

**BA Youth and Community Work**  
**SJYW6010 Applied Research Project**  
**Proposal Form**  
**2017/2018**

|                                                    |                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Name</b>                                        | Thraen Thraen                                                                                                       |
| <b>Title of Applied Research Project</b>           | Youth work in fandom: a comparison of opportunities for young people in the fan communities and youth work in Wales |
| <b>Submission Date</b>                             | 26 <sup>th</sup> October 2017                                                                                       |
| <b>Supervisors Name</b>                            | Darrel Williams                                                                                                     |
| <b>Research Ethics Form Completed and attached</b> | yes                                                                                                                 |

**Note below your ideas for your research: Choose something that you find interesting**

I am interested in exploring digital youth work and how online communities may or may not already be conducting youth work in online spaces. I am particularly interested in exploring examples within *Harry Potter* fan communities of projects which are engaging young people and offering them new opportunities and how these might be considered youth work.

**How practical will this idea be: e.g. what resources do you require? How much time do you have?**

This research primarily requires time, both of the researcher and of participants, to conduct interviews. For participants, this will likely be no more than an hour of their time, and likely much less. Additional time is also required of the researcher to transcribe, analyse, and share results. In addition, this research will require access to the communities in order to find participants and an adequate computer and internet connection in order to host and record video interviews.

**Outline the overall aim, and separate research questions you may want to explore**

The overall aim of this research will be to consider both similarities and differences of professional youth work practice in Wales and opportunities for young people in fan communities. The question I hope to explore are:

- Are there “youth workers” in Harry Potter fan communities?
- What lessons or insights might this youth work have for youth work practice in Wales?
- What lessons or insights might youth work theory and practice in Wales have for Harry Potter fan communities?
- How might youth workers better support young people in and through digital spaces and communities?

## **Applied Research Project Proposal**

**When writing your proposal please think about the following (up to 1000 words):**

- 1. Aim of study/your topic area/issue for research;**
- 2. Research Objectives/questions;**
- 3. Reflect upon why you are going to explore the topic you have chosen;**
- 4. Literature you are going to explore;**
- 5. Methodology/methods of data collection you intend to use;**
- 6. What Ethical considerations do you need to be mindful of?**
- 7. What would be the positive outcomes of engaging in this research? Who will benefit? How does it relate to Youth and Community work practice?**
- 8. How will you disseminate your research?**

### **Research Proposal**

The proposed research project aims to compare and contrast professional youth work practice in Wales with the opportunities for young people within *Harry Potter* fan communities and the people who facilitate these opportunities. Within this topic, there are four main questions this research will aim to explore. First, based on the definitions used by youth work in Wales, are there “youth workers” in *Harry Potter* fan communities? If so, what lessons or insights might this youth work have for youth work practice in Wales? Likewise, what lessons or insights might youth work theory and practice in Wales have for *Harry Potter* fan communities? Finally, how might youth workers better support young people in and through digital spaces and communities?

In order to achieve this aim and answer these questions, the following objectives will be met. First, the research project will review existing, relevant literature on youth work in Wales and *Harry Potter* fan communities. Next, a series of interviews with young people and adults in *Harry Potter* fan communities will be conducted and transcribed. These interviews will then be analysed using a thematic analysis to draw out common themes and patterns. Then, these results will be compared with the literature reviewed at the beginning of the project in order to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each. Finally, the project will conclude with any recommendations for both youth work practice in Wales and projects aimed at young people in *Harry Potter* fan communities to improve outcomes for young people.

I have chosen this area of research because I believe that there is a strong need for it. Youth work is meant to take place wherever young people already are. More and more, young people are spending considerable time interacting in digital spaces. However, professional youth workers in Wales (and in many places) are hesitant to engage with young people in these spaces, often due to uncertainty about how to do so ethically and professionally. This leaves young people to navigate these spaces on their own, without support. Mirroring the origins of youth work in Wales, some adults in the online communities have simply taken up the task of supporting young people in these spaces. However, unlike youth workers in Wales today, these adults do not have the benefit of the quality of research and reflection that professional youth workers have.

