



**VICTORIA UNIVERSITY**  
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

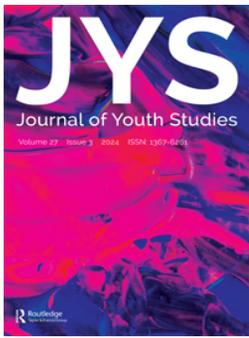
*Talking about relational youth work: why language matters*

This is the Published version of the following publication

Cooper, Trudi, Corney, Tim, Tierney, Hilary, Gorman, Jamie and Sutcliffe, John (2024) Talking about relational youth work: why language matters. *Journal of Youth Studies*. ISSN 1367-6261

The publisher's official version can be found at  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2023.2298327>  
Note that access to this version may require subscription.

Downloaded from VU Research Repository <https://vuir.vu.edu.au/47762/>



# Talking about relational youth work: why language matters

Trudi Cooper, Tim Corney, Hilary Tierney, Jamie Gorman & John Sutcliffe

To cite this article: Trudi Cooper, Tim Corney, Hilary Tierney, Jamie Gorman & John Sutcliffe (04 Jan 2024): Talking about relational youth work: why language matters, Journal of Youth Studies, DOI: [10.1080/13676261.2023.2298327](https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2023.2298327)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2023.2298327>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 04 Jan 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 532



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

## Talking about relational youth work: why language matters

Trudi Cooper <sup>a</sup>, Tim Corney <sup>b</sup>, Hilary Tierney <sup>c</sup>, Jamie Gorman <sup>c,b</sup> and John Sutcliffe <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Arts and Humanities, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, Australia; <sup>b</sup>Institute for Sustainable Industries & Liveable Cities, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia; <sup>c</sup>Department of Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University, Kildare, Ireland

### ABSTRACT

The literature on youth work emphasises the importance of ‘relationship’ to good practice, moreover, the characteristics of the youth-work relationship have been posited as a defining feature of youth work in the British-influenced tradition. Despite this, little attention is paid to the choice of language used to describe how professional youth workers relate to young people, or how language choices reflect political framing of youth work and of power relationships within their practice. Language choice has implications for how youth workers perceive their professional identity, for how accountability is construed, and for inter-professional working. In this article we undertake a thematic analysis to identify, analyse and critique various language options, drawing on international literature, with an application focus on Irish and Australian contexts. We address the question, ‘what language choices offer most precision and clarity about youth work professional relationships in different contexts?’ We identify three main ways the relationship between youth workers and young people has been framed: as collaboration; as transaction; or, as rights-based entitlement. We conclude with discussion of how different relational language choices in youth work should be selected to be congruent with the youth work context, power relationships and purposes.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 5 May 2022  
Accepted 18 December 2023

### KEYWORDS

Client; service users; primary consideration; relationship; youth work; rights

## Introduction

The special nature of the ‘youth work relationship’ has been claimed as definitive of youth work (Batsleer 2008; Brent 2009; Devlin and Gunning 2009; Hart 2016; Hennell 2022; Jeffs and Smith 2010; Martin 2002; Rodd and Stewart 2009; Sapin 2013; Spence 2007; Wood, Westwood, and Thompson 2014; Young 2006). With a primary focus on Ireland and Australia, and within what Cooper (2013) describes as British-influenced youth work, we analyse language used to describe professional youth work relationships in policy and codes of ethics for youth workers, comparing these

**CONTACT** Trudi Cooper  t.cooper@ecu.edu.au  School of Arts and Humanities, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, Western Australia, 6027, Australia

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

with claims about the youth work relationship made in the youth work literature. We analyse contemporary and historical documents to identify language choices that offer clarity about the youth work professional relationships in Australian and Irish professional youth work contexts.

Relational descriptors in youth work are important because they convey messages about power relationships between youth workers and young people, about the purpose of youth work practice and have implications for accountability. Congruence about relational language is important to inter-professional working because it enables relational differences between professions to be identified and managed. Precise language is beneficial for ensuring the purposes of youth work are clear to those within the profession and outside. Other professions have recognised the need for clarity about relational language, for example in social work (Ife 2016; McLaughlin 2009; Vojak 2009) and in disability services (Carothers and Parfitt 2017; Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson 2001; Foreman 2005).

Our analysis focuses primarily on government-funded youth work in Ireland and Australia. The discussion draws upon UK youth work literature because of its acknowledged influence upon the development of professional youth work in both countries (Cooper 2018; Devlin 2017; Ewan 1983; Maunders 2014). Our discussion is limited to these countries because we recognise that youth work varies internationally in scope and practices (Cooper 2018) and do not have space to consider more contexts. The authors are familiar with both contexts, which offer useful contrasts in the formal status of youth work, the existence of professional associations, and in system of government.

## Background

The mechanisms of language to subjugate, alienate, marginalise, and manipulate populations have been described and explained by many academic disciplines (Goldstein 2005). Social activists from diverse movements have written about how language can be used to maintain power relationships and dehumanise people. Watson (2015) provided examples of how words used in management and politics are selected to obfuscate and mask reality with meaninglessness. Disability activist movements challenged paternalism of those who justify removing people's agency 'for their own good' and first popularised the slogan 'nothing about us without us' (Charlton 1998). This slogan has been taken up by other self-advocacy groups, including homeless people and sex workers (Cataldo and Bawden 2018; Yarbrough 2020). Minority or marginalised groups have attempted to 'rehabilitate' language, for example, when feminists, LGBTQIA+, black, and disability activists have repurposed previously pejorative terms as positive enabling labels. This process succeeds only if people to whom these labels are applied pejoratively, adopt them collectively as badges of pride.

## *Difficulties of language*

Unlike youth work, scholars in social work have grappled with questions about what language social workers should use to describe interactions they have with people with whom they relate professionally. The social work literature has affirmed that language is not neutral, that some commonly used language is not consistent with

social work values, and that choices of words may objectify people, cause stigma, and cause shame (Ife 2012; McLaughlin 2009; Vojak 2009). Vojak (2009, 939) argues that the 'discourse of business management reduces social problems to economic considerations'. Ife (2012, 254–257) contends that the words workers use can be 'dehumanising' and have human rights implications. In this regard, youth work and social work share a concern to ensure language respects the dignity of all. Social work academics have struggled to find appropriate language to describe how they relate to people who engage with their services (Ife 2012; McLaughlin 2009; Vojak 2009). McLaughlin (2009) examines the appropriateness to social work of relational descriptors such as 'patients', 'cases', 'clients', 'customers', 'consumers', 'experts by experience', and 'service-users'. Ultimately, he rejects all these terms in favour of letting people who engage with services decide how the relationship should be described.

