

**Multiple childhood geographies: giving voice to
young people's experience of place**

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to

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by

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Abstract

Cultural geography draws attention to the diverse meanings and values of groups in society, however, despite a growing interest in the geographies of children and youth, there have been few recent empirical studies investigating young people's experience of place. In particular, comparatively little is known about the multiple realities of young people living in contrasting social and environmental contexts. This study investigates the multiple geographies of young people growing up in inner and outer urban areas of an English Midlands town in the late 1990s. An investigation of this kind is especially apposite in that it provides geographical perspectives on the widening, and increasingly more complex, discourses surrounding young people, space and society. This thesis uses participatory and ethnographic methods to engage young people in evaluating their local environments and to explore in detail the meanings, values and experiences young people associate with different places and place uses.

The theoretical framework for this study is based on an extensive cross-disciplinary review of literature and informed by recent theories of childhood and youth, social change, social action, children's rights, participation and citizenship and contemporary cultural geography. It adopts an holistic approach to understanding the complex and multifaceted world of young people as a product of their reflexive relations with their social and environmental contexts.

The study recognises the multiple realities that exist within and between different groups of young people and the variable factors which influence young people's geographies. It utilises conventional social variables such as gender and age to differentiate between 'cultures of childhood', together with contingency factors concerning location and parental influence. The study reveals both commonalities and differences in young people's experience of place, which cut across social and spatial divides to give rise to a heterogeneity of childhood experiences. A major conclusion is that 'lifestyle' or 'microcultures' offer a more suitable way forward for future children and youth research.

The thesis contributes to discourses of childhood and youth by investigating how childhood is constructed, contested and reproduced in neighbourhood space. The marginal status of young people in urban neighbourhood space is exposed in terms of the neglected spaces of young people, marked by a dearth of appropriate environmental provision, environmental hazards and conflict with adult place users. However, the thesis also reveals young people's keenness to be more involved in improving their communities, together with a range of different 'modes' of participation in local decision making and community development processes.

The thesis concludes by highlighting key implications for policy and planning with and for young people with respect to social and environmental provision for young people, environmental quality, and the social integration of young people in everyday community life, local decision making and environmental planning.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introducing children and geography

Childhood is a social construction varying in its definition over space and time. Understanding the lives of young people growing up in Britain in the 1990s involves recognising childhood as a diverse reality experienced in different ways by different young people¹. One particularly important arena of experience for young people concerns their use of local places beyond the confines of the home and school. This study is concerned with exploring the diverse local geographies of young people's use of local places.

Neighbourhood public spaces are important for young people because they afford opportunities for play, learning, socialising, sense of belonging and personal and social development (Moore 1986; Matthews 1992; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Pearce 1996; Hart 1997). As the most frequent users of neighbourhood space for recreational purposes (Ward 1978; Williams 1995), young people have a vested interest in the quality of such places. However, evidence suggests that urban neighbourhoods are often places of conflict, frustration and danger for young people (Cahill 1990; Rosenbaum 1993; Hillman 1993; White 1993; Barnardos 1994; Blakely 1994; Goodey 1995; Valentine 1995; Webster 1996; Valentine and McKendrick 1997; Watt and Stenson 1998).

Whilst some argue that modern society fails to provide enough time, space and consideration for children (Ennew 1994; Leach 1994), others (notably the media) repeatedly admonish young people for their 'inappropriate' use of local public spaces (Davis and Bourhill 1997). Criticisms of young people in public places tend to emerge from paternalistic discourses of childhood and youth, which categorise young people as not yet adults and therefore in need of socialisation and control (Prout and James 1990). What is missing in many empirical and theoretical studies is an emphasis on the views and experiences of young people themselves, concerning their uses of urban public space, the meanings they attach to local places and the diversity of social and environmental contexts within which these take place.

¹ This study will use the term young people generically to refer collectively to children and youth. Problems concerning terminology are considered more fully in section 1.2. Epistemological issues and debates concerning boundaries and dimensions of childhood and youth are reviewed in Chapter Two.

Despite a growing acknowledgement of the variable nature of childhood and, in geography, of the cultural diversity of groups in society, comparatively little is known about the different experiences of young people living in contrasting environments and consequently the multiple geographies which arise. This study investigates the multiple geographies of young people growing up in inner and outer urban areas of an English East Midland town in the late 1990s. An investigation of this kind is particularly apposite in that it will provide a geographical perspective on the widening, and increasingly more complex, discourses surrounding young people, space and society. None the less, given the complexity of the issues, its focus is selective in that it considers just one facet of young people's lives - the way in which they value and use urban public space.

Childhood and youth do not, however, constitute a single, isolable entity for study, rather they reach across social settings, disciplinary boundaries, public arenas and historical contexts. This study, therefore, is informed by broader developments concerning children, childhood, youth and social change. These include the growing children's rights movement and international developments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; developments in the social study of childhood and youth which seek to 'reconstruct' traditional views of childhood; the cultural turn in geography which recognises the importance of cultural difference in society, based on the way in which individuals cohere and collude around shared sets of meanings, values and lifestyles, and in turn the way in which space is contested; and macro structural changes which impact on the lives of young people growing up in the 1990s.

The chapter will start by clarifying the use of terms associated with childhood and youth. It then goes on to provide a geographical basis for the study by drawing out those issues and concepts, particularly in cultural geography, which are considered as being especially pertinent in contributing to the incipient field of children's geographies. Finally, the chapter will draw attention to the broader academic and social contexts of research with young people.

1.2 A note on terminology

Children, youth, adolescents, teenagers, are all concepts readily used with respect to young people and often lead to confusion both in terms of interpretation and status. Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as anyone under the age of 18 years. However as Frith (1984) points out, because of the distinctions between younger children and older 'teenagers' and the fact that many teenagers appear more adult- than child- like, it appears inappropriate in many cases to use the term 'children' when describing older teenagers. Nonetheless, childhood discourses are in the main equally pertinent to youth, since in many cases it has been childhood discourses that have shaped the lives of older as well as younger children

(Zinnekar 1990). Children and youth also share the similar social status of being in various ways 'less than adults'.

For the purpose of this study the term 'children' will be used to refer to young people up to the age of 12 years. 'Youth' will be used in conjunction with established Youth Service² definitions of young people aged 13-25.³ The term 'teenagers' will also be used as determined by the literature or when talking specifically about the 13-15 year olds in the study, many of whom also refer to themselves as teenagers. The term 'adolescence' on the other hand is based on developmentalist assumptions which identify a life phase spanning childhood and youth based on physiological and psychological changes the individual is purported to experience in the course of growing up. Although pertinent to the age range of the young people in this study⁴ this term will only be referred to in the context of other studies. Instead the terms childhood and youth will be used to refer to the period spanned in this study, which is 10-15 years.

For all intents and purposes this project will recognise that the boundaries of adolescence and youth significantly overlap to encompass a stage in life 'ambiguously wedged between childhood and adulthood' (Sibley 1995a) commonly characterised as a transitional phase. In this way adolescence and youth, like childhood, are interpreted as processes rather than age-related stages occurring at various times and in different ways for individuals in diverse social and cultural contexts. In much of the literature the terms 'children' and 'young people' are used to refer to younger and older children respectively. According to UK employment legislation 'young people' are "defined not as those under 18, but those over school leaving age" (Newell 1991: 91). I find this unacceptable since it suggests that children are not people and accentuates the 'otherness' of children, which so many contemporary theories contest. The term 'young people' will therefore be used in this project to refer to youth, adolescents *and* children. Reference to older teenagers as children will only be made in this study in so far as either the participants themselves, literature or legislation dictates, for example when talking about children's rights.

² Northamptonshire County Youth Service for example refers to youth within the age bracket 13-25.

³ This study recognises that the boundaries of youth are culturally and historically variable and thus an area of debate. For example whilst young people in some contexts may be considered adult at 16, in others they may retain the status of dependent minor into their late 20s (See subsequent debates in Chapter Two).

⁴ Adolescence has been generally taken to refer to the period marked by the onset of maturation (10 years for girls, 12 years for boys) up until full height is attained (at approximately 18 years of age). However, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, the use of age as a means of social differentiation is contested.

1.3 The 'Cultural Turn' and geographies of childhood

Children, childhood and youth have not been the focus of much geographical enquiry. Exceptions are the work of Aitken (1994), Aitken and Herman (1997), McKendrick *et al.* (1998), Matthews (1992, 1995), Matthews *et al.* (1998a, 1998b, 1998d, 1998f, 1998g), Skelton and Valentine (1998), Valentine (1996a, 1996b, 1997a; 1997b), Valentine and McKendrick (1997). Earlier geographical studies of children's geographies focused on the developing environmental cognition and spatial competence of children (see Matthews 1992; Aitken 1994 for a review). The absence of studies of children in the broader field of geography has led to criticism concerning the neglect of childhood as a geographical frame of reference (James 1990; Winchester 1991; Sibley 1991; Philo 1992). Nonetheless, as a result of the 'cultural turn' (Johnston 1997) there has been a growing interest in geographical studies of children, childhood and youth (Matthews *et al.* 1998b). Moreover, studies of the differences between young people's and adult's relationships with space (Matthews *et al.* 1998b), the invisibility of children's values and interests on urban landscapes (Sibley 1995a), the spatial construction of youth cultures (Massey 1998) and the politics of urban public space use (Gregory and Urry 1985; Jackson 1989; Soja 1988; Smith 1990; Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1993; Pile 1996; Keith and Pile 1993; Valentine 1996a; Aitken and Herman 1997), suggest that geography is well placed to make valuable contributions to the development of theory and policy surrounding young people growing up in society as well as to evolving discourses of childhood and youth.

The 'cultural turn' in geography is characterised by "a celebration of difference in society" (Johnston 1997: 270) and an acknowledgement that reality is socially constructed in the context of the practice of everyday life (de Certeau 1984; Ley and Duncan 1993). As Johnston (1997: 268) states:

"Geographers, (...) , sought an approach which avoided the implicit narrowly materialist determinism of both positivism and marxism/realism but also was theoretically richer than the voluntarism of the humanistic approaches advanced in the 1970s and 1980s."

What has emerged is a 'new cultural geography' concerned with differences in the way individuals and groups "cohere and collude around shared subjectivities" [... as they] construct their own personal geographies" (Matthews 1995: 456). One of the characteristics of the new cultural geography therefore is a realignment of the subject within the structure-agency dichotomy. Pile (1993) observes that the developing humanistic and historical-materialist perspectives that prevailed into the 1980s provided one-sided accounts of 'the social', due to the splitting of the social into structure and agency (or context and intentionality in the case of humanists). Hence he justified the search for alternative models of the self in order to understand the person within the social.

For Pile (1993), the search for new geographical models is based on a repositioning of the self in society through a growing recognition of the subjective reality of meaning. Burgess and Pile (1992: 31) argue that “geographers need to recognise the power of human emotions ...”. They go on to quote Douglas (1977: 51) as saying:

“ these feelings are the core of our being, the stuff of our everyday lives. They are the foundation of all society. They come before symbolic meaning and value, lead us continually to reinterpret, (...) and recreate thoughts and values. (...) they are the reasons behind our reasoned accounts (...) Without feelings, there would be no use for rules, ideas or social structures ...”

The foci above are predicated on the basis of a concern not, as hitherto has been the case, with social structures or human agency, but with new understandings of the self within this dialectic, in particular with the subjective experiences of everyday life that constitute cultural difference. It is not the goal of this study to employ a psychoanalytical research model to understand the geographies of young people as has been undertaken elsewhere (Aitken and Herman 1997). However, the study aims to uncover the affective relationships young people have with local places in order to understand the spatial construction of children’s social and cultural worlds.

Accompanying this new alignment of the self in society is a reinterpretation of the concept of culture. The new cultural geography rejects previous interpretations of culture as the preserve of an elite or unitary national culture (Jackson 1989; Anderson and Gale 1992), and recognises instead the existence of a ‘plurality of cultures’ (Jackson 1989: 1) within society in terms of different ‘ways of seeing’ (Berger 1972). Differences are seen to be manifested in terms of distinct sets of values, attitudes, beliefs and meanings of heterogeneous groups, which give rise to diverse lifestyles, behaviours and codes of practice (Clarke 1984; Jackson 1989; Anderson and Gale 1992). Clarke (1976) suggests that culture is the way in which groups handle the raw material of their social and material existence. McDowell (1994) echoing Clarke, notes that culture is:

“ ... a set of ideas, customs and beliefs that shape people’s actions and their production of artefacts, including the landscape and the built environment ... Cultural ideas are expressed in the lives of social groups who articulate, express and challenge these sets of ideas and values, which are themselves temporally and spatially specific.”

(1994: 148)

Along with a shift in focus towards a subjective understanding of the distinct lifeworlds of different groups in society has been a rejection of positivism and a reassertion of humanistic perspectives in geography (Ley and Samuels 1978; Buttner 1976, 1990; Tuan 1976; Cosgrove 1989; Smith 1984; Barnes and Duncan 1992). Clarke *et al.*

(1976: 11) noted that “cultures are not simply systems of meaning and value carried around in the head, they are made concrete through patterns of social organisation”.

A second dimension of the new cultural geography therefore recognises that different ways of seeing are part of a wider system of social relations in which groups have differential access to power. Matthews (1995: 456) argues that “not all social groups enjoy the same positions of power and influence”, such that the ‘ideologies of powerful groups close to the centre of decision making (insiders) exert greater effect on the places around them’. Inequalities in power relations which prevail, for example, between male and female, black and white, abled and less abled, adults and children, characterise the unequal cultural terrain within which “meanings are negotiated and relations of dominance and subordination are defined and contested” (Jackson 1989: 2).

Central to the new cultural geography therefore is a concern with the ways in which cultural politics between insiders and outsiders - those whose voice is seldom heard in society (Matthews 1995) - gives rise to landscapes of power and geographies of exclusion (Sibley 1995a). Studies have been conducted focusing on a range of diverse social groups including women (Monk 1992; Winchester 1992), lesbians and gays (Bell and Valentine 1995; Whittle 1994), people with disabilities (Matthews and Vujakovic 1995), ethnic minorities (Jackson 1989); and gypsies (Sibley 1981; 1992). However, studies focusing on children’s different ways of seeing have been notably absent (James 1990; Philo 1992; Sibley 1991; Winchester 1991).

In an attempt to elevate the profile of childhood on the research agenda in geography Matthews *et al.* (1998b) define an agenda for the geography of children based on differences in the way young people and adults see, feel about and react to a landscape. They argue for example that ‘what goes on during the day of an average young person is different in rhythm, scale and content from that of adults; conceptions of what it means to be a child differ between adults and young people; land uses and facilities are different for children and adults, even when shared they are used in different ways; the environmental range of children is more restricted than that of adults; many environmental hazards for children are not hazards for adults, children differ from adults in the way they see the world around them; and children are unable to influence decision making and management which determine the structure of environments in general and land uses in particular (pp 8-9). Underlying these propositions is a recognition of the need to investigate the environment as children see it not only by engaging them in the ‘here and now’ of their life worlds, but also recognising at the same time that young people construct their own models of difference within structures laid down by adults.

The new cultural geography, in contrast to earlier notions of culture (Sauer 1925), is thus located within social relations such that it has come to be interpreted as an active force in social reproduction. As Jackson (1989: 3) states:

“If geographers are to make the most of recent developments in social theory, (...), they require a more sophisticated theory of culture, for culture is not only socially constructed and geographically expressed ... it must also be admitted that culture is spatially constituted.”

The location of young people in public space is therefore delicately poised within a complex web of social and spatial relations manifest in the tensions between adults and young people and private and public domains. Sibley (1995b) for example draws attention to the failure of studies to situate children at the same time in the context of the family, domestic space and the larger spaces of the locality and the city.

Understanding these tensions requires recognition of the liminal state of young people undergoing the transition from childhood to adulthood, frequently referred to as adolescence. As Sibley suggests, youth are ambiguously wedged between childhood and adulthood. James (1986: 155) notes that “neither child nor adult the adolescent is lost between, belonging nowhere, being no one.” Sibley (1995a: 34) recognises that “adolescents are denied access to the adult world, but they attempt to distance themselves from the world of the child”.

Aitken and Herman (1997), drawing on the work of Winnicott, employ the concept of ‘transitional’ space - “spaces where connections may be maintained between an external world and an internal conception of self so that the new significance can be realised” (Aitken and Herman 1997: 72) - in which the young person can “recursively separate from the (m)other in a fluid process of intuition, play and experimentation” (p. 65). Aitken and Herman (1997) highlight the compatibility of Winnicott's ideas with Lefebvre's work concerned with the way that space is produced by recognising it as a social morphology that is integrally tied to lived experience. Transitional or liminal spaces are the sites in which young people's lives are spatially constituted through a ‘trial by space’ (Lefebvre 1974: 416), through which values and ideas are produced and reproduced through confrontation with other values and ideas and new spaces constructed.

The notion of transitional space can in turn be translated into geographical space. For young people, lacking autonomous space in the family home, the street offers an alternative ‘transitional’ space in which to construct their own identity. It is in these ‘liminal spaces’ that conflicts arise as young people appear ‘discrepant on adult landscapes’ (Sibley 1995a). As Matthews *et al.* (1998b) note dominant adult uses and values are often at odds with those of young people. Landscapes thus become documents of power and control, cultural expressions of powerful groups (adults) in

society which, through the decision making process, differentially impact on the lives of individuals and groups (young people). A number of studies have shown how young people in transitional spaces such as the street constitute a threat to public order and therefore are subject to regulatory regimes such as curfews (Cahill 1990; Jeffs and Smith 1996; Valentine 1996a; Matthews *et al.* 1998h). The issue of boundaries between self and other (or young person and adult) is therefore a critical element in understanding the positionality of young people in geographical space in relation to adults. Positionality according to Johnston (1997: 289) refers to: "the source of understandings of the world and power to act within it".