This project will use key texts on youth work in Wales, including Welsh government policy and youth work theory, as a foundation for the research. Additionally, it will explore existing literature on digital youth work, with particular attention to the Welsh context. It will also explore existing research on fan communities and *Harry Potter* fan communities in particular, including the works of H. Jenkins, D. Buckingham, and N. Kligler-Vilenchik, and other relevant research such as in the *Journal of Transformative Works and Cultures*.

The methodology for this research will rely on qualitative data from individual, semi-structured interviews with participants. Participants will be given interview questions in advance and then interviewed via online video chat which, with their consent, will also be recorded and stored on a password-protected computer. Once the videos have been transcribed, they will be destroyed. Anonymised transcripts will then be stored in a secure data archive in accordance with university regulations. Participants will be chosen to include people who create opportunities for young people in these communities, such as leadership of the Harry Potter Alliance, a youth organisation focused on creative civic engagement, as well as young people who participate in these opportunities. Approximately three participants who create these opportunities and approximately ten young people will be interviewed. All participants will be over the age of 18.

This research will focus in particular on The Harry Potter Alliance; the House Show Series, which provides a space for young, aspiring musicians to perform for the first time; and Wizards in Space, which publishes original works from fandom and hosts various other opportunities to help young writers develop their voice, gain feedback from peers and more experienced writers alike, and build confidence in their writing. Interview questions for leadership of these projects will explore their motivations for setting these up

and what impact they believe it has or have witnessed. These three examples have been selected based on personal knowledge of these communities. Interview questions for young people involved in these projects (including those who fall into both categories) will explore their motivations for participating and what impact it has had on them personally. Interviews will also create space for participants to share other examples of how these spaces foster both peer and intergenerational relationships, other examples of empowerment for young people in these communities, and what value young people see in their participation in these communities.

The data collected in these interviews will then be analysed using a thematic analysis to highlight and analyse patterns and common themes within the responses. These results will then be compared to the literature with a particular focus on how the projects researched both do and do not match up with youth work practice, policy, and theory in Wales.

In conducting this research, the primary ethical considerations have to do with participants' consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and right to withdraw. Participants will be asked to consent to video recording. In the interviews, participants may discuss topics that they find distressing. In order to address this risk, the interviewer will provide participants with support, including a list of further resources for support.

Engaging in this research will provide benefit to both youth work in Wales and to the *Harry Potter* fan communities and participants in the research. Youth work in Wales can learn from positive examples of digital youth work, which may help youth workers in Wales feel more willing to attempt to engage with young people in digital spaces. This would then benefit the young people they engage with as well. For the *Harry Potter* fan communities, the research can provide a useful reflection tool and share some of the knowledge or youth work in Wales.

The results of this research will be disseminated in a variety of ways. First, the results will be shared in an academic paper which will be made available online. It will be submitted to relevant publications, such as [youthworkwales.org.uk](http://youthworkwales.org.uk) and the *Journal for Transformative Works and Cultures*. A young-person friendly summary of results will also be made available online, and participants will be given access to both the academic paper and the summary.

### Timeline of Activity:

Work backwards from the submission date and outline key dates for completing your Applied Research Project. Also outline the dates you will meet with your supervisor:

| DATE                                | ACTION                                     |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 14 November                         | Feedback on Lit Review                     |
| 21 November                         | Feedback on Methodology                    |
| 5 December                          | Feedback on presentation of results        |
| 12 December                         | Feedback on Discussion chapter (ch 5)      |
| 9 January                           | Feedback on draft ARP                      |
|                                     |                                            |
|                                     |                                            |
|                                     |                                            |
| <b>18<sup>th</sup> January 2018</b> | <b>Applied Research Project Submission</b> |