Youth workers face a similar linguistic challenge. Within Australian youth work academic literature, there is no settled agreement about how to describe the professional youth work relationship. Young people are variously referred to as the 'primary constituent' (Bessant, Sercombe, and Watts 1998) or 'primary consideration' (Corney 2014, 2021; YACVic 2007; YWA 2007), or 'primary client' (YACWA 2014). In Ireland, while the terms 'participant' and 'member' are commonly used (Devlin 2017; Devlin and Gunning 2009), the terms young person/young people are most evident in policy documents and practice literature (for example, CDYSB 2008; Government of Ireland 2001; Lalor, de Roiste, and Devlin 2007). Irish government guidance on Covid protocols (Oct 2021) adopts the terms 'young person', 'service user' or 'young people/service users' all of which sidestep the question of relationship.

### Theorising professional youth work

In Australia (Cooper and White 1994; Irving, Maunders, and Sherington 1995) and Ireland (Hurley and Treacy 1993; Jenkinson 2000), different youth work traditions were influenced by British youth work, through a process Bacchi (2009) calls 'policy travel', as well as physical 'travel' between UK, Australian and Ireland by practitioners and academics. As in the UK (Smith 1988), professional youth work in Australia and Ireland developed from foundations in the pragmatic and tacit practices of volunteer unpaid youth work, including religious and political movement-based youth work (Cooper 2018). While having common origins, the customary boundaries of professional youth work differ between countries, and differ significantly between Australia, Ireland, and the UK (Cooper 2018). In this article, 'professional youth work' refers to those who work in a paid capacity with young people using specific youth work methodologies (Cooper 2018), does not include those who work with young people using different methods, for example, social workers and youth justice officers and may not include all forms of unpaid youth work.

Four main bodies of theory have been influential in the development of professional youth work theory and practice in British-influenced youth work, and in Ireland and Australia specifically. These are Freirean critical pedagogy (Corney et al. 2023; Shor 2002) community development theory (Batsleer, Rowley, and Lüküslü 2023; Corney 2004; Ife 2013; Kenny, McGrath, and Phillips 2017); human rights theory (Corney et al. 2022; Ife 2013; Ife and Fiske 2006) and conservative ideologies that inform 'soft-cop' approaches to youth work (White 1990). Approaches to youth work professionalisation from within

the discipline have been influenced by external state and institutional welfare ideologies in both countries, namely social-democratic welfarism; neo-liberal individualisation and conservative social control, which is explored in the analysis. We now summarise each approach and its implications for professional youth work relationships in Australian and Irish contexts.

### *Freirean informed youth work*

Youth work informed by critical pedagogy has its foundation in Freire's (1972) approaches to education characterised by youth activism and consciousness raising. In the Freirean tradition, most writers argue that youth work relationships are purposive and that their purpose is to further non-formal/informal/social education (Batsleer 2008; Jeffs and Smith 2005; Sapin 2013). Drawing upon Freirean theory, they argue that educative practice includes elements of 'care' (Batsleer 2008). Freirean critical pedagogy was introduced into Australian youth work by youth work lecturers from England (Cooper 2018; Corney et al. 2023). In Ireland, the Freirean connection can be traced to both British practice, and the influence of development workers and missionaries, for example, Hope and Timmel (1995).

### *Community development informed youth work*

In Australia, youth work as community-embedded practice developed from British youth work traditions deriving from the Fairburn-Milson Report (Department of Education and Science 1969), by Australian activist traditions that established locally managed community-based projects in the 1980s (Cooper et al. 2020; Corney 2004). In Ireland, youth work links with community development have been fostered by joint training and education leading to dual qualification in youth and community work. Within community development traditions youth workers use informal social education methods to foster strong social bonds between young people and their communities, and to promote young people's full inclusion, participation and leadership in local communities. The youth-work relationship is pedagogical (Department of Education and Science 1969), but is not necessarily informed by Freirean methods or values.

### *Human rights informed youth work*

Youth work informed by human rights approaches focused on young people and social, economic, political and civil rights, underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other human rights treaties (Corney 2021). In Australia and Ireland, human rights theories have informed advocacy and empowerment approaches to youth work including welfare support (such as housing) and mental health (National Youth Health Programme 2018), young people's civil and political rights (campaigns to lower the voting age for young people (NYCI, n.d.) support for climate justice (Gorman 2021). The youth worker's relationship is as an informal educator to support young people's enfranchisement, an advocate, a service-provider (accommodation, food) or a conduit between young people and other services (youth-friendly medical services, legal services, mental health support).

## **'Soft cop' youth work**

Soft cop youth work has been found in Australia (Cooper and White 1994; White 1990) and Ireland (Bowden 2006; Swirak 2018). The 'soft-cop' approach provides funding for youth workers to keep young people off the streets. In Ireland, youth work has been used to divert young people from custodial sentences (Bowden 2006). In Australia, youth workers have been involved with youth night patrols and diversionary provision of youth recreation activities. In this role, youth workers relate to young people as 'friendly influencers' who listen, address material needs, and make referrals, whilst reducing getting into trouble with the law, for example, in Australia Northbridge Project (Cooper and Love 2017), NSW Aboriginal youth night patrols (Sims et al. 2019) and the National Youth Diversion Programme in Ireland (Swirak 2018).

## **Methodology**

The epistemic framework for this research is post-Marxist (Goldstein 2005), rejecting possibilities of objectivism, teleological historicism, grand theory, and rejecting science as objective knowledge. Our purpose is to expose tensions and contradictions within knowledge-power systems of the language of 'youth work relationship'. Our position on knowledge is therefore subjectivist/constructivist, where theory is situated (Haraway 1988) and where both writers and readers influence social interpretation and are influenced by it. Within this framework, the authors use thematic analysis, which is understood as 'creating themes and coding the data with respect to those themes' where themes capture the meaning behind what is expressed in the data (Fugard and Potts 2019).

The purpose of this thematic analysis is to trace:

- (1) What language has been used in influential historical and contemporary youth work documents to describe professional relationships between youth workers and young people?
- (2) What are implications of the various language choices for practice, theory, power, and ideology?
- (3) What language choices would offer most clarity about the youth work professional relationship in different contexts?

Thematic analysis enables the interpretation of language that describes youth work relationships, to reveal how language reflects and constructs knowledge-power of institutions, and praxis. Through this analysis, we trace how the youth work relationship has been defined at the intersections between ideological fields of knowledge-power. These fields are derived from contested socio-cultural discourses on youth and youth work, which serve both to confer legitimacy on the language used to describe the youth-work relationship and challenge the legitimation of other language.

