encourage the development of agency within the young person. This relationship that is formed during the computer game playing experience is one that is equal with often the young person taking the lead, facilitating the youth work task as defined in chapter 3. It allows the youth worker to listen to the young person. This dynamic also contrasts with the dynamic of playing at home which can be a solitary experience. The development of using computer games as an opportunity for young people to lead funding bids is a natural outworking of computer games ability to level this power dynamic, concretely making real world change through a virtual engagement.

Several interviewees spoke of a mixed gender balance when playing games, some interviewees spoke of games being primarily used by boys, this raises the question, are girls less likely to play games than boys? Statistically more females than males within the UK play computer games, yet within the teenage age groups research from Swift & Padilla, more males will play than females. The question is around hardware and game choice. The rise in casual gaming on tablet computer and mobile phones has corresponded to the rise in female game playing. Yet only two projects have tablet computers for young people to use. Games on consoles are seen as gender defined, either boys or girls games.

In this chapter we have investigated the participant's responses to computer games and their ethics. Explored some of the influences upon which the hermeneutical action in relation to computer games is based. These responses have been rooted in these findings within the context of the previous few chapters.

8. Conclusion

In this conclusion the main findings of the study will be presented in relation to the three questions this study set out to investigate. How do those active in the youth work task, define youth work within Scotland? How do youth workers within Scotland use computer games? What can be revealed by investigating the ethical and hermeneutical situations created by youth works use of computer games?

8.1 How do those active in the youth work task, define youth work within Scotland?

The youth work that is investigated within this study is not as strong as the policy or theorist would demand of youth workers. The youth workers used the term 'intentional' rather than 'professional', youth works purpose is education yet the participants did not name education as a purpose. This could simply have been a case of a vocabulary mix up, or it could be that the youth work theorists and policy makers at the Scottish government are missing an ambiguity in the role of the youth worker and youth works effect on the young person that is implied by a deliberate linguistic device. This uncertainty has some positives. It is rich and reveals youth work to be underlined with complex structures. This uncertainty provokes a question of which layer of abstraction has been applied in order to reach these definitive statements.

Seven of the participants came from Christian Faith-Based youth work. Within these participants there was a notable lack of religious intent for the youth work that was being carried out. This is refreshing for those who perceive CFB youth work as solely defined by proselytising, conversely, it is concerning for those whose viewpoint is that these workers should be presenting the Gospel. Clyne & Sercombe point out that every youth worker has motivations. These reasons are varied and differ for each youth worker. If the first question defining youth work has found that the participants step back from the strong language, words such as educational, and professional, could this lack of stating religious intentions be a part of the same reticence? If so where does this place youth work as a profession, and why does this uncertainty seem to be so wide spread?

The role of play within Scottish youth work is central. Play is used to attract young people, to engage young people and to work with young people. The participants showed that play is used but not in a considered way. This lack of consideration is important. Youth work is a process of self-reflection; the identity of the youth worker is as a reflective practitioner. For one of the major tools for youth work to be engaged with yet remain unconsidered by practitioners is concerning. It asks questions of the way youth workers decided on the appropriate tools to use. Despite this unexamined nature, youth work seems to understand play has a nature compatible with youth work and learning by a process of intuition. Youth work uses play well, but with more reflection and critique it could be better.

The reality of youth work within Scotland is that the agenda of the funder is king. Money dictates work style/content for youth workers. One of the participants works on a job skills programme, this brings in finance for the project and allows the organisation to branch into other areas of work. It also brings with it an employability objective from the funding body. Considering this issue is not about how much good this will do for the project or will the young person benefit from additional job skills, both of these are good, it is a question of who is the primary client. The youth worker in this example is working with the young person towards project aims, given by the agency that are in turn agreed in the funding bid with the funding body. In this formulation it is clear how the influence of the funder can challenge the place of the young person as the primary client. As youth work branches out into neighbouring areas like employability, the uniqueness of youth works agenda will be challenged. This is an issue for youth work in Scotland to consider carefully.

It is therefore concluded that Scottish youth work exists in a state of ambiguity around the definition of youth work in Scotland at the front line worker level, incorporating a reticence around verbalising youth works purpose and aims. This is resulting from the reality of working for multiple masters, funding, organisational, parental and the messiness of teenage human existence. This something that Sercombe identifies and prepares the worker for, with his contextual approach to youth work ethics.