The positionality of the subject, however, has been problematized by new critical social theoretical discourses such as feminism, post colonialism, post structuralism, postmodernism and psychoanalysis (Pile 1996; Johnston 1997), which are concerned with new ways of mapping the subject (Pile and Thrift 1995) in response to the hegemony of white, ableist, adult, masculinist interests in the production and reproduction of society, culture and space. Post modernists thus recognise counter-hegemonic discourses as meaningful cultural alternatives. The post modern context for investigating cultural difference emphasises the diversity that exists within and between conventional social groupings. As Philo (1992: 201) states: "social life is ... fractured along numerous lines of difference constitutive of overlapping and multiple forms of otherness." Contingency factors such as location and cultures of parenting thus become relevant for young people in negotiating a course through these diverse and increasingly more complex maps of meaning.

As a result, a growing area of interest within cultural geography has emerged concerned with mapping the subject through the body (Pile and Thrift 1995; Aitken and Herman 1997; Pile 1996; Nast and Pile 1998) according to different contexts, contingencies and social practices. In drawing on the work of Freud, Lacan, Winnicott and Klein these studies contribute to theoretical knowledge of the way in which the young person is positioned in relation to the external world and the way in which bodies and places simultaneously make each other (Nast and Pile 1998). However, it is the contention of this study that (adultist) theoretical insights need to be complemented by research grounded in the local knowledge and subjective experience of young people in their practise of everyday life, which may provide a more informed basis for bringing about change.

Positioning children in these changing discourses of culture and space is especially difficult as a result of fundamental differences between children and adults in the way they see and make sense of the world around them (Aitken and Herman 1997; Matthews *et al.* 1998b). Aitken and Herman (1997) for example state that:

“It is one of the great ironies of human experience that by the time we are old enough to reflect upon what it is like to be a young child, we are far removed from the experience and are likely to have difficulty fully empathising”.
(pp. 63-64)

The crisis of representation that has been identified in cultural geography (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford 1988; Barnes and Duncan 1992) is thus particularly pertinent with respect to the study of children (Prout and James 1990). The themes in cultural geography highlighted here in many ways complement intellectual developments in other disciplines investigating childhood. In particular, acknowledgement of the existence of cultural diversity in childhood, the ambiguous and contested nature of relations between adults and young people and the inequalities in power relations between adults and young people are all pertinent to understanding the way in which space is constructed and challenged by young people as they negotiate their transitions in the changing social and environmental contexts of their lifeworlds.

Studies of childhood have become increasingly more inter disciplinary with contributions from a range of social discourses from disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, social policy, youth and community studies, cultural studies, environmental education, planning, legal studies and politics. By drawing on wider developments in the fields of childhood and youth, this study will help to draw geography into global debates about childhood and in the process contribute a spatial perspective to research, policy and practice concerning children, childhood and youth. The remaining sections of this chapter will highlight key developments in some of these areas of work which contribute to the timeliness of this study.

1.4 Reconstructing childhood

Childhood and youth have become more topical on research and public agendas over the last decade as a result of mounting concern about the well being of young people in different social and environmental contexts and increasing moral panics about young people in public places. National and local media reports of young people as victims and perpetrators of crime or anti-social activities and the vulnerability of young people to social and environmental hazards have reflected a crisis in childhood (Scruton 1997; Cox 1996; Stephens 1995; James and Prout 1990; Jenks 1996) characterised by paradoxes and inconsistencies in its social construction. Moral panics about young people sit in opposition to nostalgic views of childhood (Jenks 1994) as a ‘walled garden of innocence and vulnerability’ (Holt 1975) and reinforce society’s ambivalence towards childhood wherein young people are either seen as angels or devils (Valentine 1996b). As a result, theorists have begun to reassess prevailing assumptions of childhood and youth (James and Prout 1990; Qvortrup *et al.* 1994; Jenks 1996; Cohen 1997; Wyn and White 1997; James *et al.* 1998).

These recent studies have been characterised by a search for new paradigms of childhood. Central to these emerging paradigms is the rejection of childhood as a universal naturalness and recognition that childhood is an historically and culturally variable social construction giving rise to a multiplicity of realities. This marks a challenge to deterministic, developmental theories of childhood as a linear progression conceptualised from an adultist perspective in terms of what children are to become. Instead childhood is identified as a meaningful time in its own right experienced in the here and now of children's everyday lives (Matthews *et al.* 1998b).

Theories of childhood and youth cultures which prevailed in the 1970s and early 1980s conceptualised the way in which young people's lives were structured and stressed the process of social reproduction according to sub-cultural affiliations such as class. In contrast new paradigms focus on the agency of young people as cultural producers in their own right, active in the construction and determination of their lives (James and Prout 1990; Qvortrup *et al.* 1994; Jenks 1996; Cohen 1997; James *et al.* 1998). This is not to ignore the influence of structural forces on the lives of young people but to realign children and youth within the structure-agency dichotomy (James *et al.* 1998).

A number of comparative cross cultural studies of young people's lives (Offer *et al.* 1988; Stephens 1995; Chisholm *et al.* 1990; Katz 1993; Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Chawla 1997; Skelton and Valentine 1998) have been conducted, highlighting the diversity of young people's experiences growing up in different social and environmental contexts, which demonstrate the variability of childhood and youth as social constructions. However, there is still a paucity of literature on young people's experiences and perspectives in the 'here and now' of their everyday lives. In particular, there is a need for new approaches to studies of children and youth which acknowledge the multiple faceted nature of child and youth transitions as experienced from the young person's perspective. New social theories of childhood have nonetheless initiated a new era of childhood studies which transgress conventional disciplinary boundaries and move towards a common focus for childhood and youth research.

More recent social studies of children have witnessed a conflation of interest around social constructionism (Richards and Light 1986; Coleman and Hendry 1990; Coleman 1993; Harre 1986; Ingleby 1986; Jackson and Rodriguez-Tome 1993; Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995). Coleman and Hendry (1990) for example echo dimensions of the new paradigm for childhood put forward by James and Prout (1990) through lifespan development theory which states: there is a human ecology or context of human development; individuals and their families reciprocally influence each other; individuals are producers of their own development and a multi-disciplinary approach must be taken to studying human development. However, despite discourses of childhood and youth being mirrored, to an increasing extent by key concerns in

contemporary cultural geography, contributions of geographical perspectives to emerging discourses of childhood and youth have been lacking. This study therefore draws on geographical perspectives of culture, space and power to provide insights into the way young people's lives are socially constructed and experienced. One particular historical landmark that has influenced social constructions and discourses of childhood which also makes this study timely is the global children's rights agenda.

1.5 The global children's rights agenda

In 1989 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations general assembly setting out a manifesto for recognising children as equal citizens to adults. The Convention, ratified by Britain in 1991, outlines a range of children's rights - to protection, provision and participation - which commits all nations ratifying the Convention to review all aspects of their law, policy and practice concerning children and ensure measures are taken to guarantee compliance. In particular the Convention stipulates that young people have a right to play and recreational activities (Article 31), to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Article 15), to the right to express their views in all matters affecting their lives (Article 12). Article 3 states that in all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration and Article 4 implicates States Parties to undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures to implement the rights recognised in the Convention. Lansdown (1995) observes that these are powerful assertions of children's rights to be actors in their own lives and challenges traditional concepts of the child by converting the child into a 'principle for social commitment' (Pais 1992).

The UK's first report in 1995 was, however, heavily criticised by the United Nations (1995) stating that there was a "clear dissonance between a professed commitment to children's welfare and the effective implementation of that commitment" (Children's Rights Development Unit 1994: xiii). This was in spite of the guiding principle of the Children Act (1989) in Britain that 'the child's welfare is paramount' and that children have a right to participate in decisions that affect them (Lansdown 1995). Despite political mandates such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children Act, progress towards achieving democratic representation for children has been slow in coming about. Whereas issues concerning, for example, children's participation in the provision of social services have witnessed tangible changes, in other areas of local governance - such as the planning and management of public space - young people's views and interests remain marginalised. None the less there have been other global initiatives which have hastened work in this area.

In 1992 the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro provided a mandate to all local governments to work with their residents to create a 'Local Agenda 21' (sustainable

development) action plan in involving partnerships with all sections of the community. However as Hart (1997: 9) notes “environments will only be used sustainably if individuals and communities are empowered with the capacities to live sustainably”. Effective and responsible use of local places by young people will only be fostered once they have developed a sense of belonging, a sense of worth in their communities and a sense of ownership and identity, in their place affiliations. Local Agenda 21 initiatives concerning young people, however, have been as yet sporadic, incipient and uncoordinated. Part of the problem has been uncertainty and inexperience of how to facilitate the representation of young people in local governance. Local government structures and practices which alienate young people on the urban landscape are caused by a lack of commitment towards young people and paternalistic attitudes amongst local officials (Hodgkin and Newell 1996).

This study aims to illuminate some of the problems and potentialities of accounting for young people as urban place users and active environmental agents in local decision making. At the same time it will provide insights into the way in which the rights of young people to use urban public space are constrained by myopic and often ill-conceived social strategies designed to facilitate adult (economic) agendas whilst at the same time controlling and containing young people’s use of public space. Conventional social strategies and structures of governance which marginalise young people in local neighbourhoods are in turn symptomatic of negative conceptions of childhood and youth and uncertainty of how to respond to young people growing up in the 1990s.

1.6 Growing up in the 1990s: the influence of macro structural changes

Contemporary theories of childhood contend that childhood is a social construction which varies culturally and historically. Young people growing up in Britain in the 1990s are therefore faced with historically specific sets of social and cultural conditions characterised by a restructuring of childhood. Stephens (1995) suggests that ‘localised Western constructions of childhood are now being profoundly restructured as a result of complex patterns of globalisation and social and economic changes’. James *et al.* (1998) for example have recently extended theories of childhood to encompass broader sets of issues concerning social change and differentiation. Dominant sociological dichotomies - structure and agency, identity and difference, continuity and change, local and global - have hence been aligned with new discourses of childhood, or childhood dichotomies.

A number of writers have situated changing discourses of childhood and youth within the context of social changes associated with ‘late modernity’ (Giddens 1991; Jones and Wallace 1992; Fornas and Bolin 1995; Stephens 1995; Furlong and Cartmel 1997; James *et al.* 1998). Late modernity can be taken to signify a post-industrial stage in

capitalism wherein traditional sources of identity based on production are increasingly being reconstituted around new multi-contextual allegiances based on patterns of consumption and lifestyle (Jones and Wallace 1992; Fornas and Bolin 1995; Wildemeersch *et al.* 1988).

Childhood and youth are therefore subject to increasing commercial pressures in terms of identity, style and fashions in leisure and lifestyle activities. The prevailing culture of consumption, the commodification of childhood leisure places (McKendrick *et al.* 1997) and explosion in information and media technology (Fornas and Bolin 1995) have all imposed new pressures on childhood and youth, on where young people go and what they do in their free time. Some critics have suggested that childhood has become integrated into the economic system as a mode of production in itself (Oldman 1994b). However, not all young people have the means to construct their identities and lifestyles in this way (Lister 1991). It is therefore no surprise that widening social and structural inequalities (Kumar 1993; Bates and Riseborough 1993), restrictive social policies which obfuscate the roles, rights and responsibilities for young people and the control (Berman 1986; Fyfe and Bannister 1996, Zukin 1995) or 'annihilation' (Mitchell 1996) of free public space, have given rise to an increasing number of young people experiencing disaffection, apathy and alienation (Wyn and White 1997; MacDonald 1997).

Late modernity thus poses increasingly more complex and uncertain sets of social circumstances which create tensions, ambiguities and contradictions for young people, for example, between the family, the market place, the community and institutions of the state (Jones and Wallace 1992). Furlong and Cartmel (1997) argue that young people are caught within an 'epistemological fallacy' whereby the intensifying ethos of individualisation (capacity for self determination) is being undermined by social practices and policies which restrict young people's capacity for social participation. Jones and Wallace (1992: 142) observe that:

"While social stratification, based largely on social class, gender, race and ethnic inequalities, affects young people's life chances from birth, during their life course they steer their way, with varying degrees of success, through formal and informal institutional structures, which put new constraints and opportunities in their paths; structural inequalities mean that there are more opportunities for some and more constraints for others, so that some young people's actions may clearly be seen as informed choice strategies, arising from opportunity, and others as survival are not polarised, the extent to which agency or structure predominates is more a question of degree."

Understanding young people's lives in the context of their local neighbourhoods therefore needs to take account of three sets of factors. First, the changing macro structural context of childhood; second, the positionality or situational context of

different young people in terms of the specific social and environmental context in which they live; and third, the capacity of different young people to negotiate between the social and environmental contexts in which they live and their own aspirations, motivations and desires. A number of writers have therefore concerned themselves with what they call the 'reflexivity of youth as a social process' (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Jones and Wallace 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 1997). Some studies for example highlight the ability of young people to subvert and resist the production of public space (Katz 1991; White 1993; Breitbart 1995; Pile 1996; Valentine 1996a), whilst others focus on the construction of 'worlds apart' (Matthews *et al.* 1998a) from adults as young people withdraw from the public eye (Lucas 1998).

The way in which young people value and use local places cannot therefore be divorced from the broader historical and social contexts in which they live. Increasing social problems concerning young people growing up in urban areas such as crime, unemployment, social and environmental hazards, substance misuse and the perceived threat of young people as discrepant 'other' in public places are intermeshed with broader processes of social change and differentiation. The lives of young people therefore need to be understood holistically. As Henderson (1995: 11) states:

"The need for an holistic approach, of seeing and understanding children in their totality, from individual circumstances to environmental conditions ... is based on the principle of the indivisibility of need: the argument that particular needs cannot be separated from each other because they are experienced interdependently."

This is reflected in the increasing tendency for studies of the lives of young people to use social biographies and life course perspectives which take account of the complex, multifaceted and variable nature of young people's lives. The pervasiveness of children and childhood in society necessitates an holistic and multidisciplinary perspective which takes account of theory, policy and practice in a range of settings. Context is therefore important in studying the multiple realities of childhood.

By locating this study within the broader contexts of global historical developments and cross disciplinary theoretical perspectives it attempts to recontextualise previous studies of children's environments within contemporary discourses of childhood and social change whilst, at the same time, contributing a spatial perspective to those debates. The study complements existing knowledge of what it is to be a young person in the late twentieth century, as well as providing new ethnographic insights which may be used to reflect on established practice in the planning and management of urban space, urban service delivery and public policy priorities and practice concerning children and youth. To that end this project has five broad aims.

1.7 Aims and structure of the thesis

This project sets out with five general aims. These aims are not mutually exclusive, instead they provide discreet foci for studying young people's multiple geographies from different perspectives.

- * To investigate the views and experiences of young people growing up in contrasting urban areas using participatory and ethnographic approaches.
- * To explore the multiple realities which exist within and between social groups of young people in terms of the way they value and use local places.
- * To examine the way in which young people respond to their social and environmental contexts and construct landscapes of meaning.
- * To consider how childhood is constructed, contested and reproduced in neighbourhood space.
- * To explore perspectives on improving local places with and for young people.

The thesis is divided into two parts. In light of the absence of an established literature on children and childhood in geography Chapters Two to Five provide a comprehensive cross-disciplinary review of literature in order to provide a rigorous and coherent framework for this study. The review of literature begins with Chapter Two which focuses on the changing ways in which childhood and youth are conceived. In light of these dominant conceptions of childhood and youth Chapter Three then considers how the lives of young people have been, and may be, understood in terms of structure, agency and contingency. Chapter Four maps out the importance of space to young people in terms of the ways they value and use their environments. Chapter Five then goes on to consider the importance of children's rights, participation and citizenship in shaping environments for young people.

The second part of the thesis begins with Chapter Six which outlines the methodological issues and approaches relevant to this study and provides a description of the locations, sample populations and issues concerning ethics and procedure. Chapter Seven provides an introductory overview of the results by considering the extent to which difference and diversity is evident in the geographies of young people according to location, gender, age and parental influence. Chapters Eight to Thirteen focus on each of the aims of the thesis by disentangling the local geographies of young people. Chapter Eight explores the places and spaces children use and value in the course of their neighbourhood transactions. Emphasis is placed on the affordances of

place and the way in which young people construct their own meanings from and within their environments. Chapter Nine explores the importance of hanging out to young people, the environmental contexts for hanging out and the form it takes in different locations. Chapters Ten and Eleven concern power relations in space and the way in which local places are contested between young people and with adults. Chapter Ten looks at the conflicts that occur when the place use of young people collides with that of adults in the course of their daily place transactions. Chapter Eleven then reveals the pervasiveness of bullying as a phenomena of young people's use of neighbourhood space. It illustrates how hegemonic spaces are created by some young people and the impacts these practices have on the geographies of other young people. Chapter Twelve investigates the quality of the two local environments for young people to grow up in both in terms of levels of provision and the quality of the different environments. Chapter Thirteen considers perspectives on young people and environmental planning.

Finally, Chapter Fourteen draws attention to the major findings of the study with respect to the aims set out above, highlighting in particular the implications of the results of this study for policy makers and planners and for improving the quality of local places with and for young people. Suggestions are then offered for further research.