In the analysis, we pay attention to language used in different youth work contexts to describe the professional relationship between youth workers and young people in Ireland and Australia:

- (1) In policy documents: disruption, alignments and interruptions of three prominent youth work ideologies (social democratic welfare, neo-liberal individualisation, and conservative social control) found in Australia and Ireland, and elsewhere.
- (2) In youth work professional associations: deconstruction of narratives about professional relationships.
- (3) In contemporary youth work practice descriptions: The congruities and incongruities of emergent options within contemporary narratives of Australian and Irish youth work.

The first group of documents analysed were youth work policy documents from England and Wales from the period 1959–2005. The reason these documents were selected was because the ideas presented in these policy documents provided the impetus for the first wave of youth work theorisation by Davies (1979), Jeffs and Smith (1988; 1990), Leigh and Smart (1985), Smith (1982) and Smith and Doyle (2002). This theorisation influenced youth work teaching in Ireland and Australia. The second group of documents were developed by youth work professional associations since the beginning of the twenty-first century. These documents were selected because this marked the beginning of alternative visions of professionalised youth work in Ireland and in Australia, that spoke to the professional ethics of relationships. The final set of documents was a mixed set of more recent policy and practice documents on youth work from Ireland and Australia. The reason this set of documents was selected was to identify changes that have occurred in the last 15 years, not captured elsewhere and specifically in the Irish and Australian context.

In these documents, we analyse how different languages for relationship (in policy, professional associations, and practice) have implications for power relations, that create synergies and tensions with various youth work traditions (critical pedagogy, community-embedded youth work, human rights). We conclude with a discussion about the 'fit' between categories of relationship-descriptors and specific youth work contexts, a reflection on the limitations of this method, and pointers to future directions for research.

### **Development of professional youth work relationships in policy**

Government reports on youth work are important because they illustrate how dominant political ideologies and worldviews have framed professional youth work purposes, roles and relationships, as well as reflecting changing demographic patterns and social concerns. In England and Wales, there were five comprehensive government reviews of youth work in the period between 1958 and 2005. These have been foundational to the development of youth work theory, nationally and internationally (Cooper 2018). British-influenced theorisation of professionalised youth work was formalised by writers such as Leigh and Smart (1985) Jeffs and Smith (1988) and Davies (1979), who responded to propositions about youth work raised in British government reports. This theorisation was influential in Australia and Ireland, even though the organisation and provision of youth work in these countries was dissimilar to the UK (Cooper 2013). In Ireland, there have been several major government reviews in the period from 1977 to 2022. The 2001 Irish Youth Work Act defines youth work as developmental, educational, voluntary and complementary to formal education. In Australia, there have been state reviews but no equivalent national reports on youth work because of devolved responsibilities to states. A national document on youth work produced by the Australian Youth Affairs

Coalition (AYAC 2013) draws on the British literature on youth work, supporting the relevance of analysis of British policy documents, and suggests human rights justifications for youth work, but does not explicitly discuss the nature of the relationship between youth workers and young people, and is not analysed separately.

In the remainder of this section, we address the question:

What language has been used in influential youth work policy documents to describe the professional relationship between youth workers and young people?

### *Welfarist origins and relational language*

Paid professional youth work emerged in the period after WW2 in the UK (Irving, Maunders, and Sherington 1995; Maunders 2014). Professional youth work was signified by qualification, payment, and national funding and policy. From 1950 to 1990, UK youth work was underwritten by social democratic welfare political values (Cooper 2013). Policy reports reflected various social concerns, such as youth welfare and youth engagement (Albermarle), social cohesion (Fairbairn-Milson), racism, and youth disenfranchisement (Thompson), but throughout this period concern about youth delinquency and crime, was a constant preoccupation, implying a secondary conservative social control ideology was influential alongside the dominant social democratic welfare and the later neo-liberal ideologies. This is consistent with observations by White (1990) in Australia, and Bowden (2006) in Ireland. In Ireland, youth work was delivered by local youth clubs, uniformed organisations and religious bodies (Devlin 2010) similar to club-based youth work in the UK where the purposes were to provide social opportunities for association and recreation, to offer pastoral care, and to support young people's leadership within youth centres and beyond. Youth workers related as 'leaders', to young people who were 'members'.

Social education was identified as a goal of youth work in the *Fairbairn-Milson* report (1969). The language about relationship changed to youth workers as 'partners' and 'supporters' of young people to help them become leaders, where young people are 'social equals'. Community development methods became part of youth work practice. In the Irish context, national policy intervention for youth work was articulated in the *Policy on Youth and Sport* (Department of Education 1977), and the *O'Sullivan Committee* report on the development of youth work services (1981). Both documents articulate a vision of youth work focused on personal development so young people could 'participate effectively in a changing society' (O'Sullivan 1980, 12) and implied an informal social education relationship.

In England and Wales, the *Thompson report* (Department of Education and Science 1982) affirmed youth workers as social and political educators (stated that youth workers should work with young people to address sexism and racism and that young people should participate in decision-making. This report centralised the educative and consciousness-raising role of youth work. Only post-*Thompson report* did anti-oppressive and consciousness-raising Freirean-inspired youth work methods become embedded into mainstream youth work theory in England and Wales. The relationship between youth workers and young people was that of 'informal educator/learner'.

In Ireland, the Costello Report (1984) and subsequent *National Youth Strategy* (1985) similarly emphasised the empowerment of young people through social and political

education as the primary purpose of youth work. The 2001 Irish Youth Work Act defined the practice as a 'planned programme of education' and the National Youth Work Development Plan (2003) provided a vision for 'youth workers as educators' (14), noting that '[y]outh work's primary concern is with the education of young people in non-formal settings' (NYWDP 2003, 13). This affirmed a 'non-formal educator/learner' relationship.

### ***Neoliberal turn and relational language***

A change from welfare to neo-liberal approaches to services is documented in the UK beginning in the 1990s (De St Croix 2016). A similar transition occurred in Australia during the 1990s, as illustrated by changes from recurrent grant funding to competitive tendering with outcomes-focussed evaluation (Cooper and Brooker 2020). In Ireland, the effects of neo-liberal ideology were less pronounced until the 2008–2011 financial crisis and subsequent austerity (Melaugh 2015). The language used in policy to describe the relationship between youth workers and young people shows distinct differences between the welfare state social democratic era and the neo-liberal era. In the UK, the neoliberal ethos informed 'Transforming Youth Work' (Department for Education and Skills 2002), where the individual is given greater emphasis, and peer groups are de-emphasised (Smith 2003). The relational language explicitly promoted young people as having a 'consumer' relationship with youth workers and this was consolidated in the *Youth Matters* report (2005), which proposed young people should receive funding for 'personal development opportunities' which they could buy from youth workers or from competing commercial arts and sports outlets.