8.2 How do youth workers within Scotland use computer games?

To explore this question we have to assess three interconnected issues, how are youth workers using computer games? What ethical issues and considerations are considered within this usage? How is youth work interpreting computer games?

8.2.1 how are youth workers using computer games?

Computer games were viewed by some participants as a necessary evil, the use of computer games was an expression of an assumed position of young people's culture, but one that would give back modest returns to the worker. A significant minority of participants, expressed being unhappy with the use of computer games. In contrast to this there were a number of interviewees who are computer game players and are positive about the role computer games can play within youth work. Within this second group there was recognition that youth work had not made pro-active choices in relation to their computer game use.

When it comes to deciding upon games for the youth work context, youth workers are primarily using guidance from PEGI. This has strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of the ethical experience, the PEGI system is legal guidance for the games appropriateness, yet unable to inform workers on how much room there is for ethical exploration within a game. Computer games ask worker to balance the ethical gains with youth work commitment to providing safe space for young people. The content of a game rated as only suitable for over 18's, needs care and consideration to be exercised when exposing that material a 14 year old. Complicating this decision is the home context; if young people can play 18+ games at home, is it safer to be playing them in a youth work situation where youth workers are actively looking to engage and question the playing of the game, working through issues with the young person? This decision is a contextual analysis and relies on the assessment of the worker, selecting the appropriate ethical model of engagement and proceeding accordingly.

The other question is one of practicability. Every youth worker would love to have the time to engage with computer games, to use them ethically and appropriately for each young person. Yet often the youth worker is unable to make this commitment. In this situation the question should be asked, is this youth engagement actually youth work or an augmented janitorial service?

8.2.2 what ethical issues and considerations are in play with this usage?

The youth workers who participated within this study confirmed that they could see how computer games can be used for ethical explorations, finding that computer games provide a fertile ground for ethical questions. This fits with the theoretical work of Sicart and Burns. There was an absence of the suggested linkage between ethics and spirituality by Mayo-Collins, Mayo, Nash and Cocksworth. This link wasn't evidenced or expressed within the work of the participants. It noteworthy that this research project relied on the perception of the participants for information. No observations were made of participants work with young people through computer games within youth work contexts. This suggested linkage between spirituality and ethics maybe identified in future research through an ethnographic observation methodology to researching the question.

For many of the participants it was easier not to ask the question than to struggle with the answer. Youth workers took early action to ensure the young people wouldn't ask awkward questions, computer games were predetermined inappropriate in order to avoid their play, (and questions). This banning of games to avoid issues that cause discomfort for the youth worker is a large ethical dilemma. This avoidance of the question renders the work of youth work impotent. Instead of being a space where young people are empowered to be curious, youth work becomes a space that refuses to deal with issues it considers difficult. It excludes young people from the conversation around playing virtual violent acts and the opportunity to consider these aspects of the world. Young people deserve the right to consider the negative factors of the world. Youth work can be the safe space for considering and working through these issues, but only if it starts to allow the questions.

The third stage of Sicart's hermeneutical model is around engaging and contributing to the wider game community in general participants exhibited a lack of awareness of current issues within computer game culture. This lack of engagement with the gaming community and general gaming news, leaves youth workers trying to interpret games content and ethical capabilities from an uninformed position. If youth work wishes as a sector to use computer games to their full capacity, engagement with the wider game community will need to be instigated.

8.2.3 how is youth work interpreting computer games?

Youth work interprets computer games as hard work. Computer games are not the easy option. Part of the reticence of workers to use computer games is rooted in this perception. This manifests itself with an avoidance of the issue. Computer games such as *Grand Theft Auto* provide an engagement that was too intensive in terms of volunteer/worker capacity. Participants who use computer games more extensively asked for resources and time to reflect on the existing instinctive use of computer games. The notable ways that the participants use computer games include, as a space to emote, as crowd control, as an attraction, but not as a tool for actual youth work. This engaging computer games for these significant but peripheral tasks points to youth work interpreting computer games as having an ability which allows for a depth of interaction that is yet unexamined.

Computer games are partly used as a fun distraction, but the real youth work happens somewhere else. The participants are not considering using computer games as a central role within their youth work practice. Four interviewees demonstrated that this is not the only way to work; computer games and their use can be a central part of the youth work context. It can be a vibrant part of a practice that encourages learning, which brings about space for the young person to lead within an equal relationship where the young person is the primary client. Both the young person and worker can reflect upon an ethical experience.