Chapter Two

Locating childhood and youth

2.1 Introduction

Childhood and youth are social constructions. They cannot be separated, either as a set of ideas or practices, from the social and cultural contexts within which they occur. Prout and James (1990: 2) have suggested that there is a “crisis in the study of childhood”, characterised by the lack of a suitable framework which locates childhood and adolescence within changing social contexts and which recognises young people as social actors in their own right (Suransky 1982; Prout and James 1990; Caputo 1995; James 1995; Corsaro 1997). What is being argued is that dominant conceptions of childhood and youth have become inappropriate for two reasons. First, because dominant paradigms, based on adult-centric notions of what children and youth are to become, have colluded in the repression of young people as active social agents. Second, because they are culturally and historically defined, conceptions of childhood and youth must be flexible enough to account for variations over time and space.

Until recently, dominant paradigms for studying childhood and youth have been based primarily on developmental perspectives, which have viewed children and youth as natural and universal phenomena. According to these perspectives, children are ‘adults in waiting’ - passive recipients of socialisation into an adult world; inferior, inexperienced, immature pre-social beings (Prout and James 1990; Jenks 1996) as yet lacking the characteristics and competence of rounded adult individuals and therefore in need of education and control. Emphasis has been placed on “*what children are not* rather than on *what they are*” (Oakley 1994: 22). However as a result of a growing awareness of the competence of young people, the “uncritical acceptance of the protective imperative” (Goldson 1997: 1) and the fallibility of adults acting in young people’s ‘best interest’ (Alston 1994), increasing attention is being directed to new ways of interpreting childhood as a meaningful time (Prout and James 1990) in which young people may exercise their democratic rights as equal citizens (Hart 1992, 1997).

Emerging views recognise that childhood and youth cannot be understood as universal, linear processes of development. Instead childhood and youth need to be seen as socially and culturally variable phenomena, the experiences of which differ over time and space (Hoyles 1989; James and Prout 1990; Amit Talai and Wulff 1995). Prout and James (1990: 7) state that:

“ The immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture. It is these ‘facts of culture’ which may vary and which can be said to make of childhood a social institution.”

Definitions of childhood must therefore be to some extent “dependent upon the society from which they emerge” (Hendrick 1990: 36) and hence must be understood as social constructions. Rather than one universal childhood, what emerges is a ‘multiplicity of divergent childhoods’ (Archard 1993; Valentine 1996b) varying according to social, cultural and historical contexts.

A central facet of conceptions of childhood is the location of boundary with adults as well as with youth. The boundaries between childhood and youth are not self-evident nor fixed (Chisholm *et al.* 1990), rather they are fluid and culturally defined according to context. Ambiguity in understandings of childhood and youth therefore not only reflects inconsistency in their social constructions but also in different definitions of the concepts, for example, as indicated by the disjuncture of the social and legal status of childhood and youth.

This chapter outlines the different ways in which childhood has been conceived. In Chapter One the proposed use of childhood and youth terminology for the purpose of this study was clarified. The first section in this chapter will consider more fully some of the debates concerning the nature of the concept of the child, the difficulties in locating the boundaries of childhood and youth and how these have changed over time according to the historical and social contexts in which they have occurred. It will then go on to explore two models of childhood which have dominated theory and practice in childhood and youth until recently - the ‘Natural Child’ (based on developmental precepts) and the ‘Moral Child’ (which came about as a result of attempts to understand the socialisation of the developing young person). The constructions of media representations and perpetuation of popular myths of childhood and youth will then be considered. As a response to the perceived limitations of the two dominant conceptual models of childhood and youth, the final part of the chapter will set out the key dimensions of an emerging paradigm for childhood as a social construction which acknowledges children as active social agents.

2.2 Childhood, youth and adolescence: boundaries and dimensions

2.2.1 In search of a framework

The difficulties revealed in Chapter One in delimiting the boundaries of childhood, youth and adolescence reflect the enigmatic way in which the earlier ages of life are socially constructed. A useful, though not wholly satisfactory, starting point for providing a coherent, theoretical context for locating childhood and youth is age. Finch (1986) describes the sociology of age as relatively uncharted territory. In particular childhood and youth have been noted as being neglected as an area of sociological study (Pilcher 1995). Attention to childhood has largely been conducted in connection with education or the family, or in the case of youth studies, confined to popular culture, employment and the labour market. Despite this absence, Pilcher (1995: 1) suggests that “age is an important part of how we see ourselves and how others see us”, for example in terms of status, prestige, citizenship and power.

Western industrialised societies tend to group individuals together on the basis of age related criteria. However, unlike other sociological variables such as race and sex, age is a dynamic variable, which can be understood in terms of three dimensions (Pilcher 1995). First, age has an inescapable physiological dimension in that the body ages over time. Second, societies have different culturally defined expectations of behaviour patterns, social roles, functions and status associated with different stages of biological development. Third, the experience of different age stages in life is historically specific.

Until recently, attempts to understand the sociology of different phases in life with respect to these three dimensions, has been dominated by the concept of the *lifecycle* which provides a functional perspective of social expectations according to the age related developmental stages an individual sequentially undergoes. In this sense ‘age’ is a problematic concept. Indeed, it has been criticised, for its universal and deterministic emphasis on the biological aging of the body, to the neglect of the variable social contexts in which human development takes place. As a result, the *lifecourse* perspective, based on the work of Hareven (1982a) has emerged as an alternative for achieving a more comprehensive understanding of the sociological significance of age.

In contrast to the lifecycle concept, the lifecourse perspective is dynamic and flexible in that it acknowledges historical and cultural variations in the way in which life stages are experienced and undertaken (Ikels *et al.* 1992). The processes by which life stages, and *transitions* between them, are negotiated are central to the lifecourse perspective and necessarily embrace the influence of structuring institutions (Jones and Wallace 1992) on progression through the life course. “People do not grow up in laboratories” (Riley 1984: 8) but within cultural and historical contexts characterised by “transitions, (...)

relationships, statuses (and) institutions (which bring about) transformations of identities and influence access to power and resources within society” (Pilcher 1995: 21).

Childhood and youth, as two early phases of the lifecourse, are embedded within sociological studies of age. ‘Growing up’ is commonly used as a metaphor for the rationale of this stage, in terms of what young people are to become from the standpoint of the perceived ‘wholeness’ of adults. Thus childhood and youth are inextricably linked to social relations with adults and more particularly, adult conceptions of the early years of life, which are themselves culturally and historically variable. These three processes - history, culture and the power relations between adults and children - therefore affect the nature of conceptions of childhood and youth (Pilcher 1995). The cultural variability of conceptions of childhood over time and space will be exposed subsequently and the way in which adult’s power over children affects prevailing conceptions of childhood will be revealed in the context of childhood in modern Britain. At this stage it is important to draw attention to the need to differentiate between the concept of childhood as a (culturally and historically variable) idea and a conception of childhood as the nature of particular articulations of childhood (Archard 1993).

Archard (1993) draws attention to the difference between the concept of childhood and having different conceptions of childhood. He posits three basic reasons why conceptions of childhood may differ. First, he talked of ‘boundaries’ of childhood. In the Middle Ages infancy appeared to merge with adulthood at about the age of seven. In contrast, modern conceptions of childhood suggest either denotation of a period between infancy and adolescence or, one which embraces the whole of the period of the life course before adulthood (Klein 1990). The boundaries of childhood and youth therefore vary according to historical social contexts. West (1997) for example highlights how the boundaries of childhood and youth are currently being simultaneously extended upwards into adulthood and downwards into infancy giving rise to an extended period of pre-adulthood.

The second reason Archard puts forward to differentiate conceptions of childhood from a concept of childhood is in terms of the different ‘dimensions’ or contexts from which childhood can be viewed. For example the age at which a child can work may be incompatible with the age to vote and therefore take decisions about matters that affect their working life. What Archard suggests is that “the various dimensions of childhood need not necessarily converge in defining one consistent and agreed period of human life” rather that “the point at which a given conception deems childhood to end has a notional or virtual status” (p.25). Archard identifies adolescence in particular as a key period in the modern conception of childhood, in which the dimensions of childhood gradually merge into the dimensions of adulthood. Sibley (1995a) refers to adolescence

as a 'liminal' phase in which the individual is 'lost in between' being a child and an adult. The adolescent dimension in British society has hence been characterised by James (1986) as 'being nothing', 'belonging nowhere' and 'having nothing to do'. Despite the actual differences between early childhood and adolescence, those in the latter stage are commonly counted as children. The modern concept of childhood in reality emerges as one that is characterised by a "multiplicity of childhoods varying according to differential social priorities" (Archard 1993: 26), social structures and the nature of adult-child relations at any one point in time.

Third, Archard talks of 'divisions' of childhood such that different periods can be identified within childhood. Whereas in premodern times infancy was followed directly by adulthood, the increasing sophistication of advanced, western post- industrial societies has given rise to a finer differentiation of life phases. In late modern capitalist societies the early phases of life are characterised by many distinct divisions - infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence and youth - all differentially signified through social institutions eg nursery, infant school, middle school, upper school, youth clubs. To conceive of all periods of childhood as historically and culturally predictable (de Winter 1997) undermines the integrity of each phase by failing to recognise the "diachronic" (developing over time) and "synchronic" (coexisting with other conceptions at specific points in time) specificity of different stages of childhood (Esman 1990: 37). Archard (1993: 27) concludes by stating that: "any conception of childhood will vary according to ways in which boundaries are set, its dimensions ordered and its divisions managed. ... To be aware of the gap between concept and conception is at the same time to realise that there can be, and are, different conceptions of childhood."

Hockey and James (1993) adopt a different approach to understand the changing categories of childhood and youth, in the form of 'personhood'. They suggest that the boundaries of growing up are marked by a transition to adulthood characterised by the achievement of independence. They state that "the form which dependency assumes in any society is expressive of the relationships of power within that society" (p.55). As the struggle for independence becomes more difficult due to macrostructural changes, the transition period between childhood and adulthood becomes longer and more crucial as a time in the structuring of the lifecourse. Keniston (1968) suggests that rather than constitute a lengthening of the period of adolescence, a new 'phase' could be identified in the form of 'post adolescence' wherein adolescent 'development tasks' have been completed but adulthood has not yet been achieved. He states that:

"... we can discern an emergent stage of life that intervenes between adolescence and adulthood, a stage of life made possible by the affluence of the post modern world, and made necessary by the ambivalence that world inspires ... (for all) those who after adolescence and before adulthood enter a further stage of development." (Keniston 1968: 263-264)

Klein (1990) in a similar vein argues for the need to differentiate an intervening period of youth, beyond adolescence but before adulthood. He bases his assertion on the need to recognise the extent to which responsibility and independence is conferred on youth as distinct from adolescence or young adulthood. According to Klein it is changing social roles which accompany the transition from school to work that provide the opportunities for increasing responsibility and independence. He suggests that the period of youth is about taking increasing control over one's life, whilst at the same time being provided with safeguards against potential error. Although he based his ideas on college youth, the underlying principles of youth as a graduated transition to adulthood involving increasing autonomy, provides a useful conceptual approach for locating boundaries between different stages of childhood. Autonomy and responsibility are important cornerstones for discussions on young people's rights, participation and citizenship which will be explored in detail in Chapter Five.

These competing perspectives present different interpretations of how the boundaries of adolescence might be conceived. The particularities of each proposition differ, yet they are united by their preoccupation with the way boundaries are produced by external socio-structural forces which impinge upon the young person. James (1986) however adopts a different starting point, focusing on the way in which boundaries are set by young people themselves. James demonstrates how young people use their bodies in symbolic expression of and about their adolescent condition in order to define the boundaries to the self, the 'other' and groups of young people as a whole. Belonging is not simply a matter of conforming, but a question of using bodily style, in ways culturally determined and tacitly agreed by the group, to negotiate the position of self in relation to society. In this way the body is used as a tool to mark boundaries of inclusion and exclusion with respect to the 'group' as well as in relation to 'outsiders' (James 1986). This latter example illustrates the ambiguity of adolescence both as an active cultural process, as well as in relation to boundaries imposed upon young people.

The whole debate around the terminology and conceptualisation of childhood is not just epistemological, but concerns power relations between adults (and therefore society) and young people. Pilcher (1995: 58) suggests, for example, that youth is best understood not in terms of chronology but as "a position between the dependent and powerless state of childhood and the independent and autonomous stage of adulthood". Henderson (1995: 10) attempts to clarify this disjuncture by stating that "at the heart of the issue is a failure by adults to engage with the issue of power as it relates to children." The 'experience' of childhood is shaped and lived out in an adult world with insufficient attention paid to the needs, interests and rights of the young person.

'Youth' similarly, can be seen as a power-laden concept related to generational conflict (Hood-Williams 1990; Pilcher 1995) for example as used in the context of youth movements or youth cultures. Youth or adolescence can be thus characterised as a liminal phase of "status ambiguity" (Coleman 1992: 21), being neither dependent child nor self-determining adult, in which the full rights of citizenship are denied. It could be suggested that it is within the context of this status ambiguity and the consequent social relations which impinge on young people that so called youth problems emerge.

In seeking to make sense of the dimensions and boundaries of childhood a number of writers have looked back to history. In so doing theorists provide a rationale for the "shift from notions of naturalistic determinism to an analysis of the conceptual relativity of childhood over time" (Goldson 1997: 4). For Hendrick (1990) the value of such retrospection lies in explaining the "tenacity and self confidence of western interpretations of childhood" (p.35). Hockey and James (1993: 55) state that: "Only by unpacking the past, then, can we discover the signifying potential for metaphoric strategies which is intrinsic to the concept of childhood in the present".

2.2.2 Childhood in history

The focus for the majority of historical perspectives of childhood has been the work of Aries (1962) who states that before the sixteenth century the idea of childhood did not exist. The early years of life up until approximately seven years of age, were considered as infancy after which children were portrayed as miniature adults, dressing in small versions of adult clothes. Children were essentially integrated into the world of adults, with little representation of children's distinctive attributes. What Aries suggests is that an awareness of the particular nature of childhood as distinct from adulthood, was lacking. Critics of Aries (for example Pollock 1983), disputes his thesis on the grounds of his own evidence, arguing that the past did not lack childhood, rather that previous societies simply had different moral views towards childhood (Archard 1993). Indeed, the child's particular nature *was* recognised in the Middle Ages, but was different to a 'modern concept' of childhood (Archard 1993).

A change in conceptions which accompanied the 'invention' of (modern) childhood is widely recognised to have occurred during the seventeenth century (Aries 1962; Pollock 1983). During this period adults started to see children as 'potential' adults in need of protection and education rather than simply as miniature adults (Aries 1962; de Mause 1976; Postman 1982). Rousseau (1762) together with Locke (1693) marked the advent of a period when parents began to see children as individuals who saw, felt and thought in qualitatively different ways to adults, therefore requiring separation from the adult world. Rousseau (1762), who is often credited with being the pioneer of the modern view of childhood with his text *Emile*, depicted childhood as conceptually different from adulthood, drawing attention to what he understood as the qualities of childhood - morally innocent, as 'seeds in need of nurturing', close to nature and free,

but being corrupted by social conventions. Locke (1693), on the other hand, adopted the puritanical ethics of protestant evangelists and talked of the 'child as original sin', as 'souls in need of salvation' which parents were dutifully bound to nourish. Locke (1693) hence identified the evolving moral consciousness and spirit of benevolence amongst parents towards children as explanations for the emergence of modern conceptions of childhood.

Some argue, however, that the emergence of the modern concept of childhood did not occur solely as a result of an increasing benevolent sentiment towards children, but as an outcome of broader social changes (Anderson 1980), for example, the increasing awareness of the importance of education (Aries 1962; Hendrick 1990; Cunningham 1995), changes in the family structure (Aries 1962; Shorter 1976; Stone 1977) or the rise of capitalism (Shorter 1976; Stone 1977; Kett 1977; Hoyles 1989). Hendrick (1990) provides a useful chronology of changing historical social constructions of childhood with respect to social change. He talks, in terms of the 'romantic child', the 'evangelical child', the 'factory child', the 'delinquent child', the 'school child', the 'psychological child', the 'welfare child', the 'family child' and the 'public child', emphasising in particular the increasing demarcation of social roles and institutions accompanying industrialisation. The impact of social changes on changing conceptions of childhood is also argued by Cunningham (1995: 3) when he states:

“ Childhood cannot be studied in isolation from society as a whole. It is arguable that the factors which have had most impact on it, both as a set of ideas and as a phase in life, have been primarily economic and demographic, and, in second place, political. It has been the economic development of the western world which has allowed for both the shift in the experience of childhood from work to school, and for the emergence of the idea that childhood should be a time of dependency.”

Historical changes in social constructions of childhood have hence given rise to an increasing separation of childhood and adult worlds. This separation gained momentum in the late 19th century as a result of child labour legislation, compulsory schooling, juvenile justice and the emergence of periods of apprenticeship (Kett 1977; Suransky 1982; Hawes and Hiner 1985). Society's need to delay entry into adulthood through prolonged education generated the concept of 'adolescence', as a distinct phase of childhood.

2.2.3 Conclusion

These historical studies of childhood, despite their ambivalence and over-generalisations, have shown that childhood and adolescence are social inventions which vary over time. According to historical studies of childhood, societies have always had an awareness of children, but the way these conceptions of childhood have been socially constructed have changed. Anthropological studies have in a similar fashion

emphasised the variable nature of childhood between different cultures (Benedict 1935; Mead 1943; Schildkrout 1978). Despite being challenged on methodological grounds Mead's (1943) work, for example, suggests that adolescence is absent in many pre-industrial cultures. These historical and anthropological studies have initiated new sociological discourses of childhood which recognise childhood as an historically and culturally variable social construction and challenge dominant discourses of childhood which have prevailed throughout much of the twentieth century (James and Prout 1990; Jenks 1996). These will be considered in the following section.