In Ireland, a value-for-money policy discourse emerged in the 2010s (McMahon 2021). Youth work experienced funding cuts while the 2014 *Value for Money and Policy Review* led to a restructuring of funding programmes, the establishment of local statutory oversight bodies and more tightly prescribed operating rules and targets for youth workers. Government responsibility for youth policy moved from the Department of Education to Health and then to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA 2014, 2015). The focus on non-formal education reduced, and greater emphasis was placed on youth work as a policy tool to protect young people from harm and support their developmental needs. These changes in policy direction have implications for how youth workers relate to young people, and as in England and Australia, moved youth workers towards a 'service provider/ consumer' relationship with young people.

### ***Youth work professional associations and relational language***

From the twenty-first century onwards, professional youth work associations have formed worldwide and provide an alternative perspective on how language is used to frame the relationship between young people and youth workers and different languages emerged. For example, in Australia 'primary consideration' (YACVic 2007) or 'primary client' (YACWA 2014; Youth Action 2004) are found, and in Ireland, 'young people' is used (D'Arcy 2016).

### ***Emerging descriptors of youth work relationships***

In Australia and to some extent Ireland, some organisations refer to young people as 'co-creators' (UNICEF 2019), co-producers (Roper, Grey, and Cadogan 2018), or as

'co-designers' (Corney et al. 2020; NYCI 2021). In other projects, young people volunteer as 'peer educators' (e.g. YACWA, n.d.; Jigsaw, n.d.), or are recruited to volunteer and paid roles as 'peer supports' as MercyCare (2021). Terms such as 'co-design' and 'co-creation' emphasise young people's agency in shaping policy and services. In Australia, co-creation is used by youth workers to describe ongoing involvement of young people in shaping programmes and services, whereas 'co-design' has been used to describe more engagement between youth workers or policy makers, and 'representative' young people to make some service design decisions before the inception of a project (Corney et al. 2020). In Ireland, the term 'young people' remains the most commonly used (DCYA 2015; NYCI 2021), but does not specify how youth workers should relate to young people.

## Power and ideology embedded in relationship descriptors

This section addresses the question:

What are implications of the various language choices for practice, theory, power, and ideology?

Three distinct relationship-descriptor categories emerged when descriptors were clustered according to the type of relationship that the term implies. The relationship types identified were 'transactional' 'rights bearer' or 'collaborative'. This section considers each option, its ideological basis, and implications for power within the relationship.

### *Transactional relationships*

The language of transaction is implied in several terms used to describe youth work interactions. These include 'client', 'consumer', 'customer', and 'service-user'. 'Client' was found in several documents describing youth work codes of ethics derived from the early twenty-first century (YACWA 2014). Consumer was found in UK policy documents from the early twenty-first century, but not before. Client is derived from the language of business to refer to various commercial transactional relationships where a 'client' pays for a personal service provided by a person whom the purchaser anticipates has a particular skill and aligns with user-pays concepts in neo-liberal ideology (Horton 2007; Jordan 1997). 'Client' was repurposed by social workers in the 1970s within social democratic welfare ideology to replace terms such as 'almoner' or 'patient', which no longer fitted the welfare state ethos (McLaughlin 2009). Social workers who resisted the term 'client' contended that this transactional label individualises and objectifies people as the passive recipient of professional knowledge about their needs and strengthened paternalistic tendencies within social work (McLaughlin 2009). Customers buy products, services, or experiences, of all kinds. Consumers consume products, services, or other 'experiences' that they may or may not have purchased for themselves. The term 'service user' is sometimes found as a shorthand in organisational reports. Service users' (sometimes shortened to 'users') refers to people who use a particular service (with or without payment, and sometimes involuntarily). As McLaughlin (2009) notes, these transactional terms depersonalise people, which dehumanises, may stigmatise them, and are 'totalising', as if people who use a service are defined by this feature of their life. In the analysis of youth work

reports, there was only limited support for transactional descriptors for example, in Youth Matters (Department of Education and Skills 2005).

In the youth work literature, Sercombe (2010) suggests the term 'client' is appropriate to youth work, presenting three arguments. Firstly, he claims youth workers take their mandate/instructions from young people, akin to a lawyer-client relationship. Sercombe's second argument is that professions logically necessitate client-type relationships, hence youth work can only be a profession if young people are clients. Richard Davies (2016) points out that two of the three classical professions (medicine, and clergy) that Sercombe (2010, 9) mentions, do not have clients. Sercombe's final argument is that the term 'client' can be ironically rehabilitated to refer to a relationship that empowers young people. However, this would require young people wanting to be called 'clients', ironically. Moreover, D'Arcy (2016) contends that clientship denotes a one-dimensional relationship between individuals or entities stripped of their broader social context and usually describes a service provided to an individual. Cooper (2002) contends a customer/consumer relationship is incompatible with an educational role. This makes 'client' a bad fit in most youth work contexts, although it may work for specialist youth legal services and para-legal youth advocacy services.

### *Rights-bearing relationships*

The language of rights has influenced some terms used for young people's relationships with youth workers. The language of civil and political rights comes from liberal ideology and the language of social and economic rights from socialist or social democratic ideological tradition (Heywood 2017). In liberal ideology, distinction is made between positive and negative rights, where liberals support negative rights (freedom from interference) but not positive rights whereas positive rights (the 'right to something, where another person has a duty to provide something) are supported by modern liberal, social democratic and socialist ideologies (Heywood 2017). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has been influential in giving precedence to the 'best interests of the child', which 'shall be a primary consideration' (Clause 3.1). The UNCRC assumes positive rights for children and young people including the right to family, the right to education and the right to be included in decisions being made about them.

The UNCRC principles have been used to extend young people's rights, for example in campaigns to lower the voting age, and human-rights discourse is strongly embedded in Irish youth policy. In Australia, the UNCRC formed the basis for the concept of young people as the 'primary consideration' of youth workers or as youth workers' 'primary constituency'. This language was consciously adopted in some Australian youth work codes of ethics and academic texts because it aligned with externally recognised rights frameworks (UNCRC 1989; *The Victorian Charter of Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*) and other government structures, such as the *Commission for Children and Young People* in Victoria (Corney 2021) and provides a countervailing narrative to challenge neo-liberal trends in youth work policy.

On the negative side, the concept of the 'best interests of the child' is individualistic and can be paternalistic and used to restrict young people's agency. The individualistic focus on rights as presented in the UNCRC, is in tension with youth work practice embedded in community (Brent 2009) and concerned with solidarity (Batsleer, Rowley,

and Lüküslü 2023; De St Croix 2016) and also with communitarian cultures, such as First Nations peoples (Kickett-Tucker et al. 2016). The paternalistic aspect of rights theory in UNCRC is illustrated in recent research with homeless young people where the 'child's best interests' had been used to override article 12 (the right to be listened to) to restrict the young person's autonomy in choosing where to reside, without necessitating adequate support to the young person whose choice is removed (Cooper et al. 2020). Where the youth work literature supports maximising young people's agency, a paternalistic interpretation and application of the UNCRC is problematic. Additionally, rights discourses may privilege individualism detached from collective responsibilities and facilitate marketisation of social relations (Lynch 2022).