It is appropriate to conclude that the use of computer games by Scottish youth work can be rich and complex. Yet it needs more resources and time to consider the role of computer games, asking hard questions of games, young people and itself. Computer games demand hard work, through engagement with the game community and spending time with young people. This is not impossible in the youth club setting as the pool table testifies. The current use of computer games points to an intrinsic valuing of the resource, but the area needs further research to enable the youth worker to find a more considered practical application of the resource.

8.3 what can be revealed by investigating the ethical and hermeneutical situations that youth works use of computer games creates?

Theology provides a reading of popular culture that is nuanced and developed. It starts from the early binary positions outlined by Cobb, to a mutual correlation detailed by Lynch, with popular culture and theology as equals in discussion with each other. Currently the discussion around computer games and youth work is very much from youth work to computer games unilaterally. Theology through the work of Burns provides a model for engagement with computer games which youth work lacks. It provides a comprehensive hermeneutical checklist from which to assess the ethical dimensions of interacting with violent games, for Burns this reveals and describes the religious aims within computer games. As theology provides this ethical outworking and considerations, is there room for youth work to adopt an amended version of this questioning model, utilising its analysis to make clear the linkage between theology, spirituality and ethics? Developing a piece of work using theology's underwriting framework, certainly would allow for youth work to engage more fully with computer games.

For the participants the issue of the split between the real, the virtual and the liminal was constant. This split is uncertain. It is active and movable. With Huizinga carving out a space where there is liminality which can be of use for the game, for the player, and in this study, for youth work. This consideration is of course contextual, as an ongoing project requiring examination. The ethical and hermeneutical responses of the participant's points to computer games doing all of this already yet youth work is not taking advantage of this. Theology has a great resource of thought in this area that can be brought to use. As we have seen in the example of the Eucharist, exploration of this liminality is a developed and ongoing research area where theology can illuminate the youth work and computer game conversation. Bringing tools and a language to engage with the issue.

The role of play is a major area that is underdeveloped by both theology and youth work. The reflective nature of youth work leads to an ad-hoc approach when major youth work tools are under considered, and models aren't available to utilise. This may be the core root of the uncertainty that emerged as a strong theme from participants

It is appropriate to conclude what can be revealed by investigating the ethical and hermeneutical situations that youth works use of computer games creates, is a lack of resources, tools and language to engage with the results of this usage. Youth work is struggling to engage fully, it is

struggling to find a language and model to consider this issue within. Theology has a key role in this conversation to illuminate the discussion and a language to contribute further.

8.4 Future development of work

The future development of this work academically could take three main paths.

The relationship between the virtual within real life was a constant concern for youth workers throughout the study. The theological tools need to be applied further in this area. A research project exploring how young people are engaging with ethics and computer games would allow for the development of a full model of ethical engagement with computer games that may reveal the link between spirituality & ethics fully. A theological exploration of play is an area that could be fruitfully developed further. The language which Miller suggests in 1970 and White echoes in 2010 needs developed and worked on. In order to bring play back to theology and a church which needs it.

Developments within contemporary youth work policy should focus on three aspects, research, support, and resourcing. The call this paper makes is firstly for policy makers to invest in practical academic research. For tools such as computer games and play to be researched providing a solid theoretical or practical youth work base. Youth workers are under supported in general, this is damaging to youth work as a practice and as a profession. For youth workers to be using fear as a decision making aid is dangerous. Policy makers need to engage in resourcing the sector theoretically and practically. Computer games function as crowd control, as safe space, space to emote, a space to engage and also opt out of engaging. Computer games provide a location for conversation that benefits from a physicality that allows for open communication without confrontation. Is it testament to youth works inventive nature that it has taken a tool, and used it for its own ends well. Well is demonstrably different to good. Try eating soup with a fork, you will get some of the benefit but the overall experience is unsatisfactory. The theorists and some of the participants hint that computer games can provide more. They are a location from which to explore with the young person the ethics, beliefs, morals and understandings that exist within their lives, identifying how they perform the task of hermeneutics.

The simplest way for youth work to start using computer games well is to provide a youth work phronesis. To use the reservoir of youth workers knowledge and perspective to ask good questions of young people playing computer games within youth clubs. This can only be achieved if youth workers have the resources and freedom to use computer games well. To move it from a fork to a spoon

To use computer games better involves regularly watching young people playing games, listening to them playing and asking reflective questions of them. As youth workers who work with young people our role is to listen. Part of being a good listener is asking the correct questions at the correct time. Look at Burns questions in chapter 6. For the youth club setting, the voice that youth work has can be asking questions of those whose ludic phronesis is not fully formed. Youth works role is to be illuminative and reflective with the young person.