2.3 Childhood in modern Britain

2.3.1 Introduction

Social constructions of childhood in the twentieth century have been dominated by two models referred to by Jenks (1996) as the Piagetian paradigm (rooted in developmental psychology) and the Parsonian paradigm (based on socialisation theory). The former talks of childhood as a universal naturalness, the latter of the social child in need of socialisation into an adult world. The binarism between children as 'angels' (innocent) and as 'devils' (bearers of original sin) (Valentine 1996b), which characterised 18th century conceptions of childhood have prevailed, dominating social constructions of childhood for much of the twentieth century. They have also underpinned the paradoxical and ambiguous nature of childhood in the context of modern Britain. The contributions of both models to popular conceptions of childhood will be reviewed in the ensuing sections.

2.3.2 The Natural Child: The legacy of developmentalism

Until recently childhood has largely been understood in developmental terms according to conceptions such as 'maturation' and 'learning' based, in particular, on the work of Freud (1943) and Piaget (1954). The preoccupation of the expanding psycho-analytic movement of the 30s and 40s with scientific rationalism, informed thinking about childhood as a developmental naturalness (Jenks 1996). Jenks notes the tendency of these theories to 'routinize' and 'naturalize' childhood on the basis of developmental conceptions of normality, conceived as having universal relevance.

Piaget suggested that all children acquire cognitive competencies according to a universal set of sequential stages, from initial development of sensory-motor skills, through pre-conceptual and intuitive thought to concrete and formal operations in adolescence. Adolescence was hence seen as a time when the skills and competence learned in early childhood could be consolidated in readiness for life as a fully developed adult. The growth process of the child's cognition is treated as if it were impelled towards a pre-stated structure of adult rationality (Jenks 1996). Jenks (1996) conceptualises Piaget's hierarchy of intelligence in terms of status dichotomies,

contrasting the low status figurative thought of children with the high status operative intelligence of adults, from which notions of 'childishness' emerge. In this way the status of childhood has been "crystallised into lasting institutional forms such as the family, nursery, school and clinic" (Jenks 1996: 5) according to age related developmental stages.

In the same way as Piagetian concepts of the cognitive development of the child monopolised theories of early childhood, developmental perspectives, for example early psycho analytic theories of Erikson (1963) and Havighurst (1972), have similarly framed conceptions of the later period of childhood known as adolescence. Invented by Hall (1904), the term 'adolescence' is used to refer to the phase in a young person's life associated with the period of sexual maturation beginning with the onset of puberty and ending when full height is attained - age 10-16 in girls and 12-18 in boys (Schonfeld 1973). Directed by developmental drives, adolescence was perceived as an inevitably troublesome time in which the young person, is likely to experience 'storm and stress' (Hall 1904), be unpredictable, ambivalent and confrontational (Havighurst 1972; Bradshaw 1990a; Coleman and Hendry 1990). Stereotypes of adolescence such as these, initiate responses which control and contain adolescents as 'mythical other'; primitive or presocial beings in need of civilising (Hall 1904). In this way, adolescence was constructed in developmental terms, prefiguring the social contexts within which it occurs.

Developmental models of childhood and adolescence were viewed from an idealised adult centric standpoint, emphasising what children lack in relation to adulthood rather than what is present from the perspective of the child. 'Growth metaphors' (Jenks 1996) such as 'adolescent transitions' and 'growing up' predominate the rhetoric of such theories and provide inertia for developmentalist approaches. The term 'transition' is however a contentious issue in that adolescence is not only the period of life that connects childhood with adulthood but is also a meaningful time in its own right (Prout and James 1990). Indeed it can be argued that adolescence is no more transitional than any other life phase (Schneider-Fuhrmann 1986).

As a result of these developmental perspectives, until recently, the sociology of adolescence has been constructed from a psychological standpoint, rather than with respect to prevailing social contexts and relations. As Jenks (1996: 25) states, according to the piagetian paradigm "(t)he 'fact' of natural process overcomes the 'value' of real social worlds." The way in which the Piagetian paradigm has informed social practices, policy and prevailing social attitudes towards children is most clearly demonstrated in its influence on functionalist thinking in sociology which has given rise to theories of socialisation. In this way dominant discourses of childhood and adolescence, rooted in developmentalism, have informed a particular social construction of childhood, which has prevailed for much of the twentieth century.

2.3.3 The Moral Child: socialising the human becoming

Adult ambivalence about children as either innocents or possessing original sin, has provided both the means and the ends for justifying the importation of developmentalist assumptions into a social model of childhood, conceptualised by Jenks (1996) as the 'moral child'. On the one hand, childhood is idealised as a secure and safe 'sentimentalized', world of innocence, fantasy and play (Holt 1975; Zelizer 1985; Prout and James 1990) cocooned from potential hostilities, hazards and abuses of society, which parents assume the natural right to protect (James and Prout 1990; Jenks 1996). On the other, children and adolescents are perceived as possessing an inevitable demonic quality connoted as naughty, troublesome or deviant (Valentine 1996b) and therefore a potential threat to the stability of the social system. Views of childhood and youth have therefore given rise to social practices which protect and control young people according to social norms. This has occurred in the form of socialisation theory.

Socialisation, according to Prout and James (1990), is the process by which 'immature, irrational, incompetent, asocial and acultural children are magically transformed into mature, rational, competent, social and autonomous adults' (See also Mackay 1973). According to this formulation being a child is about being 'not yet complete' as a person, but in a process of becoming a 'fully human' adult and therefore becoming 'social' (Parsons 1951). The transition from childhood to adulthood is seen, from the primacy of the rational, socialised world of adult norms and values, as a social function concerned with reproducing the social order through successfully (or not) becoming adult.

Drawing on the work of Talcott Parsons (1951), Jenks (1996: 15) talks of socialisation as "a learning process involving the acquisition of the requisite orientations for satisfactory functioning in (social) roles". At the heart of this process of *institutionalisation* is a "persistent translation of universal cultural values into particular social norms and orientations..." (Jenks 1996: 15). Parson's (1951) theory is based on the presumption of consensus values, social norms and individual conformity to the preservation of the status quo. The maintenance of the status quo is achieved through social structures and processes constructed on the basis of dominant conceptions of the way childhood and youth are located in society giving rise to an idealised vision of childhood.

The idealisation of childhood is intertwined with images of the 'domestic ideal' of the family, in which the identity of childhood becomes intertwined and lost within family structures. Saporiti (1994) refers to this process as the 'familialization' of childhood. For Makrinioti (1994) this involves the fusion of childhood into the family institution to such an extent that it defines an inseparable unit. Others see it as a process of control and containment for the benefits of social reproduction and capital accumulation (Oldman 1994a). On this basis adult conceptions of childhood create the social context,

including social norms and expectations, in which young people live.

Socialisation theory has, however, been criticised on four counts (Tonkin 1982; Prout and James 1990; Jenks 1996). First it emphasises what children lack from an adult-centric position rather than recognising the innate individuality and agency of childhood and youth (Prout and James 1990). Indeed it may well be the result of the discontinuity and tension between the undervalued 'possibilities' of youth and the rigid certainties and expectations of the social system that socialisation theory is weakened and paradoxes of childhood and youth come to light.

Second, socialisation theory assumes that a common normative value system is acquired on completion of a satisfactory transition to adulthood. Rather than conceptualising childhood and youth with respect to the social worlds of difference within which young people, developmental philosophies have retained a tenacious grip on idealised, though conceptually flawed, social constructions of childhood and youth. What emerges in reality is a multiplicity of life projections and a plurality of social cultures, which are a consequence of divergent childhoods dependent upon a range of social and environmental factors such as class, ethnicity, gender and place (Wilson and Wilson 1992; Archard 1993). For many young people, achieving adult citizenship involves more than a linear functional transition. Instead it is experienced as an holistic, multidimensional process (Roche and Tucker 1997) mediated by place, subjectivity and identity (Pile 1996).

Third, binary conceptions of childhood and youth as innocent and troublesome give rise to inconsistency and ambivalence in social relations with young people which hinder their ability for self determination and fail to adequately recognise their experiences, abilities or cultural differences. Prevailing negative stereotypes of young people as troublesome individuals likely to engage in anti-social activities appear as threats to the family ideal and therefore justify discipline, guidance and control (Hawdon 1996), to prevent them growing into untamed savages (Jenks 1996). For example, thugs, gangs, hooligans, vandals or louts, seemingly engaged in anti social activities such as 'hanging about', 'doing nothing' or just 'messaging about' are frequently devalued by adults as 'idle' (Ennew 1994) and therefore anti social. However as Pence (1988) notes, the same groups doing the same things within the structured setting of a supervised youth centre are perceived more positively.

Fourth, children do not live in a nostalgic world of fantasy rather, within changing social contexts in which the child is constantly confronted with the need to make real choices and decisions (Boyden 1990; Mayall 1994). Boyden (1990) notes how childhood is for many, an unhappy time in which harsh realities of life are confronted. Like any other stage in the lifecourse, childhood necessitates the individual negotiating his/her way through changing social circumstances (Coleman and Hendry 1990;

Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Frydenberg 1996). However, paternalistic practices which socialise young people into defined sets of activities and behaviours may divest the power of children as social actors in their own right and alienate young people from the wider community.

What emerges is a “status ambiguity” (Coleman 1992: 21) wherein childhood is variably specified according to adult whim. Despite the contradictions and inconsistencies which emanate from socialisation perspectives, the relationships between adults and young people in public policy and everyday social transactions continue to be constructed to a great extent in this way.

2.3.4 Folk Devils ... : constructing young people as ‘other’

Until recently, the sociological model of childhood and adolescence based on developmentalist views of ‘growing up’, which view young people as troublesome and subject to the inevitable experience of storm and stress (Coleman and Hendry 1990), have created a ‘myth of adolescence’ (Schneider- Fuhrmann 1986) as ‘folk devils’ (Cohen 1972), which has dominated social constructions of childhood and adolescence. Offer (1981) notes that the myth has been based on partial and incomplete developmental perspectives and a bias in empirical evidence based on *abnormal* rather than ‘normal’ adolescents. Jackson (1989) in a similar way notes the tendency of researchers to emphasise the ‘exotic’ rather than the ‘mundane’ in youth cultural studies. Stanley Cohen (1972), for example, illustrates how the mods and rockers of the 1960s were seen as ‘folk devils’ who, through flamboyant expressions of their cultural ‘difference’, initiated moral panic about youth in society.

Recognition of youth as groups apart from mainstream society came about as a result of the creation of the popular image of the ‘teenager’ by the free market in the 1950s which gave rise to the growing manifestations of ‘youth cultures’ as popular social groupings differentiated iconically through music, dance, dress and lifestyles. The ‘multiple constructions’ (Valentine 1996b) of teenagers have been further exacerbated by liberal youth movements and social protests of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly by middle class kids (see Aggleton 1987; Meeus 1988); the increasing evidence of the marginality of girls (McRobbie and Garber 1976) and working class lads (Hall and Jefferson 1975; Willis 1977), and media representation of inner city riots (Scarman 1981; Keith 1987; 1989); which have consolidated adult images of youth as a group apart from the civilised and socialised world of adults.

Youth research has been preoccupied with adult agendas concerned with aspects of (particularly failed) youth socialisation and transitions into adulthood. For example, Chisholm (1990) focuses on youth as lost social capital. More recently emphasis in youth research has switched to the growing problem of social exclusion for an increasing number of young people for whom disenchantment, disaffection and apathy

characterise their lives (Wyn and White 1997). In particular there has been mounting concern about the expanding 'underclass' of marginalised and disaffiliated young people (Hockey and James 1993; Qvortrup 1994; MacDonald 1997) who are excluded from traditional rights of citizenship.

Concern about the increasing numbers of youth who have been identified as slipping through the net of successful social integration has given rise to an emphasis on problem youth (Hawdon 1996) whose behaviour is disturbed or disturbing (Coppock 1996) or as Dohrn (1997) suggests: "mad, bad, sad and can't add". These categories not only reflect a growing social crisis for many young people (Scraton 1997) but also the shortcomings of prevailing conceptions of childhood and youth which fail to acknowledge young people's diverse social realities and the complicity of prevailing social constructions of childhood and youth in the alienation of young people in society (Leach 1994).

2.3.5 ... and Moral Panics: the role of the media in constructing popular myths of childhood and youth

The media has a fundamental influence on how childhood is socially constructed. Scraton (1997; vii) in the preface to his book "*Childhood in 'Crisis'?*" states that "the widely-proclaimed assumptions about the demise of childhood in the 1990s, the ill-discipline of children and the lawlessness of youth, have dominated popular discourses and political reaction". The catalyst for such moral panic, he suggests, has come from the killing of James Bulger in 1993 and the ensuing flood of media attention directed towards the representation of childhood in crisis.

Davis and Bourhill (1997), write about demonization of children and young people and comprehensively illustrate the power of the media in shaping popular knowledge of childhood and its supposed demise (Cox 1996). Davis and Bourhill (1997) suggest simplistic generalisations such as 'innocence and evil', 'nature and nurture' and 'protection and freedom' construct children either as objects of concern or threats to the adult order. They state: "(t)he media portrayal of children's involvement in crime, either as perpetrators or victims, is central in creating and reinforcing public perceptions of childhood" (p. 29). Far from adopting a moral stance they note that the media is motivated by the imperatives of its own agenda; of 'dramatisation, sensationalism, titillation and simplification' (Chibnall 1977, quoted in Davis and Bourhill 1997), such that representation of young people in the media becomes a popular fiction, frequently characterised by distortion and bias (Davis and Bourhill 1997). Despite the fictitious nature of media myths of childhood, moral panic has had substantive effects on social constructions of childhood.

Stainton-Rogers (1992) states that the ways children are construed not only determine how we make sense of them as children, but also inform and reflect social and economic policies towards children, political ideology and the values of institutions that manage childhood. In particular the role of the family and numerous media headlines calling for 'the return to traditional family values', discipline and control. Parton (1991: 202) explains the situation in terms of "an individualised conception of social relations whereby the market is the key institution for the economic sphere, while the family is the key institution for the social sphere."

Rather than focusing attention on the structural conditions of childhood and youth, successive governments have perpetuated the trend of individualisation (Beck 1992) in which the state intervenes not to restructure the crumbling moral fabric of society, or to recognise the plight of young people, but to impose structures which oblige parents, to take greater responsibility for their offspring, for example through the imposition of curfews (Jeffs and Smith 1996). In this way, popular representations of childhood have been influenced by prevailing political ideologies. For example, in 1993 John Major was reported in the popular press as saying: "society needs to condemn a little more and understand a little less" (Mail on Sunday 21/2/93). The policies of his and subsequent governments appear to have followed along the lines of this praxis.

The irony of media influence on social constructions of childhood is that attention is disproportionately concentrated on the misdoings of young people, to the extent that systematic abuse and violence against children by adults is sidelined. Children's concerns and values are frequently ignored whilst perceived transgressions of childhood receive condemnation. The Independent on Sunday, for example, draws attention to the fact that 'of the 70 plus children murdered each year, most were killed by parents or adults known to them' (21 February 1993). In spite of such examples of adults abusing their responsibility and position of power over children, the scapegoating of young people for society's moral decay continues, levels of provision and protection remain inadequate (CRDU 1994) and prevailing adultist constructions of childhood persist. Indeed a number of observers have noted that 'children have only to look around them to see that ours is a culture that does not actually like children very much' (S. Moore in the Guardian 26/3/93; Comedia 1991). Underlying media catalysts to popular representations of childhood is an explicit hegemony of adult power and interests over the paradoxical way in which childhood and youth are socially constructed. The significance of childhood paradoxes will be explored in more detail in the subsequent chapter in relation to social change and in Chapter Five with regard to children's rights and participation. Before the dimensions of a new paradigm for childhood are explored, one further key debate which has pervaded much of the literature is whether childhood may be in various ways disappearing.

2.3.6 Disappearing childhood?

Postman's (1982) essay on the disappearance of childhood has given rise to ongoing debate about the changing nature of childhood. What is inferred is that childhood is "disappearing as an embodiment of a particular meaning" (Qvortrup 1997: 3). Others in a similar vein have talked of crises in childhood and youth (Griffin 1993; Scraton 1997), of lost or stolen childhoods (Vittachi 1989), of childhood being eroded (Suransky 1982) or as Jenks (1996) put it 'the strange death of childhood'. All these expressions are united in their recognition that the western childhood idyll as a 'walled garden of innocence, fantasy and adventure' (Holt 1975) is seen to be under threat. Russell (1995) suggests that the crisis had reached such an extent that parents were now 'in fear of their own children.' A distinction needs to be made between changes to childhood as an idea and changes in the conditions of childhood, which have given rise to a critical reassessment of dominant conceptions of childhood in particular with respect to their universal relevance (Boyden 1990).

It could be argued that childhood is disappearing in three ways. First are those studies which focus on children in crisis situations, for example those in war zones (Garbarino 1995; Coomaraswamy 1998; Dejanovic 1998), or exposed to environmental hazards (Satterthwaite *et al.* 1996), or children as victims of abuse (Kitzinger 1990; Jenks 1996). Secondly are those which concern children who, whilst not in crisis, live in situations which for social, cultural or economic reasons, do not permit the child to benefit from a nourishing childhood. These children can be referred to as 'children without childhoods' (Winn 1984) and include street children (Swart 1989; Glauser 1990),¹ those engaged in child labour (Bequelle and Boyden 1988; Fyfe 1989), children who have domestic responsibilities for example as carers of a long term sick or disabled relation (Aldridge and Becker 1993), children whose culture impairs their freedom (Ghuman 1980; Verma and Mallick 1988), or socially disadvantaged children (Bradshaw 1990b; Kumar 1993) who experience deprivation and exclusion.