When rights conflict, decisions are made about which rights take priority. For example, the 'right to education' may compel some young people to remain in school against their wishes and has been used as a rationale to curb young people's climate activism (Biswas and Mattheis 2022). The justifications assume extended schooling benefits all young people, because those with more education earn more than those with less (Josefsson and John Wall 2020), ignoring evidence that education systems can reproduce inequalities. Youth work purposes prioritise young people's agency, their right to livelihood (a right that was historically available to young people) and supports their transition towards adulthood. Reliance on the UNCRC is in tension with these important youth work values, particularly in community-embedded youth work which emphasises communitarian values and building solidarity.

### *Collaborative relationships*

The language of collaboration appears variously in youth work literature: in scholarship; codes of professional ethics; national statements; and reports (Corney et al. 2020; DCYA 2015; NYCI 2021; Roper, Grey, and Cadogan 2018; UNICEF 2019). Terms used included 'co-creators', 'partners', 'members', 'participants', 'co-leaders/ peer educators'. These terms make explicit some degree of active involvement by young people in shaping what is offered to them. Young people as 'co-leaders' have been present since paid youth work began (Ministry of Education 1958) and arguably has re-appeared as 'peer educator' and 'peer mentor', as provision changed. Collaborative language is congruent with youth work values because it affirms young people's agency and solidarity. Previously, 'co-leadership' was promoted in youth clubs, and formalised pathways enabled young people to become qualified youth workers. Now, young people who become peer educators or peer mentors, are trained to provide informal education and support to other young people. The main objection to using these terms generically is that only a few young people ever become co-leaders/peer educators/peer mentors.

Mental health researchers have raised concerns that 'co-design' has already become a form of tokenistic participation (Roper, Grey, and Cadogan 2018) and this illustrates how practice can subvert the original meaning of language, especially if concepts become incorporated into 'management speak', as may have occurred with co-design. Therefore, youth workers should exercise caution if they refer to young people as co-designers or co-creators, to monitor whether these terms have become emptied of their meaning.

The next cluster of terms we examine are 'member', 'partner', and 'participant'. These words were considered together because of their historic use within youth work to

describe young people's relationship with youth services. Each signifies an active commitment by young people, albeit quite limited. 'Member' may facilitate an educational process through participation in governance but requires a club or a cooperative structure. 'Partner' may work in more contexts but requires organisations to make the 'partnership' a reality, by involving young people in decision-making and governance. If not, 'partner' becomes empty newspeak. 'Participant' can include everything from 'turning up' and 'taking part' through to active involvement in decisions about the design and operation of services (Corney et al. 2022). Any of these terms could be appropriate to describe the interactions between youth workers and young people, if the choice of language aligns with the reality of power relationships.

## Conclusion

The conclusion addresses the question:

what language choices would offer clarity about the youth work professional relationship in different contexts?

In accordance with the epistemic framework, the answers we offer to these questions are situated and local, and we conclude that the choice of appropriate relational descriptor depends upon the context of the youth work programme. There is no single descriptor that will fit all contexts. Descriptors must be chosen locally to reflect the values, purposes, practices and realities of each context.

Beginning with transactional language, what type of youth work would be congruent with transactional relationship-descriptors? 'Primary client' is sometimes found in youth work Codes of Ethics. Whilst we accept the good intentions of this usage (to prioritise young people's perspective) we contend this is not the best term because of the associated baggage of transactional individualism and user-pays neoliberal ideology, and because it is not compatible with the educational relationship between youth workers and young people. In Australia, 'client' is sometimes used in youth accommodation services but does not accurately reflect the power relationship. The young person does not 'instruct' the accommodation worker because the power to admit or evict the young person and to set the terms of their stay is with the youth worker and their employer. In this instance 'service user' is more accurate than client but shares the disadvantage of being dehumanising. The circumstances in which 'client' might accurately apply are limited but exist where youth workers offer their services directly to the public on a user-pays basis. Whilst rare, some 'independent youth workers' operate in Australia, but the young person is rarely the 'paying client', and thus rarely the client. Client may also apply in youth legal services, but it is arguable whether this is youth work.

The language of rights-bearers is adaptable to several types of youth work and the concept of the young person as 'primary consideration' aligns with many formulations of youth work values. It is consistent with situations where power rests with youth workers rather than young people (which is the reality in many services). It aligns with language used by other institutions such as Australian Commissions for Children and Young People and the Irish Government. This relationship-descriptor is consistent with advocacy and to some extent empowerment.

However, the individualised concept of the rights-holder undermines communitarian concepts of solidarity and risks paternalism and loss of young people's agency, particularly in child protection contexts. Youth workers should be aware of these limitations and potential for contradictions within practice. Both 'primary consideration' and 'primary constituent' are found in youth work codes of professional ethics. A 'rights' approach is congruent with the individualistic focus of professional Codes of Ethics (although rights are not the only possible basis of codes of ethics). Of the two options, 'primary consideration' aligns best with international conventions, and is sufficiently generic to be appropriate in many youth work contexts. It is more understandable than 'primary constituent' and aligns better than 'client' as a descriptor of practice-relationships. In Australia, there are pragmatic reasons to align the youth work professional code of ethics with organisations, such as Commissioners who support young people's rights. In Ireland, D'Arcy (2016) sets out a rights-based ethical framework for youth worker training and education. Despite the limitations of rights-based language, we contend this is the best-suited language for codes of professional youth work ethics.

The language of collaboration as relationship-descriptors is attractive to many youth workers, but this begs the question of whether practice is congruent with collaborative relationship-descriptors, and whether the collaborative relationship descriptor is congruent with existing organisational power relationships. Where young people share power, carefully chosen collaborative descriptors are appropriate. Collaborative descriptors provide several options that align with varying degrees of power sharing, from young people being involved in governance and decision-making, to participation limited to 'showing up'. When choosing between collaborative language options, the decisions should be guided by congruence with reality of the relationship, and organisational power-sharing. 'Member' might suit a rural youth club. 'Peer-educator' or 'Peer worker' might suit a youth-led project, and 'participant' might be most appropriate for attendees at a youth-run event, where circumstances require little responsibility from most young people. 'Young people who engage with [name of service]' does not describe the relationship and does not contribute to clarity about the nature of the engagement. The varied language of collaboration presumes diverse power relationships, and maybe useful as a contextualised practice descriptor but is too context specific to be useful in professional youth work Codes of Ethics.