The second mechanic requires taking time to reflect. Youth workers need to spend time considering what they want from computer games. Pimlott and Pimlott suggest carrying out a technology audit; consider what you do in the light of what you want to do. Will a *Mario Kart* game in the youth club achieve the same ethical effect as a *Bioshock* gameplay evening? The tool of computer games is multifaceted but if you pick the fork function don't match it with the soup.

The final mechanic is one of engagement with the computer game community. Youth work is often accused of attracting activists, yet youth work is inactive in relation to computer games. The biggest change youth workers can make around their use of computer games is to engage with computer games and the game community. This can be done by playing more, by reading the computer games news sites, talking to youth work peers in order to share good practice, using computer games as an issue to discuss with senior staff and policy makers.

Youth work has the soup in front of it; computer games can function as a most cutlery ways. By getting to know computer games better, they will begin to look more like a spoon.

Appendices

Appendix A. Anonymised participant detail table

Anonymised participant detail table.

	Sex	Age	Youth work specific degree	Employed or volunteer youth worker	Nationality
1	Male	35-45	Yes	Employed	Scottish
2	Male	25-35	No	Employed	UK
3	Male	25-35	Yes	Employed	Scottish
4	Male	25-35	Yes	Employed	Scottish
5	Male	25-35	Yes	Volunteer	Non UK
6	Female	25-35	Yes	Employed	Scottish
7	Male	35-45	Yes	Employed	Scottish
8	Male	25-35	No	Employed	Scottish
9	Male	18-25	No	Volunteer	Scottish
10	Male	35-45	Yes	Employed	Scottish
11	Male	25-35	Yes	Employed	Scottish
12	Female	25-35	No	Employed	Scottish
13	Male	25-35	Yes	Employed	Scottish
14	Male	25-35	Yes	Employed	UK
15	Female	25-35	Yes	Employed	Scottish

Table 8. Anonymised participant detail list

Appendix B – Question list from interviews, 3, 8 and 13.

Questions for participants - Interviewee 3

Interviews would start with the permission form being signed and interviewees being assured about confidentiality for data. Interviewees would then be given some background to the research subject by way of introduction to the research project.

Section 1. The purpose of these questions is to reveal more about the context of Scottish youth work in which the worker is engaged

Q1.

So what is youth work?

Q2.

[Discussion of Clyne 2012]... He comes off with various wee types of Christian faith based work. He goes with informal education work, he goes with a top-down model where the elders tell you what to do and you do that, and one kinda in the middle. So what I'm hearing [you describe] is, kinda towards the informal education model rather than the top down?

Q3.

Where would you say you are on the axis of informal education, on the continuum where would you say your work is?

Q4.

Can ask you about the role of play in your work?

Q5.

Can you describe your project to me and give me details of youth work you do and can breakdown between males and females and stuff? You said here, the school and you have special interest groups?

Section 2. The purpose of the questions in this part of the interview is to investigate the usage of computer games within youth work practice.

Q6

If that is what youth work is, how do you use computer games within your youth work practice?

Q7

One of the questions I have is around how do computer games allow that space for young people to develop or actually grow. Where is that within actually being a youth worker and using that game?

Q8

The whole nature of the game is open so you can create and everything is possible within that so you can dream it you can make it.

Q9

What age are you talking about? That leads us into the next one which is, what games do you play and how ethically are you working out what games it is okay to play and not to play, which we have kinda covered a wee bit but it would be interesting to hear a bit more from you on it.

Q10

One of the questions I have been thinking about is if we are in youth work and starting where the young people are, then can we say that games like Call of Duty for an eight year old are inappropriate? If they are already there because the young person has already played the game, and for us to say we will not go to that part of your life what does that say to that young person? Or to say that part of your life already isn't good and I am going to ignore that you are doing that?

Q11

Okay I'll give you some yes no questions or give me an example of when you have seen this. When have computer games been and helpful in exploring ethics and spirituality with young people.

Q12

Have you ever used computer games to increase the agency of young people?

Q13

Can you give an example of a situation where a video game has facilitated a piece of youth work with a young person?