The third category, arguably of greater relevance to this study, concerns what Stephens (1995: 180) calls "deviations from modern childhood". According to Stephens, idealised western concepts of childhood are being challenged as a result of changing macro structural, social and cultural influences on young people which are modifying the particular qualities and attributes of childhood in late twentieth century post industrial countries such as Britain. The impact of social change on contemporary childhood has attracted a great deal of attention in the literature (see for example Chisholm *et al.* 1990; Davis 1990; Jones and Wallace 1992; Fornas and Bolin 1995; Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Bynner *et al.* 1997) and will be returned to in the following chapter. At this stage it is important to simply draw out those dimensions which

¹ These categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, since street children could also be classed as at risk.

constitute the changing contours of childhood in late modernity² (Giddens 1991). These can be couched largely in terms of the paradoxical situation whereby childhood and adulthood experiences are conflating - referred to by Land (1994) as the crumbling bridges between childhood and adulthood - whilst at the same time becoming more separated.

At a societal level young people are being increasingly drawn in to the adult world of economic activity as consumers (Buchner 1990; Stewart 1992; Jones and Wallace 1992). In contrast to practices which sought to cordon off childhood from the demands of the economic world, in order to become educated, contemporary childhood is characterised by children playing an increasingly important role in the post industrial economy (Jones and Wallace 1992). The growth in global communication systems - information technology, advertising media, satellite TV and the growth in home videos (Furlong and Cartmel 1997) - create a situation in which young people are now receiving a similar flow of information and stimuli to adults (Buchner 1990). Young people are gaining adult levels of knowledge about their world earlier than previously has been the case, but without full 'adult' credentials, autonomy or legitimacy of consuming adults to act on that information. The importance of identity and style for young people has become more crucially defined in terms of cultures of consumption (Nava 1992; Stewart 1992; Miles 1996) as traditional sources of identity and belonging become opaque (Furlong and Cartmel 1997). Whereas Stephens (1995) sees this as central to the crisis in the reconceptualisation of childhood in modernity, Harvey (1989) talks of the 'structured coherence' of capitalism and Jameson (1984) the 'cultural logic of late capitalism.'

At the same time, McKendrick *et al.* (1998) note how, in line with the growing consumerisation and commercialisation of leisure time, young people's out of school world is increasingly being packaged as a commodity to be bought and sold in the market place. Specialised play ghettos, childwork institutions and attractive leisure experiences reflect an increasing preoccupation with socialising young people into economic roles at an increasingly younger age, but in the process exacerbate the separation of young people from the everyday activities of their communities. The 'organic' experiences which characterised childhood a generation before, in which young people's experiences and identities were realised within the neighbourhood and the community, have been replaced by 'virtual' and 'detached' childhood experiences (Liden 1997) characterised by a process of social dis-integration rather than integration into community life.

The impact of social change on the lives of young people has implications for the structural location of childhood (Goldson 1997), as well as for the roles and relationships of the state, families and young people themselves. In particular it

² See Chapter Three for definitions and debates about late modernity.

precipitates critical reflection on the status of young people as citizens in their own right and the premise upon which adult's assumed hegemony over childhood rests. As Qvortrup (1994) contends, it challenges the principle of ontology and age, shaking the ideological foundation which legitimises adults' natural right to exert power over children. The conventional conception of the child-adult relationship as one of dependency is open to question as young people exercise a greater degree of self determination in constructing their own biographies beyond the 'walls' of the family. Recent attempts to reconceptualise childhood (notably by James and Prout 1990; Jenks 1996; Qvortrup 1997) have hence been characterised by attempts to recognise childhood as an active social process. The idea of childhood as a process of active cultural production is however mediated by the differential intra-structural positions and conditions within which different childhoods are determined (Goldson 1997).

The following section will uncover the key dimensions of attempts to reconstruct childhood as an active social process, in so doing redressing the power imbalance between adults and children in constructions of childhood. In the following chapter greater account will be taken of the effect of macrostructural changes on contemporary childhood drawing attention in particular to the contingency factors which mediate young people's ability to negotiate their changing social contexts.

2.4 Reconstructing childhood

2.4.1 Dimensions of an emergent paradigm

Theoretical developments in the way childhood is conceptualised have occurred hand-in-hand with changing directions in the social sciences generally. A change that Prout and James (1990: 8) quote Crick (1976: 2) as describing as “a shift from function to meaning”. This shift mirrors developments in geography which have taken place under the umbrella of the ‘cultural turn’ (as discussed in Chapter One). Prout and James (1990: 9) suggest that “childhood is a phenomenon in relation to which the double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present”. In so doing they locate a new paradigm of childhood sociology in relation to changing societal contexts within which the interplay between self and society gives rise to childhood as an active social process.

Whereas developmental and socialisation paradigms focus on the age-related normative growth processes of the young person as “human becoming” (Jenks 1996: 9), contemporary sociological perspectives recognise instead the importance of acknowledging childhood as a period of life within which young people, as active cultural producers, construct and reconstruct their worlds within existent structures. Childhood is therefore seen not as an inevitable and predetermined experience, rather as being variable across time and space.

Emerging views of childhood therefore acknowledge the immaturity of childhood as a biological fact, but propose that the way in which immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture which varies over time and space (Prout and James 1990). Childhood is thus characterised by difference and diversity and the lived experiences of children are thus framed within, though not wholly determined by, structural conditions and prevailing social constructions of childhood at any one time. According to this emerging view of childhood, children are seen as active social agents who negotiate and carve out their own childhoods from the complex interplay between structural conditions and personal circumstances.

Despite the incipient nature of a new paradigm for childhood, there appears to be a consensus around a number of fundamental dimensions which have characterised recent attempts to reconceptualise childhood (See in particular Qvortrup *et al.* 1994; Jenks 1996; James and Prout 1990). First, childhood is understood as a social construction with specific structural and cultural components which vary across time and space. Second, childhood is a sociological variable associated with age, and therefore can be defined in terms of power relations with respect to adults. As such, childhood is embedded in the production of social relations and cannot be separated from other sociological variables. Third, there is an essential temporality of childhood such that childhood is experienced in the ‘here and now’, giving rise to childhoods

which are in effect 'worlds apart' (Matthews *et al.* 1998a) from adulthood. Childhood can therefore only be meaningfully studied from the child's perspective. Fourth, children are viewed not as passive objects of adult concern, rather as active social agents capable of determining their own lives, of those around them and of the societies in which they live. These four key components of a new paradigm for childhood will be used as a basis for this study.

2.4.2 Childhood as a social construction

Childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity, is neither a natural nor universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies (Prout and James 1990; Jenks 1996). The child as a universal phenomenon is based on the premise that the experience of childhood rests on a pre-social 'naturalness' (Jenks 1996) which predetermines the nature of children's development. However as an increasing number of retrospective studies of childhood in history (Hendrick 1990; Cunningham 1995; Cox 1996; Goldson 1997) and cross cultural research (Offer *et al.* 1988; Hoyles 1989; Amit Talai and Wulff 1995) have shown, differences in the way childhood is lived out in different social, cultural and historical contexts reflect the variability of childhood as a social construction.

Whilst there is little doubt that young people go through similar developmental processes as they evolve, the "way in which immaturity is understood and made meaningful varies over time and place is a fact of culture" (Prout and James 1990: 7). Prout and James's (1990: 1) concern is with "the ways in which the physiological processes of aging are conceived and articulated in particular societies into culturally specific sets of ideas and philosophies, attitudes and practices". Young people's lives are therefore shaped by the social structures and values in any given society according to prevailing philosophies of childhood (Hendrick 1990; Pilcher 1995; Jenks 1996).

Others (Hoyles 1989; Amit Talai and Wulff 1995) have adopted a cultural or anthropological perspective to explode universal 'myths of childhood' and demonstrate its variability over time and space. It has been suggested for example that, in contrast to pre-industrial agrarian societies, adolescence develops as an extension to childhood dependency in industrial cultures (Furnham and Gunter 1989). Cultural traditions involving recognised rites of passage and social norms in non industrial (traditional) societies facilitate the smooth transition of young individuals to adulthood (Mead 1943) as a continuous process, thus circumventing the transition from childhood to adulthood as being constructed as a troublesome time. Rather than Mead's assertion that adolescence does not exist, it is perhaps more apt to suggest that it takes a form devoid of western social connotations. Boyden (1990) for example contrasts childhood in Britain with that of Peru by referring to the significant number of 6 to 14 year olds in Peru who are heads of households, principal breadwinners and primary carers of younger siblings (Boyden 1985). For these individuals the transition from childhood to

adulthood is hastened by economic necessity, cultural norms and social realities and occurs earlier in life than their developed world counterparts. As a result of cases such as these, it has been argued that conventional notions of childhood and adolescence which have dominated theories of childhood have been based on western constructions of childhood (Boyden 1990; Hockey and James 1993; Stephens 1995). Adolescence therefore, like childhood, is not a fixed concept, but is problematic varying according to criteria used for definition, academic disciplines and social and cultural (and therefore philosophical) contexts.

Others, along a similar line, have noted how childhood is eroded or betrayed (Allesbrook and Swift 1989; Vittachi 1989; Boyden 1991) as a result of the immediacy of social rather than cultural circumstances (see section 2.3.6). What is at issue here is not that children are deprived of life as a child (although in places such as Kurdistan, Argentina, Brazil and Iraq where the wholesale disappearance and genocide of children by the state has occurred, this is literally the case), rather that childhood as a largely western notion of a 'carefree, safe, secure and happy phase of human existence' (Sommerville 1982) is undermined and therefore replaced with an alternative, though none the less real, social construction of childhood. Boyden (1990) remarks that idealised and sentimentalised western visions of childhood are not only at odds with the real life experiences of many children in the 'South' but also the 'North'.

The fact that childhood, youth and adolescence are variable as cultural constructions does not necessarily mean that childhood is not present in some cultures or at different times in history, rather that it may simply take a different form. Indeed an irony appears to exist in the theorisation of childhood in that on the one hand childhood is acknowledged as a socially and historically variable cultural construction; on the other the UNCRC talks in terms of the universal rights of all children under 18 years of age. It seems more feasible to retain a binary perspective in discourses of childhood and make a distinction between the lived worlds of children and childhood as constructed through social discourse (Prout and James 1990; Cunningham 1995; Qvortrup 1997). Whilst the 'form' that childhood takes is likely to vary across cultures, the essential, innate or presocial human predisposition (the 'essence') of children and adolescents as growing and developing beings could be argued as being perennial across time and space. In this way childhood is seen as a multi-faceted phenomenon, split between self and society, but grounded within social and cultural contexts. How childhood is conceptualised is pivotal in accounting for how childhood is, as well as how it might be. Childhood is therefore a fluid and dynamic historical social process.

2.4.3 Childhood as a social variable

Childhood is a variable of social analysis and is therefore embedded in prevailing social relations with respect to adults. It can never be entirely divorced from other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity (Prout and James 1990). Despite this, the sociology of childhood has, until recently, been a neglected area of research. The 'child' has tended to be subsumed within discourses of the family (Alanen and Bardy 1990; Brannen and O'Brien 1994; Makrinioti 1994; Saporiti 1994). According to Prout and James (1990) sociological discourses of childhood rest partly on "the way in which notions of childhood are embedded within a tightly structured matrix of significations which binds childhood and positions it in relation to the family" (p.24).

A number of recent writers have identified children and adolescents as minority social groups who share much in common with the subjugation of women in society (Ambert 1986; Alanen 1994; Oakley 1994). Ambert for example suggested that children's relative absence from the literature is rooted in a male-dominated sociology which fails to give worth to child care; adding credence to suggestions that adult-child relations are embedded within prevailing structures of class relations associated with the economic mode of production (Qvortrup 1985; Oldman 1994a, 1994b). However unlike women, children are doubly disenfranchised, first as being economically unproductive and second as a result of their age and subsumation within the family.

The position of childhood relative to adults is therefore one of power relations (Hockey and James 1993). Implicit in this generational relationship is an assumption that adults know best. Hockey and James argue that children are subject to regimes of control which effectively deny them much active choice in the direction of their own lives. They note that if personhood in Western society is symbolised through ideas of autonomy, self determination and choice, then these are denied in the very act of parents role as carers and their control of children's behaviour and actions. Hood-Williams (1990) has argued that examining adult-child relations in terms of 'age patriarchy' characterised by an imbalance of power, presents issues of power, control and dependency which problematize the concept of childhood. The implication of recognising childhood as a social variable subordinated within age-patriarchal social relations is to state that children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspective and concerns of adults (Prout and James 1990). As a result there have been calls for statistical accounting which counteracts the 'invisibility of children' (Leonard 1990; Save the Children 1995; Hodgkin and Newell 1996) and recognise childhood as a time in its own right.

2.4.4 Childhood as a time in its own right

James and Prout (1990) draw attention to how the “reawakening of interest in temporal dimensions of social relationships” (p.216) is crucial to the study of childhood. They highlight two temporal themes associated with childhood. The first, concerning the ‘time of childhood’, in which childhood is located within historical social constructions of the aging process. The second, focuses on the ‘time in childhood’, concerned with how time is used to produce, control and order the everyday lives of childhood. Within these themes exploration of the different dimensions of the temporality of childhood reveals the way in which the ‘time of childhood defines, and is defined by, time in childhood (James and Prout 1990).

When talking of the ‘time of childhood’ two dimensions are particularly pertinent. As an ‘ongoing historical process’ (James and Prout 1990) the social construction of childhood over space and time exhibits a ‘cultural relativity’ in the standardisation of social time within different epochs. The “timeless culture of childhood as innocence and purity” (James and Prout 1990: 228) gives rise to a “timeless cultural space” (James and Prout 1990; 229), separated from the adult world and perpetuated by ‘nostalgic’ myths of childhoods past (Jenks 1994; 1996) which shape childhoods present. The second dimension which characterises the time of childhood concerns the way in which the social construction of the aging process in terms of the sequencing of time (for example which sees childhood as a state of becoming), exerts sets of constraints on the biological self. Childhood, as a state of becoming, becomes timetabled into separate worlds demarcated by temporal institutions such as nursery and school. Within such institutional frameworks, childhood is presented as a temporal event (Ennew 1994) and just as any other period in life, is a component of the “ ‘multicultural’ characteristics of society” (Matthews *et al.* 1998b: 14). James and Prout (1990: 217) note that “each ‘time of life’ is understood to confer particular qualities and attributes upon its incumbents so that cultures can have their own periodizations and draw such boundaries differently.” The pertinent issue here is the differential power relations between different ‘times of life’ which shape time in childhood.

James and Prout’s second theme of temporality in childhood concerns the relationship between childhood time and adulthood time. A number of writers (Ennew 1994; Phadraig 1994) have highlighted the conflict between time for children and time for adults. Ennew (1994) identifies how the non school activity of children is increasingly ‘curricularised’ according to adult conceptions of the nature of childhood and relation to the everyday worlds of adults. Matthews (1992) amongst others (see also Michelson and Roberts 1979; Spencer *et al.* 1989) notes that young people experience the world in different ways to adults and therefore “inhabit (and negotiate) spaces within an adult constructed world” (Ennew 1994: 125) often at odds with their own outlooks. Adults conceptions of young people ‘wasting time’ or ‘doing nothing’ underline the way in which childhood time is linked to the standardisation of social time according to adult

preoccupations (James and Prout 1990).

By developing the notion of childhood as a sociological variable, it can be argued that childhood is phenomenologically, a meaningful time in its own right. Matthews *et al.* (1998b) state that children are not just citizens of tomorrow, they are citizens of today. They advocate the need to study the 'here and now' (Riger 1993; Caputo 1995) of childhood, and acknowledge the immediacy of young people's lives. Matthews *et al.* (1998a) draw attention to children's diverse and multi-faceted everyday life with its own richness and intrinsic value, often not obvious to adults. Ennew (1994) however notes that there is little or no data about what children do when they are in control of their own time.

Rather than being seen as "a group apart from the rest of society, practising an imperfect version of adult culture" (Amit-Talai 1995: 231), a number of writers have suggested that instead of knowing something less than adults they may know something different (Matthews *et al.* 1998b). However rather than acknowledging differences between childhood and adulthood on an equal basis, childhood cultures have been subordinated to that of adults such that the needs and interests and therefore time for childhood have been marginalised in society (Hockey and James 1993; Ennew 1994; Matthews 1995). In an attempt to counteract this, recent research on childhood and youth has concerned itself with the social and phenomenological worlds of difference of children and youth as citizens in their own right within their historical and generational contexts (James and Prout 1990; Qvortrup *et al.* 1994; Mayall 1994; Moore 1994; James 1995; Jenks 1996). Prout and James (1990) go on to purport that ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood, in that it allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research. Increasing emphasis is therefore being placed on research which acknowledges children and youth as active cultural producers (Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995).

2.4.5 Children as active social agents

Sociological reconstructions of childhood see children as competent social agents in their own right (James and Prout 1990).

"Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes" (Prout and James 1990: 8).