### Post-script

Finally, we consider how to interpret the resurgence in relationship-descriptors that signify a power-sharing relationship between youth worker and young people. We would like to believe that the recent 'turn' towards collaborative descriptors indicates the waning influence of neo-liberal ideology, however, we remain cautious whilst the mechanisms that sustain neoliberal approaches to youth work (such as competitive tendering and user-pays) remain, and we fear the changed terminology may be no more than 'window dressing' that does not change underlying power relationships. Despite this observation, the act of replacing neoliberal relationship descriptors with collaborative descriptors, potentially opens-up possibilities of different ways of thinking about youth work that undercut the narrow economic focus of neoliberal ideological framing and may support change if power congruency can be asserted, which is one

of the reasons why careful choice of relational language is important in professional youth work.

When working with First Nations settings or community-embedded youth work, additional sensitivity is required to the cultural norms of the context. Alternative descriptors not discussed here may be needed, as illustrated by youth work in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Baxter, Caddie, and Cameron 2015; Cooper and Baxter 2019; Martin 2002) or in the Australian work of Collard and Palmer (2006). In addition, the comparative study of youth work policy history beyond Europe remains an under-researched element of the international study of youth work history, and the findings presented here will need adaptation to other contexts.

## Ethical considerations

All sources analysed are published and publicly available. This research does not involve human subjects.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## ORCID

Trudi Cooper  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4758-5881>

Tim Corney  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1980-6835>

Hilary Tierney  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1379-6944>

Jamie Gorman  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5153-2045>

John Sutcliffe  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6477-094X>

## References

- Australian Youth Affairs Coalition. 2013. *The AYAC Definition of Youth Work in Australia*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60948b9e3847ee0caf0e2dd4/t/60ced174beb02125730e6fdf/1624166774392/National+Definition+of+Youth+Work+2013++AYAC.pdf>.
- Bacchi, C. 2009. *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to be?* Pearson Australia.
- Batsleer, J. 2008. *Informal Learning in Youth Work*. Sage.
- Batsleer, J., H. Rowley, and D. Lüküslü. 2023. *Young People, Radical Democracy and Community Development*. Policy Press.
- Baxter, R., M. Caddie, and G. B. Cameron. 2015. "Aotearoa New Zealand's Indigenous Youth Development Concepts Explores in Practice Today." In *Youth and Inequality in Education: Global Actions in Youth Work*, edited by M. Heathfield and D. Fusco. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Bessant, J., H. Sercombe, and R. Watts. 1998. *Youth Studies: An Australian Perspective*. Addison Wesley Longman.
- Biswas, T., and N. Mattheis. 2022. "Strikingly Educational: A Childist Perspective on Children's Civil Disobedience for Climate Justice." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 54 (2): 145–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2021.1880390>.
- Bowden, M. 2006. "Youth, Governance and the City: Towards a Critical Urban Sociology of Youth Crime and Disorder Prevention." *Youth Studies Ireland* 1 (1): 19–39.
- Brent, J. 2009. *Searching for Community: Representation, Power and Action on an Urban Estate*. Policy Press.

- Carothers, D., and C. Parfitt. 2017. "Disability or Language Difference: How Do We Decide?." *American Journal of Qualitative Research* 1: 1–12.
- Cataldo, M., and C. Bawden. 2018. "Nothing About Us Without Us: Opportunities for Lived Experience in the Homelessness Sector." *Parity* 31(5): 33–34.
- CDYSB. 2008. *Essential Guidelines for Good Youth Work Practice*. City of Dublin Youth Service Board.
- Charlton, J. I. 1998. *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment*. University of California Press.
- Collard, L., and D. Palmer. 2006. "Kura, Yeye, Boorda, Nyungar Wangkiny Gnulla Koorlangka: A Conversation About Working with Indigenous Young People in the Past, Present and Future." *Youth Studies Australia* 25 (4): 25–32.
- Cooper, T. 2002. "Concepts of 'Quality': And the Problem of 'Customers', 'Products', and Purpose in Higher Education." Higher education research development society of Australia (HERDSA) conference: quality conversations, Perth, Western Australia.
- Cooper, T. 2013. "Institutional Context and Youth Work Professionalization in Post-Welfare Societies." *Child & Youth Services* 34 (2): 112–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2013.785877>.
- Cooper, T. 2018. "Defining Youth Work: Exploring the Boundaries, Continuity and Diversity of Youth Work Practice." In *SAGE Handbook of Youth Work Practice*. SAGE, edited by P. Alldred, F. Cullen, K. Edwards, and D. Fusco, 3–17.
- Cooper, T., and R. Baxter. 2019. "Future Prospects for Australasian Youth Work." In *Youth Work: Global Futures*. Brill/Sense, edited by G. Bright, and C. Pugh, 109–127.
- Cooper, T., and M. R. Brooker. 2020. "Support for Homeless Young People Under 16 Years Old: Towards a New Paradigm." *Journal of Applied Youth Studies* 3 (1): 43–64. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43151-020-00005-5>.
- Cooper, T., M. R. Brooker, H. Tierney, and J. Sutcliffe. 2020. "Digital Technologies and Youth Work: Opportunities and Challenges for Models and Theory." In *Youth Work in a Digital Society IGI Global*, edited by Z. Zeinab, A. Seyedali, K. Steven Eric, S. Asnarulkhadi Abu, and O. Siti Zobidah, 1–20.
- Cooper, T., and T. Love. 2017. "A Youth Curfew: A Retrospective View of the Rise, Fall and Legacy of the Northbridge Policy." *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 52 (3): 204–221. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.17>.
- Cooper, T., and R. White. 1994. "Models of Youth Work Intervention." *Youth Studies Australia* 13 (4): 30–35.
- Corney, T. 2004. "Youth Work and Community Development-Kissing Cousins or Comrades in Arms." *New Community Quarterly* 2 (3): 17–20.
- Corney, T. 2014. *Code of Ethical Practice for Youth Workers*. London, UK: Commonwealth Youth Programme, Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Corney, T. 2021. *Professional Youth Work an Australian Perspective*. 2nd ed. Youth Network of Tasmania.
- Corney, T., T. Cooper, H. Shier, and H. Williamson. 2022. "Youth Participation: Adulthood, Human Rights and Professional Youth Work." *Children & Society*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12526>.
- Corney, T., J. Marion, R. Baird, S. Welsh, and J. Gorman. 2023. "Youth Work as Social Pedagogy: Toward an Understanding of Non-formal and Informal Education and Learning in Youth Work." *Child & Youth Services*, 1–27.
- Corney, T., H. Williamson, R. Holdsworth, H. Shier, R. Broadbent, and T. Cooper. 2020. *Approaches to Youth Participation in Youth and Community Work Practice: A Critical Dialogue*. Youth Workers Association.
- Costello Report. 1984. *The National Youth Policy Committee Final Report*. Government Publications.
- D'Arcy, E. 2016. *A Framework for the Inclusion of Ethics in Youth Work Education and Training*. North South Education & Training Standards Committee For Youth Work [NSETs].
- Davies, B. 1979. "From Social Education to Social and Life Skills Training: In Whose Interest?" Accessed June 14, 2021, from [http://www.infed.org/archives/bernard\\_davies/davies\\_in\\_whose\\_interests.htm](http://www.infed.org/archives/bernard_davies/davies_in_whose_interests.htm).
- Davies, R. 2016. "Youth Work and Ethics: Why the 'Professional Turn' Won't Do." *Ethics and Education* 11 (2): 186–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2016.1182309>.