Q14

Are you seeing, particularly with your work in [one part of the project], community forming, taking care of itself, setting rules and saying yes/no, have you seen it yet?

Questions for participants - Interviewee 8

Interviews would start with the permission form being signed and interviewees being assured about confidentiality for data. Interviewees would then be given some background to the research subject by way of introduction to the research project.

Section 1. The purpose of these questions is to reveal more about the context of Scottish youth work in which the worker is engaged

Q1.

The first question is can you tell me what types of youth work you're actually involved in? Can you tell me what is it you do and how often you do it?

Q2.

What is youth work and how do you define it?

Q3.

Do you think there's a difference within how you do outcomes, or how harsh you have to be with outcomes because there is statutory involved, as opposed to a voluntary/third sector organisation who are chasing funding?

Q4.

What's the role of play within your work? The question is around the idea of youth work being informal education and the balance between it being informal and the balance of it being education and where that actually sits with what you're doing?

Section 2. The purpose of the questions in this part of the interview is to investigate the usage of computer games within youth work practice.

Q5.

Where do you use computer games in your work?

Q5.1

You have your own server?

Q5.2

So it's collaborative?

Q5.3

Fifa & Minecraft, any other games you are using?

Q6

Are you covered by Wi-Fi?

Q7

One of the rises other youth workers have observed so far in this study has been with young people bringing in their own iPads or iPods with games. And actually forming groups of maybe two and three, all playing the game. So the game has gone from something you

provide, to you providing a space where the young people bring their games and play together. Have you seen that? Has that been happening?

Q8

Where have you seen computer games matchup with your descriptions of youth work earlier? Obviously we have outlined maths and we have outlined reading, but where else have you seen it matchup with those things you outlined at the beginning?

Q8.1

Were those punishments decided communally by the group, or how is it moderated?

Q9

One thing I wanted ask was, someone from [the employing agency] put up a *second life* thing, what happened to that? Is it still there?

Q11

[Discussion of Flow] Have you ever seen that within a youth work setting, or do you think you could ever achieve that within a youth work setting?

Q12

Do you think games themselves are ethical? If you didn't have the conversation and whomever it was playing on their own at home?

Q13

[Discussion of Red Cross paper] That's the argument, actually will that work?

Q14

Are that any games you wouldn't play in a youth work setting?

Questions for participants - Interviewee 13

Interviews would start with the permission form being signed and interviewees being assured about confidentiality for data. Interviewees would then be given some background to the research subject by way of introduction to the research project.

Section 1. The purpose of these questions is to reveal more about the context of Scottish youth work in which the worker is engaged

Q1.

Question one is a very simple one that will no doubt be familiar with, what is youth work?

Q1.1

So it's a deliberate interaction?

Q1.2

Would you call it relational?

Q2

Have you seen the Steve Griffiths book?

Q3

[Discussion of Wells] We think tend to think of time in terms of timesheets or I work for this many hours. But how do we actually balance work against this stuff?

Q4

Your youth work outcomes, first of all what things do you do, and what outcomes do you look for from that?

Q5

Formalising learning. One of things I been finding, is lots of projects are creating partnerships with councils and then using the thing and kinda saying "Well, we're informal education". A lot of outcomes are having to become more formalised, and how they are able to assess, and say to that young person you've been through this youth work therefore you have learned this. Is that something your finding or is that just off the chart from where you are?

Q6

How is the youth work funded?

Section two. The purpose of the questions in this part of the interview is to investigate the usage of computer games within youth work practice.

Q7

Where do you use computer games and what games do you use?

Q8

In terms of the games you've question you've mentioned. They are all 7s or 8s under the PEGI system, is that the case, whereby, because you're dealing with primary sevens the games are pared back to a level where primary sevens can play them?

Q9

The other thing about all the games you mentioned is the high level of multiplayer, so you would never just have one player playing, you can have 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 people playing at the one time, has that been a deliberate choice?

Q10

Is there any similarities you've noticed between the practice of youth work and the process of playing computer games?

Q11

What is the role of play within youth work?

Q12

[Discussion of Flow] So, 1 is flow something you've seen within a youth work setting, and 2 do you think it will be achievable to get there with any Youth work setting.

Q13

The last big question can computer games be ethical?

Q13.1

Why?

Q14

[Discussion of Computer Games use for Emoting] What you think of that idea? Have you seen young people use it in that way, whereby using it as a way to express emotions, his point was he thought that it was a cultural permission to be upset if you have been beaten?

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