However, despite ample evidence about young people's abilities to participate in the construction of their lives and of those around them, they rarely get a chance to exercise full rights of citizenship. Prevailing social mores and traditions dictate that adults act on

behalf of young people and that young people do not have a productive contribution to make (Save the Children 1995). Expectations that young people should act in a 'responsible' and 'acceptable' way are not matched by the provision of opportunities to acquire the skills, competence or consciousness of participation. Nonetheless increasing awareness of the vulnerability of children to social and environmental hazards, for example from abuse and exploitation have initiated an awakening of society's moral conscience, and in turn, debates about children's citizenship status.

The agency of childhood has been given further momentum as a result of the images and initiatives of the Children's Rights movement: the United Nations Convention on The Rights of the Child, UNICEF's Child Friendly City Initiative, Save the Children's 'New agenda for children'; and in Britain as a consequence of judicial and legislative rulings such as the Gillick judgment and the Children Act 1989. The central thrust of these initiatives is the importance of recognising young people as individuals and their right to participate as democratic equals in the determination of matters that affect their lives. For example the Gillick judgment and Article 12 state that the child has a right to participate in decisions about matters that affect their lives. The problems lie in acting on these recommendations to challenge existing constructions of childhood in a realistic way; a prospect that many adults find alarming since it involves the relinquishing of power (Save the Children 1995). Whilst adults readily scorn 'irresponsible' behaviour by young people, and at the same time abhor the abuse and vulnerability of children, they remain largely uncommitted to developing alternative discourses of childhood which reflect the reality of young people's lived worlds and the capacity of young people as active social agents.

Childhood and youth in a contemporary form is thus characterised by a number of paradoxes, centring in particular on a number of key issues about the status and condition of childhood and youth in society, which problematise the construction of coherent models which bring the theory and practice of childhood and youth together. Arguably the most significant consideration in constructing new models of childhood and youth is building in historical flexibility to account for the changing social contexts which frame these stages in the lifecourse. The paradoxes of childhood (which will be expanded upon in the following chapter) can be seen to be embedded in the historical development of childhood, with their relevance becoming particularly salient within the context of contemporary society. The paradox is based on two prominent and competing philosophies of childhood revolving around 'caretaking' and 'liberationist' perspectives of childhood. These will be explored in more detail in Chapter Five in the context of studies on young people's rights and participation.

2.4.6 Conclusion

In seeking to redress the power imbalance between adults and children the reconstructions of childhood put forward by Prout and James (1990) have concentrated on the agency of young people at the expense of changing macrostructural influences within which childhood is constructed and lived out. With this in mind the following chapter will explore the way in which childhood and youth as active social practices have been understood within the double hermeneutic of the social sciences as structured relations between institutions and identity, collectivity and individualisation and structure and agency.

Chapter Three

Understanding the lives of young people

3.1 Introduction

Changing conceptions of childhood and youth (as outlined in the previous chapter) have given rise to new ways of understanding the social worlds of young people. The shift from adultist assumptions about childhood and youth to child-centred perspectives, which acknowledge the agency of young people, is instrumental in contributing to contemporary studies of childhood and youth. Post-structuralists such as Henriques *et al.* (1984) argue that as a means of overcoming the binarism of individual and society, the lives of children need to be interpreted as the effects of a discourse between structure and agency.

Emerging from ongoing sociological debates about children and youth is an increasing concern with the different ways in which the agency of young people, in the construction of the meanings and symbolic forms, which make up their cultures, can be understood (Wulff 1995a). Theories of childhood and youth have tended to employ the concept of culture, as a way of understanding the actions, behaviours, values and lifestyles of young people. In the 1970s cultural theory saw childhood and youth cultures as structurally determined sets of cultural practices cemented through social reproduction and contested through symbolic rituals of resistance (Hall and Jefferson 1976). Recent studies of children and youth cultures (Brake 1985; James and Prout 1990; Griffin 1993; Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Corsaro 1997; James *et al.* 1998) in contrast, emphasise the relations of young people with, rather than as a product of, social structures. Griffin (1993: 212) cites Bhabha (1990) as saying that “changing discursive configurations around ‘youth’ and ‘adolescence’ during the 1980s reflect a series of crises in contemporary western cultures which resonate around questions of development and maturity, (...) struggles over power and citizenship, resistance and survival, domination and the relationship between culture, structure and agency”. As a result there have been attempts to reconstruct childhood and youth as reflexive social processes within the dialectic of structure and agency (Giddens 1991). However Griffin (1993: 210) notes the difficulties in “untangling the relationship between culture, structure and agency” as young people’s social worlds are becoming more complex and diverse.

Fundamental to this shift in the theorising of childhood and youth cultures are the effects of macrostructural changes which frame the worlds in which young people live. Social and economic changes arising out of the process of globalisation (Stephens 1995; Qvortrup 1997), the political ideology and practice of governments of post industrial societies at national and local levels (Coleman and Warren-Adamson 1992), the changing nature of the labour market (Wallace and Cross 1990), the increasing influence of the market place and the growing culture of consumerism in the construction of lifestyles (Gardner and Sheppard 1989; Jones and Wallace 1992; Stewart 1992) and the changing nature of social networks have all had marked effects on the social conditions of modern childhood and youth. These have occurred both directly, in terms of social opportunities and restrictions, and indirectly through the role of social institutions such as the family, the state and the market place (Stewart 1992; Jones and Wallace 1992).

Young people, however, live in diverse social circumstances. Young people's lives therefore need to be interpreted with respect to the different ways in which changing social forces impact upon the everyday contexts in which they live (Prout and James 1990; Griffin 1993) and the way in which young people respond to these contexts. In recognising the complex, diverse and multi faceted nature of youth transitions and the increasing acceptance that single unitary disciplines provide only a partial understanding of the lives of young people (Jones and Wallace 1992; Henderson 1995; Roche and Tucker 1997; Wyn and White 1997) a number of writers have called for holistic, multi disciplinary approaches to studies of young people's lives, which take account of the broader social circumstances in which young people live (Richards and Light 1986; Prout and James 1990; Coleman and Hendry 1990; Waksler 1991; Jackson and Rodriguez-Tome 1993; Henderson 1995; Roche and Tucker 1997) and which are sensitive to the notion that different dimensions of youth transitions may not be concurrent.

Drawing on literature from across the social sciences this chapter will consider some of the different dimensions to understanding young people as active social agents within the context of their everyday worlds. In recognition of the need to reconcile 'new' discourses of childhood and youth within the changing structure-agency dialectic, attempts to understand young people as active agents will be complemented by consideration of the impact of changing macrostructural contexts on the lives of young people. The chapter will conclude by exploring the potential value of mobilising the concept of 'contingency' in contributing to emerging new approaches for understanding the diversity of young people's lives.

3.2 Rethinking theoretical frameworks for understanding the multiple realities of children and youth

3.2.1 Young people as active cultural agents

The principle that young people are active social agents has become widely accepted across the social sciences (Suransky 1982; Silbereisen and Eyferth 1986; James and Prout 1990; Sibley 1991; Coleman 1993; Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Caputo 1995; James 1986, 1995; Corsaro 1997; Matthews *et al.* 1998b). The determining characteristics of new approaches to understanding young people's lives is a shift from adult perspectives, which relate to young people as passive agents of social reproduction, to recognising the agency of young people as cultural producers in their own right. Brake (1985: 186) talks of a "shift from 'structuralism' to 'culturalism'" wherein culture is defined as:

"... the set of practices through which men and women actively respond to the conditions of their social existence, creatively fashioning experienced social relationships into diverse and structured patterns of living, thinking and feeling. The emphasis, within this account, is placed on the notion of human agency." (Bennett *et al.* 1981: 10)

"Culture is now seen as an active practice shaping and conditioning economic and political processes, ... the emphasis being on the making of culture, rather than its determined conditions" (Brake 1985: 186). According to Giddens "social theory must incorporate a treatment of action as rationalised conduct ordered reflexively by knowledgeable and capable human agents" (Johnston *et al.* 1994: 600). For Giddens (1976) agency is 'the stream of actual or contemplated casual interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world (p.75).' Giddens (1976) thus suggests that individual agency is dependent on structures directly at the point of action and indirectly as a result of structuring the nature of individual action.

For Silbereisen and Eyferth (1986) the agency of young people is interpreted in terms of 'action', which they take to imply "self-initiated, purposeful behaviour that can be interpreted as a means of achieving certain goals, expressing certain values, or solving certain problems in which free choice and personal control are determining factors but, within the cultural context of legal norms or social expectations" (p.4). Coleman (1993) similarly states that one of the four assumptions of lifespan development theory is that 'individuals are producers of their own development'. Such a philosophical viewpoint is underlain by the principle that young people are intentional actors, "constructing life projects with consciousness" (Suransky 1982: 36). However, there are few studies which examine the way children are active producers of their own culture (Caputo 1995), especially in environmental contexts.

None the less, a number of perspectives have emerged which provide opportunities for reinterpreting young people as social actors. Wulff (1995b) puts forward the concept of 'microcultures' as a means for understanding young people as cultural producers. Microcultures, according to Wulff (1995b: 65) are:

“ flows of meaning which are managed by people in small groups that meet on an everyday basis ... choose(ing) cultural concerns that relate to their specific situation and reformulate them in their own terms as far as it is possible. The particular combination of personalities, the localities where they meet, and certain momentous events that they experience together, are three elements in every microculture.”

Microcultures are thus a way of differentiating between the cultural values and practices of groups of young people. James (1986), for example, illustrates how young people construct their own group boundaries between self and others as a process of identity construction and maintenance, demonstrating that even when commonalities in social biography exist, young people are able to recognise social space for their own ends. In this way, boundaries between groups become markers of acceptance and rejection identified through differences in cultural codes, tastes, symbols and styles (Hebdige 1979; Willis 1990). Matthews *et al.* (1998a), apply the concept of microcultures within an environmental context to explore the geographies of young people who share common values, meanings and experiences in their relationship with local places. These they refer to as 'microgeographies'.

Despite a number of insightful ethnographic studies of young people in their environments (Ward 1978; Hart 1979; Moore 1986) which highlight the creativity of young people in interpreting and adapting their landscapes, there have been few studies which adopt the notion of young people as cultural agents engaged in producing and recreating space (Johnson *et al.* 1995; Valentine 1996a; Pearce 1996; Matthews *et al.* 1998a). Matthews *et al.* (1998b: 9) state that “children are actively involved in cultural production in a variety of settings: at home, at school, at play, on the street, with friends, teachers, parents, siblings”. However, little is known about the way in which different contexts give rise to young people's diverse microgeographies and the way in which young people value and use their local environment in each case.

Lerner (1985) specifies three ways in which the adolescent interacts with the environment. First as 'stimulus', whereby the adolescent is seen to elicit different reactions from the environment according to their own personality and behavioural characteristics. Secondly, the adolescent acts as a 'processor' of the world around them, with the capabilities of adolescents to process environmental stimuli, changing over time and from individual to individual. The third way adolescents may shape their own development is as 'agent', actively shaping and selecting stimuli in order to make choices, influence events and select contexts. According to this model, individual

agency is a dynamic-interactional process¹ between the individual and his/her external world and provides a useful tool for understanding the different means by which the individual may exercise his/her capacity as agents. However, little account is taken of the social structures and social relations which shape and provide the contexts in which young people act.

In opposition to the conventional structure-agency binarism in childhood research, Corsaro (1997) proposes the notion of 'interpretive reproduction' in which children are seen as active, in terms of their contribution to cultural production and change, whilst at the same time recognising they are constrained by the existing social structure and by societal reproduction. Corsaro (1997) identifies three types of collective action which constitute interpretive reproduction: children's creative appropriation of information and knowledge from the adult world, children's production and participation in a series of peer cultures, and children's contribution to the reproduction and extension of the adult culture. What he suggests is that children's actions occur both within the moment and over time, with young people appropriating information from the adult world to create and participate in a peer culture at specific moments.

Young people do not all act in the same contexts, nor in the same ways. Variations in the inclinations and outcomes of young people's action is contingent upon the nature and inter relationships of contextual factors. Even within any one particular context, individuals may respond in different ways. Whereas some young people may conform to the structures which surround them, others may contest and challenge their situation. It could be suggested that past expressions of rebelliousness and rituals of resistance of youth are simply expressions of their agency in response to regimes of power which fail to provide the social space to articulate their particular mode of being. Difference and diversity within and between social groups are in turn contingent upon individual characteristics such as personal psyche, phenomenological world, life trajectory and their synergy with structural contexts. What emerges is a need to recognise the multiple contexts in which young people live and from which cultural difference arises.

3.2.2 Situated lifeworlds, diverse contexts: understanding young people in the here and now of their everyday lives

The recognition that young people are active in determining their own lives has been complemented by growing awareness of the multiple contexts which characterise the diversity of young people's lives. Alanen (1988) has called for a new framework which focuses on the lives of children in their own right but in their social contexts. ['Context' can be taken to refer to the social, cultural, historical, political as well as physical environment in which an action occurs (Bronfenbrenner 1986) or as Silbereisen and Eyferth (1986: 4) state "an abstraction of the multivariate of actual environments in which human beings live ..."]. Recognition of the importance of social context of

¹ This relationship is developed in section 3.4.

young people's everyday lives (Caputo 1995), has given rise to a growing number of studies with an explicit focus on the different social worlds of children and adolescents (Richards and Light 1986; Prout and James 1990; Coleman and Hendry 1990; Waksler 1991; Jackson and Rodriguez-Tome 1993; Henderson 1995; Roche and Tucker 1997).

A corollary of this has been a growing recognition of the value of 'interpretive' and 'ethnographic' strategies for studying the lives of young people grounded in the context of their lived worlds (Ingleby 1986; Harre 1986; Wulff 1988; Prout and James 1990; Coleman and Hendry 1990; Coleman 1993; Griffin 1993; Moore 1994; Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Pilcher 1995). The movement towards child-centred research grounded in their everyday social practices of young people's lives is characterised by a recognition that 'the mind is situated in practical activity, and cannot be understood outside of its social and historical context' (Ingleby 1986).

Understanding the process of cultural production amongst young people involves recognising the diversity of their own 'localised forms of cultural activity' (Wulff 1995b) as distinct from adults and the cultural norms of the wider society. Griffin (1993) identifies the need for radical youth research to recognise the 'situatedness' of youth cultures, examining ways young people are located within particular youth discourses (p.209) and the 'textually mediated cultural practices' (p.210) which give rise to a diversity of youth cultures. Emphasis on the 'here and now' of young people's lives (Matthews *et al.* 1998b) shifts attention away from what they are to become to a focus on the lives of young people in the context of their everyday worlds as they are being experienced (Mayall 1994). Berman's (1994) study of 'rap' culture amongst young blacks in New York's Bronx provides an excellent example of how young people negotiate 'modernism in the streets' in the course of their everyday worlds by employing music as the medium through which cultural capital is maximised and expressed as a means of identity survival. McLaughlin and Heath (1993), also working with inner city youth, highlight how faced with limited alternatives young people "join gangs out of fear of the 'nowhere jobs' and resulting social death they see in ... neighbourhood adults" (p. 214). In this way "the objectivity of outsider perspectives on inner city youth with the subjective views of the young people from the street" may be contrasted (McLaughlin and Heath 1993: 213).

Explicit attention to the social settings of childhood and youth brings to light the temporal dimension of individual lives. Matthews *et al.* (1998a) suggest that there is a fluid and dynamic 'temporality' and 'spatiality' which structures and influences the cultural agency of young people in the construction of their worlds. The context of young people's lives can therefore be differentiated according to time and space. Hareven (1982b) uses a four fold classification of different 'levels' of time: family time, individual time, lifespan and historical time. This typology could be reconfigured to create a framework for the temporal context of young people's lives as shown in

Figure 3.1.

The context of young people's lives can similarly be differentiated in terms of space. Bronfenbrenner (1979) postulates that there is an 'ecology' of social contexts, in which human action takes place, which presupposes the importance of the environment in its widest sense in the context of human development. Bronfenbrenner outlines four ecological layers - macrosystems, exosystems, mesosystems and microsystems - which provide the contexts in which the 'worlds' of individuals are located. These are shown in Figure 3.2.

Bronfenbrenner's model was constructed as a basis for understanding human development and has been readily used to frame studies of young people's lives (Moore 1986; Silbereisen and Eyferth 1986, Silbereisen and Noack 1988; Matthews 1992). According to Matthews (1992: 9) "mesosystems and exosystems are (...) set within the broad ideological and institutional structures of a particular culture or sub-culture. Macrosystems reflect a society's or a sub-culture's shared assumptions" and values, for example about childhood, lifestyles and changing cultural norms; as well as the changing social and economic influences within which people live their lives. Matthews (1992) suggests, however, that these levels are not exclusive, rather are inter-related. In section 3.3 the way in which macrostructural changes restructure time for young people in terms of the restructuring of society and space will be considered in more detail.

Satterthwaite *et al.* (1996), using a similar framework to Bronfenbrenner, recognise the macro and micro contexts on which infant and child survival, health and development depend. They talk in terms of five contextual levels: the international economic and political contexts; the national social, economic and political context; the household social, economic and environmental context; parental and child knowledge/capacity and gender relations within households; and the level of infant and child health, which are interlinked through a complex pattern of inter-relationships. In this way the health of the child is linked to the context of household conditions which in turn are affected by national and international economic, social and political processes.