- DCYA. 2014. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: A National Strategy for Children and Youth People*. Government Publications.
- DCYA. 2015. *National Youth Strategy*. Government Publications.
- Department for Education and Skills [UK]. 2002. *Transforming Youth Work – Resourcing Excellent Youth Services*. Department for Education and Skills/Connexions.
- Department for Education and Skills [UK]. 2005. *Youth Matters*. HM Government.
- Department of Education. 1977. *A Policy for Youth and Sport*. Government Publications.
- Department of Education and Science. 1969. *Youth and Community Work in the 70s. Proposals by the Youth Service Development Council (The 'Fairbairn-Milson Report')*. London: HMSO. <https://infed.org/mobi/youth-and-community-work-in-the-70s/>.
- Department of Education and Science. 1982. *Experience and Participation: Report of the Review of the Youth Service in England (The Thompson Report)*.
- Department of Education and Skills. 2005. *Youth Matters*.
- De St Croix T. 2016. *Grassroots Youth Work*. Policy Press. <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781447328599.001.0001>.
- Devlin, M. 2010. "Youth Work in Ireland – Some Historical Reflections." In *The History of Youth Work in Europe*, vol. 2, edited by F. Coussée, G. Verschelden, T. Van de Walle, M. Mędlińska, and H. Williamson. Council of Europe Publishing.
- Devlin, M. 2017. "Thinking About Youth Work in Ireland." In *Thinking Seriously About Youth Work, and How to Prepare People to Do It*. Council of Europe Publishing, edited by H. Schild, N. Connolly, F. Labadie, J. Vanhee, and H. Williamson, 81–90.
- Devlin, M., and A. Gunning. 2009. *The Purpose and Outcomes of Youth Work: Report to the Interagency Group*. Irish Youth Work Press.
- Ewan, J. 1983. *Youth in Australia: A New Deal and a New Role*, Centre for Youth and Community Studies. PIT Press, Phillip Institute of Technology.
- Foreman, P. 2005. "Language and Disability." *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability* 30 (1): 57–59.
- Freire, P. 1972. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder and Herder.
- Fugard, A., and H. W. Potts. 2019. "Thematic Analysis." In *SAGE Research Methods Foundations*, edited by P. Atkinson, S. Delamont, A. Cernat, J. W. Sakshaug, and R. A. Williams. SAGE Research Methods Foundations. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036858333>.
- Goldstein, P. 2005. *Post-Marxist Theory: An Introduction*. State University of New York Press.
- Gorman, J. 2021. *Disobedient Youth: Lessons from the Youth Climate Strike Movement*. Council of Europe.
- Government of Ireland. 2001. *Youth Work Act*. Accessed November 6, 2023, from <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2001/act/42/section/3/enacted/en/html#sec3https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2001/act/42/section/3/enacted/en/html#sec3>.
- Government of Victoria. 2006. *Victorian Charter of Rights and Responsibilities Act*. Accessed November 6, 2023, from: <https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/06-43aa014%20authorised.pdf>.
- Haraway, D. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–599. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>.
- Hart, P. 2016. "Young People Negotiating and Maintaining Boundaries in Youth Work Relationships: Findings from an Ethnographic Study of Youth Clubs." *Journal of Youth Studies* 19 (7): 869–884. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2015.1112881>.
- Hennell, K. 2022. "A Relationship Framework for Youth Work Practice." *Youth and Policy*. Accessed November 6, 2023, from <https://www.youthandpolicy.org/articles/a-relationship-framework/>.
- Heywood, A. 2017. *Political Ideologies*. 6th ed. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Hope, A., and S. Timmel. 1995. *Training for Transformation. A Handbook for Community Workers*. Practical Action Publishing.
- Horton, E. 2007. "Neoliberalism and the Australian Healthcare System (Factory)." In *Proceedings of the 2007 Conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia*, 1–7. Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia. <https://pesa.org.au/images/papers/2007-papers/horton2007.pdf>.