Emphasis on specific contexts of young people's lived worlds such as the family, school or the street, runs the risk of neglecting the important influence and inter relationships of other contextual levels. This is particularly the case with studies of young people as active cultural agents which, in highlighting the agency of young people in specific contexts, have tended to neglect the importance of macrostructural influences upon these contexts. Qvortrup (1997) in particular, has cautioned against losing sight of the importance of macro social structures in a new sociology of childhood. Whilst it is commonly accepted that young people are active social agents in their own right, this becomes true only in relation to changing, multifaceted, multi-

Figure 3.1: Dimensions to the temporality of young people's lives (adapted from Hareven 1982b).

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| historical time - | concerning the specificity of social conditions |
| lifespan - | concerning the dynamic progression of young people's lives |
| social time - | concerning the configuration of temporal spaces out of social relations between adults/parents and children |
| individual time - | concerning the way in which individuals use free time |

Figure 3.2: Ecological layers of young people's socio-environmental contexts (Adapted from Bronfenbrenner 1979 and Matthews 1992).

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Macrosystem: (World structures) | World economy Transnational corporations | International organisations Cultures Societies |
| Exosystem: (Social structures) | National government agencies Local government agencies Educational institutions Non governmental organisations | Value systems Class structures Religious systems |
| Mesosystem: (Community Associations) | Social networks Work Schools Youth, leisure and recreation opportunities | Neighbourhood groups Services |
| Microsystem: (Family and peer relations) | Spousal sub-system Children and youth sub-system | Parent-child sub-system |

layered and historically variable social and structural contexts of which they are part (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Garbarino 1985).

The following section will concentrate on the way in which changes at the macro- and exo-structural levels (hereinafter referred to collectively as macrostructures) impact on the lives of young people in particularly their geographical lifestyles. Emphasis is placed predominantly on western developed societies, in particular Britain. As such the ensuing review of the changing macrostructural influences on childhood and youth will be set within a contemporary historical perspective associated with post industrial changes commonly referred to as 'late or high modernity' (Giddens 1991; Jones and Wallace 1992; Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 1997).

3.3 Changing macrostructural contexts and young people's lives

3.3.1 Introduction

Qvortrup (1997), highlights the association between societal changes and the social construction of childhood. However rather than concern himself solely with childhood as constructed through discourse he argues for the need to see childhood as constructed through a range of social, economic and cultural forces, of which changing discourses are but one phenomenon.

Arguably most significant amongst recent macrostructural changes have been forces associated with globalisation (Boyden 1990; Stephens 1995) not only of capital but also of culture and values (Allen 1995). Stephens (1995: 21) argues that so significant are the globally articulated forms that affect the local worlds of young people, that they should not be isolated within a narrowly defined field of "child research", rather constituted as an 'important generative site for exploring and theorising capitalist society and its historical dynamic'. She argues that:

"Models of political and economic transformations leading to corresponding shifts in consciousness, subjective experience, and social relationships do not adequately account for increasingly widespread notions of the disappearance, contamination, invasion, and colonisation of domains such as childhood, previously regarded as relatively noncommodified. To grasp these shifting boundaries, we need a more powerful notion of capital, not as an objective thing whose development calls for superstructural changes, but as a particular kind of social relation."
(Stephens 1995: 21).

Understanding the lives of young people can not be divorced, therefore, from the multiple contexts of social relations and processes of social change. The nature of children's lives in any particular culture varies according to the prevailing mode of production (Oldman 1994b), but also in a decisive way as a result of parents' work (Qvortrup 1997) and the way in which the organisation of time and space impinges upon the family. 'Childhood is exposed to the same societal forces as adulthood, although in a particular way' (Qvortrup 1993) such that many of the far reaching implications of macrostructural changes for children are not seen as childhood problems.

The impact of macrostructural changes on the lives of young people can be grouped into six categories - a weakening of traditional social affiliations and an increasing ethos of individualisation, a rise in consumerism coupled with the increasing role of the market in young people's lives, widening social inequalities and social exclusion, the reconstitution of leisure, recreation and public space, the conflict over public space and the restructuring of childhood and youth in relation to the family. These will be considered in turn.

3.3.2 New identities: individualisation, subjectivity and the changing social terrain

Studies of the changing social worlds of children and youth are increasingly being conducted within the context of discourses of 'late modernity' (Boyden 1990; Chisholm *et al.* 1990; Jones and Wallace 1992; Griffin 1993; Katz 1994; Stephens 1994, 1995; Fornas and Bolin 1995; Furlong and Cartmel 1997; MacDonald 1997; Liden 1997; James *et al.* 1998). Late modernity can be taken to signify a post industrial stage in capitalism wherein class affiliations, family ties and collective traditions are gradually being fragmented and overlain with new contextual allegiances, lifestyles, subcultures and identities associated with patterns of consumption (Lash and Urry 1987; Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Jones and Wallace 1992; Miles 1996; Furlong and Cartmel 1997). Social changes in late modernity have come about as a result of the imperatives of the globalisation of capital and culture (Harvey 1989; Katz 1994; Stephens 1995) which have brought about an expansion of cultures of consumption within popular lifestyles (Jones and Wallace 1992; Reimer 1995) and have removed socialising influences beyond the reach of the family.

The main line of argument in the late modern thesis is that everyday life is being transformed by an intensifying emphasis on *individualisation* (Beck 1987, 1992; Giddens 1991; Naesman 1994; Furlong and Cartmel 1997) whereby young people are increasingly separated from their social backgrounds and individual subjectivities, rather than traditional social affiliation, become the determining factor in the construction of social identities (Beck 1992). Buchner (1990) refers to this as a "biographization of the lifecourse", as individuals negotiate an increasingly complex

and uncertain world in which individual social roles and identities are no longer clear (Beck 1987). According to the individualist thesis the focus is on young people as 'reflexively mobilised' individuals (Jones and Wallace 1992; Giddens 1991) continually exploring and (re)constructing new forms of subjectivity and identity out of personal and social changes within multiple contexts (Giddens 1991; Lash and Friedman 1992).

The implications of these changes for the social life of young people are that a range of potential courses of action are open to individuals and collectives in the post-traditional social universe (Giddens 1991). However rather than withdrawing from the influences of social structures Giddens (1991: 177) sees the individual as engaging more boldly with them. In this sense it could be interpreted that, as a result of the weakening of structural influences and an increasing ethos towards 'individualisation' (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992), new opportunities are being (incidentally) created for young people to negotiate and reconstruct their identities and social roles as active cultural agents. Childhood and youth as reflexive social processes necessarily engages young people as active in the construction of their own worlds through the continual reconstruction of their own life biographies according to multiple social contexts.

Lash and Friedman (1992) characterised these changes by emphasising the importance of 'movement, flux and change' rather than 'stasis and fixity' in social processes. Wyness (1996) suggests that the social flux and fluidity which arise out of the individualising tendencies of late modernity, are bringing about greater opportunities and liberation for young people as identities and attitudes become more fluid and negotiable. In this way one can talk of the 'possibilities' of childhood rather than the disappearance of childhood (Postman 1982). One of the main changing global contexts in which individualisation is permitting new (albeit unequal) possibilities for young people is in terms of consumerism.

3.3.3 Young people, consumerism and the role of the market place

Youth cultures have long been associated with patterns of consumption and style (Abrams 1961; Hebdige 1979; Davis 1990). Post war affluence created a youth consumer market (Davis 1990) which commercial interests targeted with goods and services (notably fashion, music and entertainment) specifically aimed at young people (Stewart 1992). As Davis (1990: 166) stated: "... the entertainment media, or indeed the whole flourishing youth culture industry, served simultaneously to create the teenager and thus to exploit the young." Nava (1992: 186) draws attention to Marx's less developed ideas about the relation of commodity fetishism to false consciousness suggesting that young people (like others) are vulnerable to the manipulative power of the market. On the other hand, rather than seeing young people as passive subjects exploited by the consumer culture, Frith (1984) and McRobbie (1989) amongst others, note that young people are 'active agents' in the consumption process as they select

between and appropriate what's on offer.

For many young people in the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of the globalisation of capital and culture, identity and status, in peer groups and society at large, are increasingly defined by patterns of consumption (Gardner and Sheppard 1989; Brake 1985; Stewart 1992). Whereas youth styles were once aligned to social class, based on roles in the productive process, the shift in importance from production to consumption as the means by which social groups are differentiated have redefined young people's cultures in terms of modes of consumption of leisure time. In this way young people have increasingly been drawn into the economic system as participants in their own right (Oldman 1994b).

Hall (1989) noted that "the greater transformation in society involving the weakening of collective solidarities and identities and the emergence of new identities (and) ... individual choices through personal consumption has left a gaping hole where class, association or region once was". This hole has been filled by consumption (Gardner and Sheppard 1989). As Jones and Wallace (1992: 122) put it: "In a society comprised of active consumers, citizenship is conferred by the relationship to both private and public consumer markets, and participation in consumer markets is an important aspect of citizenship as a whole." By providing the medium through which common experiences may be defined, the culture of consumption has had a profound effect on young people's values and their aspirations and the way they spend their time and money (Stewart 1992). The 'magic of the mall' is hence significant in the lives of many young people (Anthony 1985; Lewis 1989).

Traditional youth subcultural affiliations to class (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Furlong 1990) or gender (McRobbie and Garber 1976) according to this thesis, are being replaced by 'astructural' youth cultural forms characterised by an homogenisation of tastes and styles which cut across traditional class divisions (Martin 1983; Lash 1990) creating new identities (Hall 1989; Back 1996) based on style and consumption. McRobbie (1991) for example pointed to the way in which young women can acquire a degree of independence and autonomy by participating in consumer markets. In this way consumption bestows new opportunities for social progression and citizenship which otherwise may be denied; and provide opportunities to transcend structural subordination through "new status passageways in which social identities can be remade" (Jones and Wallace 1992: 139). However, far from inferences of plurality in new (post-structural) forms of social identification, the notion of opportunity and choice implicated in contemporary consumer society could just as easily be seen as a masquerade in the crisis of late capitalism (Jameson 1984).

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) argue, that the capacity of young people to compete in an individualised world, is still structured according to social position. Furlong *et al.*

(1990) noted how class cultures still influence consumer styles, with Nava (1992) and McRobbie (1991) remarking on the way in which markets are also constructed on the basis of gender, reproducing rather than restratifying social structures. The capacity for decision making with regard to consumption is therefore dependent on the individual having a reasonable degree of economic independence (Lister 1991; Roberts et al 1991). Young people with less financial means lack the resources, or 'social capital' (Bourdieu 1984), to satisfy their changing expectations manufactured by the consumer industry (Brake 1985), despite facing the same messages from advertising media and the same demands from peers and society for achieving status and acceptability (Stewart 1992).

There is still much to learn about how these changing pressures on young people influence their geographical lifestyles in different social contexts. What is clear, however, is that due to existing structural inequalities some young people have become marginalised by being excluded from consumption. As Giddens notes "modernity produces difference, exclusion and marginalisation" (1991: 6). As a result of widening structural inequalities and ineffective youth policy (Wallace and Cross 1990), opportunities and capacities for individuals to identify through consumption practices are being "structured away" (Jones and Wallace 1992: 144) giving rise to young people's geographies being differentiated according to social context (Stewart 1992; Jones and Wallace 1992; Kirk *et al.* 1991). The following section draws attention to the way in which social inequality and exclusion arising out of late modernity, impacts on young people, as they struggle with choices and constraints in constructing their neighbourhood geographies and life trajectories.

3.3.4 Young people, social inequality and exclusion

Social and economic transformations have impacted significantly on the transitions and experiences of young people (MacDonald 1997). The way in which social change shapes the lives of young people "intertwines with class, gender, ethnicity and locality ..." (Amit-Talai 1995: 231), giving rise to 'worlds of difference' characterised by inequalities of opportunity, choice and a diversity of place experiences amongst modern youth (Bates and Riseborough 1993; Kumar 1993). Alienation, disaffection and apathy are becoming increasingly more widespread (Furnham and Gunter 1989; Wyn and White 1997) creating an increasing sense of marginalisation and social exclusion for a growing number of young people (Williamson 1993; Bates and Riseborough 1993; MacDonald 1997) as they struggle with a lack of opportunities for social participation and isolation from the adult world. Roche (1993) and Dean (1997) suggest the problem lies with the failure of social rights of citizenship, in which "lifestyle choice is increasingly important in the constitution of self-identity and daily activity" (Giddens 1991: 5), but which is unattainable for a growing number of young people.

A number of writers have identified a significant proportion of young people who constitute a growing 'underclass' in Britain, for whom disadvantage and social exclusion has become a reality (Dahrendorf 1987; Murray 1990, 1994; Westergaard 1992; Lash 1994; West and Sweeting 1996; MacDonald 1997). MacDonald (1997: 3-4) defines underclass as:

“ a social group or class of people located at the bottom of the class structure who, over time, have become structurally separate and culturally distinct from the regularly employed working class and society in general through processes of social and economic change (particularly de-industrialisation) and/or through patterns of cultural behaviour, who are now persistently reliant on state benefits and almost permanently confined to living in poorer conditions and neighbourhoods.”

Whereas middle class young people are able to “trade on their cultural capital” (MacDonald 1997: 21) in order to negotiate the constraints which hamper their social activities; for the increasing proportion of young people living on the margins in a 'drop-out society' (Wilkinson 1995), capacity for contingent activities is restricted to “the socialising influences of alternative and sometimes deviant cultures of their economically sidelined parents” (MacDonald 1997: 19). Rutter and Smith (1996) argue that the increasing occurrence of psychosocial disorders in young people are, as a result, the outcome of the changing nature of young people's isolation from the rest of society, rather than a precursor to it. What develops are “self perpetuating sub cultures” (MacDonald 1997: 16), or what Blackman (1997) refers to as everyday 'cultures of survival'. These are made up of “similar cultural outlooks, rituals, meanings, values and activities” (Roberts 1997: 3; Blackman 1997) which give rise to “a cumulation of social pathologies” (Dahrendorf 1987: 4) and sustained marginality. Or as Willis (1977) suggested, a situation in which young people collude in their own oppression.

Lister (1991) and Kirk *et al.* (1991) interpret the creation of socially marginalised sub cultures as being tantamount to the creation of second class citizens, characterised by a divergence between inclusion in cultural life and exclusion from prevailing standards of living. Kirk *et al.* (1991), for example, found how young people without funds were more likely to get into trouble as they sought to negotiate the gap between their heightened expectations (Jones and Wallace 1992) and the reality of their inability to satisfy these needs in the consumer market place (Seabrook 1982). For Lash (1994) and Wacquant (1991) the location of these subcultures constitute 'hyper-ghettos' living under a form of political, economic and social apartheid (Field, quoted in Morris 1994: 106).

Jones and Wallace (1992) however make the distinction between the growing proportion of young people at the bottom end of the social spectrum who suffer greatest deprivation but also that young people as a whole are increasingly suffering disadvantage. This has occurred through the impact of state policies such as

authoritarian restrictions on young people (MacDonald 1997) and the increasing control of public space which have tended to exacerbate rather than ameliorate distance between young people and wider society.

3.3.5 Reconstitution of leisure, recreation and public spaces

Macrostructural changes in Britain in the 1990s have brought about changes to the provision, management and consumption of leisure time and young people's use of local places. Urban space has increasingly been privatised and subject to regimes of control (Berman 1986; Fyfe and Bannister 1996, Zukin 1995) which have, in effect, squeezed young people out of the landscape. Mitchell (1996) refers to this as the 'annihilation of space', as 'others' (normally young people) are forced out of these places.

At the same time other aspects of young people's use of public space are being affected. Young people's free range is increasingly being undermined by environmental hazards and social dangers (Bjorklid 1985; Hillman 1993; Barnardos 1994; Valentine 1995; Satterthwaite *et al.* 1996; Valentine and McKendrick 1997) and the creation of 'a climate of fear' (Valentine 1995) amongst parents about the vulnerability of young people in public places. This is marked by the massive decline in the number of activities that children undertook unaccompanied between 1971 and 1990 (Hillman *et al.* 1993). As a result Valentine and McKendrick (1997) draw attention to a 'retreat indoors' by children. This is compounded by a growth in televisual information media such as videos and computer games which provide young people with alternative virtual leisure experiences (Gunter and McAleer 1990; Valentine 1997b).

One final dimension to the changing context of young people's experiences of play and leisure experiences is provided by McKendrick *et al.* (1998). They identify the growing 'business of children's play' whereby young people's leisure experiences are being sold as commodities on the free market in a range of settings - such as pubs, department stores and shopping malls as well as purpose built venues. However, in a similar fashion to other facets of consumer lifestyles, an increasing proportion of young people lack sufficient means to use such facilities.

The implications of the increasing control and privatisation of recreational opportunities (Rojek 1985) and use of public space goes beyond the consumption (or not) of such opportunities to embrace wider issues of social exclusion for some young people. In particular there is a burgeoning literature concerning young people and the conflict over public space. Of interest in this study is how young people are affected by these changes and the contingency activities and behaviours young people employ in response to them. This has in part been reinitiated as a result of media scares and moral panics about young people in public places, but is also resultant upon changes to the way local places are planned and managed. The growing literature concerning the

conflicts and hassle young people experience in public places will provide the focus of the following section.

3.3.6 Young people and the conflict over public space

Increasing attention in the literature concerning young people's use of public places has concerned the conflicts young people experience in the course of their use of public space. Such interest has been given momentum as a result of growing moral panics about the threat of, and to, young people in public places (Valentine 1996a, 1996b), rising levels of crime committed by young people (Black *et al.* 1996) and the new Crime and Disorder Bill. For some, there is a perception that young people's undesirable and anarchistic use of public space poses a threat to the moral order of public space (Cahill 1990; Valentine 1996a). For others, the problem is inextricably linked to the way childhood and youth, constructed as 'other', are engaged in an ongoing struggle for legitimate use of public spaces, constructed as adult spaces (Valentine 1996a; White 1993; Cahill 1990) as a result of their social and spatial marginalisation on the landscape. This section will consider some of the central discourses surrounding young people and conflict over public space. first, by identifying the nature of young people's struggle over public space and second, by considering how regulatory regimes and interventionist strategies affect young people's use of public space.