- Hurley, L., and D. Treacy. 1993. *Models of Youth Work: A Sociological Framework*. Irish Youth Work Press.
- Ife, J. 2012. *Human Rights and Social Work: Towards Rights-Based Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ife, J. 2013. *Community Development in an Uncertain World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ife, J. 2016. "Human Rights and Social Work: Beyond Conservative Law." *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* 1 (1): 3–8. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-016-0001-4>.
- Ife, J., and L. Fiske. 2006. "Human Rights and Community Work: Complementary Theories and Practices." *International Social Work* 49 (3): 297–308.
- Irving, T. H., D. Maunder, and G. Sherington. 1995. *Youth in Australia: Policy, Administration, and Politics: A History Since World War II*. Macmillan Education Australia.
- Jeffs, T., and M. Smith. 1988. *Welfare and Youth Work Practice*. Macmillan Education.
- Jeffs, T., and M. Smith. 1990. *Young People, Inequality and Youth Work*. Macmillan Education.
- Jeffs, T., and M. Smith. 2005. *Informal Education: Conversation, Democracy and Learning*. Educational Heretics Press.
- Jeffs, T., and M. K. Smith. 2010. *Youth Work Practice*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Jenkinson, H.. 2000. Youth Work in Ireland: The Struggle for Identity." *Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies* 2 (2).
- Jigsaw. n.d. "Peer Education." Accessed December 12, 2022, from <https://jigsaw.ie/research-evaluation/peer-education/>.
- Jordan, J. 1997. "User Pays: Why Men Buy Sex." *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 30 (1): 55–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000486589703000105>.
- Josefsson, J., and J. Wall. 2020. "Empowered Inclusion: Theorizing Global Justice for Children and Youth." *Globalizations* 17 (6): 1043–1060. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2020.1736853>.
- Kenny, S., B. McGrath, and R. Phillips. 2017. *The Routledge Handbook of Community Development*. Taylor & Francis.
- Kickett-Tucker, C., D. Bessarab, J. Coffin, and M. Wright. 2016. *Mia Mia Aboriginal Community Development: Fostering Cultural Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lalor, K., A. de Roiste, and M. Devlin. 2007. *Young People in Contemporary Ireland*. McMillan.
- Leigh, M., and A. Smart. 1985. *Interpretation and Change. The Emerging Crisis of Purpose in Social Education*. National Youth Bureau.
- Lynch, K. 2022. *Care and Capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Martin, L. 2002. *The Invisible Table: Perspectives on Youth and Youth Work in New Zealand*. Dunmore Press.
- Maunder. 2014. "Youth Work as a Response to Social Values." In *Professional Youth Work: An Australian Perspective*, edited by T. Corney. Youth Studies Australia.
- McLaughlin, H. 2009. "What's in a Name: 'Client', 'Patient', 'Customer', 'Consumer', 'Expert by Experience', 'Service User' – What's Next?" *British Journal of Social Work* 39 (6): 1101–1117. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcm155>.
- McMahon, S. 2021. "What's the 'Problem' with Irish Youth Work? A WPR Analysis of Value for Money Policy Discourse and Devices." *Youth and Policy*. Accessed December 12, 2022, from <https://www.youthandpolicy.org/articles/whats-the-problem-irish-youth-work/>.
- Melaugh, B. 2015. "Critical Conversations. Narratives of Youth Work Practice in Austerity Ireland." *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education* 7 (1): 97–117.
- Mercy Care. 2021. "Youth Peer Pathways Information Session." Retrieved 12 December 2022, from: [https://www.mercycare.com.au/wpcontent/uploads/2021/08/Youth-Peer-Pathways-Info-Session\\_Aug2021.pdf](https://www.mercycare.com.au/wpcontent/uploads/2021/08/Youth-Peer-Pathways-Info-Session_Aug2021.pdf)
- Ministry of Education. 1958. *The Youth Service in England and Wales ("The Albemarle Report")*. Accessed December 12, 2022, from: <http://infed.org/mobi/the-albemarle-report-the-youth-service-yesterday-and-today/>.
- National Youth Health Programme. 2018. "Statement of Strategy." Accessed December 12, 2022, from [https://www.youth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Health\\_Programme\\_Statement\\_of\\_Strategy.pdf](https://www.youth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Health_Programme_Statement_of_Strategy.pdf).
- NYCI. 2021. *This is Young Voices: A Model of Youth Democratic Engagement*. Accessed December 12, 2022, from <https://www.youth.ie/documents/this-is-young-voices-a-model-of-youth-democratic-engagement/>.

- NYCI. n.d. "Vote at 16." Accessed December 9, 2022, from <https://www.youth.ie/get-involved/campaigns/vote-at-16/>.
- NYWDP. 2003. *National Youth Work Development Plan*. Government Publications.
- O'Sullivan Committee. 1980. *The Development of Youth Work Services in Ireland*. Government Publications.
- Rodd, H., and H. Stewart. 2009. "The Glue That Holds Our Work Together: The Role and Nature of Relationships in Youth Work." *Youth Studies Australia* 28 (4): 4–10.
- Roper, C., F. Grey, and E. Cadogan. 2018. *Co-production: Putting Principles into Practice in Mental Health Contexts*. University of Melbourne.
- Sapin, K. 2013. *Essential Skills for Youth Work Practice*. 2nd ed. Sage.
- Sercombe, H. 2010. *Youth Work Ethics*. Sage.
- Shor, I. 2002. "Education is Politics: Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy." In *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*, edited by P. McLaren and P. Leonard. Routledge.
- Sims, M., T. Cooper, E. Barclay, and J. Scott. 2019. "Making Sense of Indigenous Youth Night Patrols." *Administration & Society* 51 (4): 664–686. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399717700225>.
- Smith, M. 1982. *Creators Not Consumers. Rediscovering Social Education*. 2nd ed. National Association of Youth Clubs.
- Smith, M. K. 1988. *Developing Youth Work: Informal Education, Mutual Aid and Popular Practice*. Open University Press.
- Smith, M. K. 2003. "From Youth Work to Youth Development." *The New Government Framework for English Youth Services* 79, [http://www.infed.org/archives/jeffs\\_and\\_smith/smith\\_youth\\_work\\_to\\_youth\\_development.htm](http://www.infed.org/archives/jeffs_and_smith/smith_youth_work_to_youth_development.htm).
- Smith, M. K., and M. E. Doyle. 2002. "The Albemarle Report and the Development of Youth Work in England and Wales." The encyclopedia of informal education. Accessed July 30, 2015, from <http://infed.org/mobi/the-albemarle-report-and-the-development-of-youth-work-in-england-and-wales/>.
- Spence, J. 2007. "What do Youth Workers do? Communicating Youth Work." *Youth Studies Ireland* 2 (2): 3–18.
- Swirak, K. 2018. "A Critical Analysis of Informal Youth Diversion Policy in the Republic of Ireland." *Youth and Policy*. <https://www.youthandpolicy.org/articles/youth-diversion-policy/>.
- UNICEF. 2019. "Upshift: Empowering Youth to Build Skills and Opportunities through Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship." Accessed December 12, 2022, from <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/media/5451/file>.
- United Nations. 1989. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations.
- Vojak, C. 2009. "Choosing Language: Social Service Framing and Social Justice." *British Journal of Social Work* 39 (5): 936–949. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcm144>.
- Watson, D. 2015. *Watson's Worst Words: A Compendium for Our Times*. Random House Australia.
- White, R. D. 1990. *No Space of Their Own: Young People and Social Control in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wilson, J. C., and C. Lewiecki-Wilson. 2001. *Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language and Culture*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Wood, J., S. Westwood, and G. Thompson. 2014. *Youth Work: Preparation for Practice*. Routledge.
- YACVic. 2007. *Code of Ethical Practice*. Accessed December 12, 2022, from <https://www.yacvic.org.au/training-and-services/code-of-ethical-practice/>.
- Yarborough, D. 2020. "'Nothing About Us Without Us': Reading Protests Against Oppressive Knowledge Production as Guidelines for Solidarity Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 49 (1): 58–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241619857134>.
- Young, K. 2006. *The Art of Youth Work*. Russell House.
- Youth Workers Association. 2007. *Code of Ethical Practice – A First Step for the Victorian Youth Sector*. Youth Workers Association.
- Youth Action. 2004. *A Code of Ethics with Commentary*. Accessed December 12, 2022, from [https://www.youthaction.org.au/2004\\_code\\_of\\_ethics](https://www.youthaction.org.au/2004_code_of_ethics).
- Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia. 2014. "Code of Ethics for Youth Workers in WA."
- Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia. n.d. "Youth Leadership." <https://www.yacwa.org.au/youth-leadership/ Yep/> Accessed 30th Dec 2023