Given the absence of legitimate private places for young people to meet they actively seek autonomous space within the public domain. In this way young people carve out 'private' space from the anonymity of the public realm (Valentine 1996a). Street spaces, shopping malls, bus stations and parks become places where young people can congregate away from the adult gaze. Urban space is therefore an important dimension in the construction of social life amongst young people and with society at large (White 1993; Berman 1986; Matthews *et al.* 1998h). White (1993: 87) states that these places are where "young people can get together to spend their time (...) among peers and friends, in an atmosphere of relative anonymity and excitement of the senses". However, young people are not considered as legitimate place users (Lieberg 1995; Wyn and White 1997). As Wyn and White (1997: 139) state: "The visibility and presence of young people in the public domains of the streets, shopping centres and malls, particularly the more marginalised, non-consuming individuals, has been met by concerted attempts to exclude or regulate them".

Underlying conflicts over young people's use of public space are moral panics about young people apparently turning feral in public spaces (Jeffs and Smith 1996). Valentine (1996a: 214) states that:

“public space ... is not produced as an open space, a space where teenagers are freely able to participate in street life or to define their own ways of interacting and using space, but is a highly regulated - or closed - space where young people are expected to show deference to adults and adults’ definitions of appropriate behaviour, levels of noise and so on ...”.

By placing the significance of young people’s spatial behaviour in the context of prevailing (unequal) social relations with adults, young people are marginalised as a result of their age. Valentine (1996a: 216) states that there is an underlying assumption that: “public space is not a space shared on an equal footing by all generations, but rather is a space that has been repetitively produced within a regulatory framework as an adult space”. Watt and Stenson (1998: 262) for example state that: “rigidities of socio-spatial inequalities coexist uneasily with post modern fluidity,” as a result of cultural difference between young people and adults, giving rise to complex patterns of contested cultural terrain.

The process of defining and negotiating spatial identity is intricately linked to the young person’s access to, and creation of, places of their own (Stokols 1979; Silbereisen and Noack 1988; Pearce 1996). Stokols (1979) suggests that place conflicts and stress arise when individuals are thwarted or denied opportunities to exert control over their environmental settings. Silbereisen and Noack (1988: 29) state that:

“Many problem behaviours of adolescents may be interpreted as attempts to gain control over their environment and to cope with a context which thwarts the pursuit of their goals. (...) The lack of private settings (... leads to) the use of public spaces as though they were private ones; as a result conflicts with adults also using the space arises”.

When alternative place uses are denied boredom, rather than stimulation, gives rise to young people creating their own alternatives which may overstep the bounds of legality or social acceptability. Guilliat (1997: 18) states: “A lot of public concern is not caused by crime but by low-level disorder - vandalism, smart remarks, graffiti ... it contributes to this perception that juveniles are out of control”. However, as Guilliat (1997) and White *et al.* (1996) observe these responses are perpetuated by a “prior mistrust of mutual antagonism”.

Valentine (1996a) suggests that because of the spatial hegemony that arises in the adult-centric way in which place use is constructed, the act of hanging out in public places and other non adherence to order becomes an expression (deliberately and unconsciously) of resistance to adult power. Acts such as this are read as a threat to the public order of public space (Cahill 1990) with young people on the streets treated as a ‘polluting presence’ (Baumgartner 1988) and therefore are subject to regulatory regimes involving private security firms and curfews (Cahill 1990; Valentine 1996a; Jeffs and

Smith 1996; Matthews *et al.* 1998g). Unaccompanied young people engaged in 'non-legitimate' place use are therefore seen as being 'out of place' (Valentine 1996a), discrepant on the landscape (Sibley 1995a). However, central to much of the discourse on young people in public space are adultist perspectives. Little attention is paid to the perspectives of young people themselves or recognition of the alternative discourses they are seeking to construct (Matthews *et al.* 1998h).

White (1993), for example, has illustrated how the public spaces of shopping malls are constructed as consumer spaces, but which are contested by 'non-legitimate' users such as young people engaging in alternative uses of these places. Some writers have considered young people's ability to subvert and resist the production of public space (Katz 1991; Lash 1994; Breitbart 1995; Pile 1996) through the pursuit of alternative ways of achieving social status, for example, through engaging in criminal activity (Peelo *et al.* 1990). Conflict arises when young people, often lacking the social capital to use such spaces as consumers, attempt to use these spaces as non consumers (Shields 1989; Presdee 1990; White 1990; Sibley 1995). Malone (1998), found how young people, excluded from using sports centre facilities because of cost, were branded as potential trouble makers and prohibited from engaging in non-consuming social activities in the centre through a regime of interventionist approaches. She quotes a sports centre manager as stating:

“ We charge entry so that only those young people who have a legitimate role come in ... if we had tables and chairs and stuff then the young people would hang around, and we don't want trouble” (p. 24).

White (1993) highlights the way in which the increasing regulation of public space brings about marginalisation in public spheres such as shopping malls and streets. He argues that the behaviour and activity of young people is shaped by their structural, situational and personal contexts. In terms of their structural position as producers (workers, unemployed, students) and consumers (levels of material wealth) in society, they are subject to various social control measures involving the state and private policing agencies (White 1993). Situational factors refer to particular social locations in which young people's environmental action takes place. Structural and situational contexts are in effect contingency factors which give rise to diverse coping strategies as young people negotiate their structural and situational contexts. White (1993) suggests that it is because of the marginalisation of young people as 'other' and their exclusion from decision making processes and the management of space, that conflicts involving young people in public places occurs. Sentiments such as this are echoed by recent work in Britain (Matthews *et al.* 1998h).

Pearce (1996) provides an example of how the structural and situational dimension to specific groups of young people is mirrored in the conflict around the way they use place. She notes that, in a borough of the East End of London, disaffection from school

has given rise to a culture of truants who create their identity within the space surrounding the school. It is these young people who are involved in the majority of disturbances and crimes of violence. This case demonstrates the extent to which the social contexts of disadvantage, racial tension and residualisation in 'underclass' ghettos and disaffection from school are intertwined with the cultural production of urban public space.

Accessible public space has increasingly been privatised and regulated through, for example, private security patrols, the police and surveillance cameras (Johnston 1992; Fyfe and Bannister 1995; Zukin 1995). As Wyn and White (1997: 139) state: "In effect, the social and physical space of young people ... has been eroded and is now subject to persistent state interventions, such as campaigns to 'clean up the streets'". White (1993) highlights how private security firms are employed to move young people on in shopping malls, as a result of being denied the legitimate right to use public spaces as non-conventional place users, in order to protect the interests of private businesses. Wyn and White (1997: 139) observe that: "young people do not have to have broken the law or engage in actual offensive behaviour before they are subject to intrusive intervention into their affairs". White (1993) found that 80% of young people had reported experiencing police intervention. As White (1993) states: "this shows an extraordinary degree of police intervention in young people's activities". What arises is, in effect, a 'spatial apartheid' (Wyn and White 1997) in which young people are denied the right to use public space as equal citizens. The redefinition and closing off of public space to young people in this way gives rise to a transformation of public into private space (White 1993). Indeed Valentine (1996a) suggests that there is a need to reassess the use of the term 'public' to describe these everyday spaces and the validity of the private-public dichotomy.

Regulatory regimes and interventionist approaches to control young people's use of public place, however, leads to further distancing and alienation of young people from public life (Jeffs and Smith 1996). Moreover as Matthews *et al.* (1998h) have shown, interventionist strategies such as curfews are misguided, in failing to understand the importance of the street for young people, and in breaching the European Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Hodgkin 1998), undermine young people's right to use public spaces and to free association. Matthews *et al.* (1998h: 17) state that: "Declaring the streets as out of bounds both (re)imposes an adult governance on space and (re)asserts an adult sovereignty over children".

This section has revealed how, faced with a lack of alternative places, young people colonise public places in a search for 'private' space. However, in doing so they are faced with regulatory regimes and campaigns through discriminatory intervention by private and public authorities to exclude them from non-legitimate use of public places.

Young people's use of place must therefore be understood within these social contexts. The final way in which macrostructural changes impinge upon young people's lives is through the reconstitution of time and space at the parent-child interface.

3.3.7 The changing status and condition of childhood and youth in relation to the family

Restructuring of time and space have profound implications for childhood and youth as globalisation of the economy and of cultural production and reproduction challenges and transforms everyday life and family structures in various ways (Liden 1997). Macrostructural changes influence families in three ways in terms of material standards of living, through cultural changes and as a result of the indirect impacts on the temporal and spatial organisation of family life.

A number of studies have illustrated the impact of social conditions on young people's lives (Kumar 1993; Leach 1994). Leach (1994), for example, reveals the increasing hardship of many families due to economic and demographic changes, giving rise to a high level of unmet needs amongst young people. Increasing cultural and economic pressure on parents brings about a time-space compression of childhood in a way that separates childhood from family life and provides insufficient time and space for the changing needs and concerns of the child (Leach 1994). Childhood in late modernity is situated within the spaces between adult timetables. As Ennew (1994) noted 'time for children is in fact organised to facilitate time for adults'; leading to writers such as Shamgar-Handelman (1994) raising pertinent questions such as 'To whom does childhood belong?'

The increasing pressure or desire in some families for both parents to go out to work (Leach 1994) has led to an explosion in 'children's work' (Englebert 1994; Naesman 1994; Phadraig 1994) such as play groups and after school clubs which institutionalize young people (Naesman 1994) within social networks beyond the reach of their parents. Wyness (1996) talks of a shift of allegiances and commitments between adults and children from the private to the public realm. These processes of defamilialization and institutionalisation lead to a situation whereby young people are rarely in control of their times and actions (Leonard 1990: 68), giving rise to their "sense of space and time becoming so dislocated that their social relationships outside the family unit become atomised" (Buchner 1990: 79) in social structures distinct from their parents. Whilst providing benefits to young people in terms of an expanded world of opportunity, in other ways, the spatially disparate nature of the modern child's sphere's of activity necessitates dependency on parents (in terms of their daily round, transport and money) and undermines autonomy in neighbourhood play (Naesman 1994). Englebert (1994) noted that the functional differentiation that characterises modern societies produces a specialisation of social institutions and ghettos which may 'not allow the tolerance and flexibility that children need' but instead give rise to many differentiated children's

worlds' which the child negotiates out of necessity rather than choice (Hood-Williams 1990; Pilcher 1995).

Changes such as these have caused increasing debates about the changing role of the family in contemporary society (Saporitti 1994; Brannen et al 1994). The whole notion of children as individuals in their own right is complicated by their role as dependents (Naesman 1994). The situation of young people in relation to the family is one of paradox with young people caught within what Furlong and Cartmel (1997) called an 'epistemological fallacy.' What they suggest is that young people's capacity for self determination is simultaneously being undermined by a reduction in capacity and opportunities for social participation. The paradox of late modernity arises as an "increasing individualisation of social processes is mediated by the irony of reduced individual capacity" (Beck 1992: 131) and enforced dependency. Young people's lives are therefore characterised simultaneously by increasing independence from, as well as dependence on, the family.

Mediating this whole process is the intervention of the state in the private affairs of families and young people (Phadraig 1994), through a process of *individuation* (Naesman 1994). According to Turner (1986: 122) individuation involves 'the bureaucratic intervention into the life of an autonomous individual.' Naesman argues that it is this process of individuation that has given rise to ambivalent attitudes towards young people. The ambivalence in social commitment to young people is reflected in the paradox of late modernity (Beck 1992) and the central conflict in many young people's lives between adult domination and control and their own propensity as free and capable individuals in their own right. Recent government policy which holds parents responsible for their children's behaviour through the imposition of curfews (Jeffs and Smith 1996) for example, enforces dependency of the young person on the family as well as encouraging the construction of young people's leisure time around the affairs of the family and the home.

Ambiguities and inconsistencies in the way childhood is conceptualised have implications for policy and practice with regards childhood and youth. Wyness (1996) for example examines these contradictory positions with respect to policy initiatives on childhood which he sees as generating contradictory models of childhood. What emerges is a paradox between the increasing concern about the vulnerability of children and their consequent need for protection against a broader trend of 'individualisation' (Beck 1992; Naesman 1994) and the encouragement of self dependence. Childhood and youth trajectories in late modernity are therefore characterised by the negotiation of an increasingly more complex, unpredictable and inconsistent set of social circumstances (Berman 1982; Giddens 1991; Beck 1992).

3.3.8 Conclusion

What emerges from this discussion is that social and economic changes impact significantly on the lives of young people. However, changing macrostructural contexts do not affect all young people in the same way. Whilst late modernity has provided young people with a wider range of possibilities, their capacity to construct their identity and lifestyles are still dependent to a lesser or greater degree on structural position. Within structural constraints, however, young people have a degree of flexibility in the way they respond to their circumstances in terms of the social agendas and lifestyles they construct, but their ability to do so is complicated by the ambivalence of society towards young people. The difference and diversity of cultures of children and youth are therefore contingent upon a range of factors related to social structures, social processes, the agency of young people and the relationships between them. Contingency factors relate to social, cultural and historical influences and are themselves contingent upon the way in which they impinge upon and are interpreted by families, groups and individuals. In the final section of this chapter, the discussions that have been conducted will be synthesised into a theoretical framework around the idea of contingency.

3.4 Contingent worlds of young people

3.4.1 Introduction

Acceptance of the socially constructed nature of childhood and youth has given rise to acknowledgement of the importance of theorising young people as active social agents (James and Prout 1990; James *et al.* 1998) as well as the influence of changing macrostructural forces upon their lives (Qvortrup 1997; James *et al.* 1998). Growing up is not simply a matter of acquiring skills, but the site of complex political tensions between children, parents and the state which young people have to negotiate (Ingleby 1986). This is particularly pertinent with regard to young people's use of public space.

Despite the acceptance that young people have considerable capacity for individual action, the extent to which young people are influenced by and constrained within structures is, however, still unclear. Similarly, although a range of studies (see Chapter Four) highlight the way in which young people value and experience place in different environmental settings, the significance of different contextual and contingency factors in accounting for commonalities and differences in young people's geographies is still not fully understood. Silbereisen and Eyferth (1986: 3) state that: “

“The search for a suitable paradigm for studying young people's lives has led to a situation whereby researchers have emphasised emerging individual capacities and behaviours apart from everyday contexts; or they have stressed contextual features and their differences, apart from the developing individuals”.

In contrast to previous approaches which constitute the polar components of the dialectic between agency and structure, recent approaches have tended to focus more on reconciling this dialectic in terms of the interrelationships between the two. Consideration of the social contexts within which young people's actions and behaviours are understood also necessitates understanding the linkages, in terms of power, causality and intentionality, in the inter-relationships between the individual and his/her context. Harre (1986) proposes an axis of location in which he suggests that these linkages can be understood as a process of "appropriation from the social through the subjective and personal to the objective, and thence to the social again" (p.289). Gregory (1981) in a similar fashion proposed a 'dialectical reproduction model' in which society forms individuals who create society in a continual reflexive process of interaction. Giddens's (1976) too echoes this philosophy in his 'structuration model' arguing that social systems are recursive in that they are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute them. He states that:

"the reflexivity of the self, in conjunction with the influence of abstract systems, pervasively affects the body as well as psychic processes. The body is less and less an extrinsic 'given', functioning outside the internally referential systems of modernity, but becomes itself reflexively mobilised"
(Giddens 1991: 7).

What these theories suggest is that the actions values and lifestyles of young people need to be understood in terms of the way in which different individuals and different contexts combine to produce diverse childhoods and in turn diverse children's geographies. To this end Silbereisen and Eyferth (1986) recognise the importance of understanding young people's behaviour in terms of the interplay between 'internal' psychological factors and 'external' social contexts such as parents, peers and society at large. In doing so they propose a 'person-process-context' model (Bronfenbrenner and Crouter 1983) which interprets the agency of young people in terms of 'Development as Action in Context' (1986). The merits of this type of approach have been outlined by Bronfenbrenner (1986: 293) who suggests that:

"the use of a person-process-context model avoids possible misinterpretations of causal pathways, which may vary markedly for different sub groups, by taking into account variations in process as a function of characteristics of the person, the context, and any interactions between them".

'Development as Action in Context' (Silbereisen and Eyferth 1986) can be applied to understanding the geographies of young people in terms of the outcomes of young people's own intentional, goal-oriented actions being adjusted to contextual demands and opportunities. As a result of the reflexivity between 'action' and 'context', changes occur not only to the individual but also to the context. What emerges then is a 'dynamic spiral of adolescent - environment interrelations' in which the adolescent is an

active agent in shaping his/her environment as well as his/her own development (Lerner 1982). The notion of 'environment' as used here refers "not just to the physical aspects of place or the family, but the geographical, historical, social and political setting in which that (young person) is living" (Coleman 1993: 263). In this way environments constitute mediating factors which give rise to contingent patterns of adolescent behaviour at different levels within society.

Hendry (1983) uses the idea of reflexivity in drawing attention to the "interplay of factors from within the individual and from the social environment which direct young people towards particular interests and activities in their leisure" (p.148). He suggests they involve a range of factors from personal characteristics to the role of adults and peers, social biographies and the effect of wider societal processes. Engstrom (1979) has similarly recognised the reciprocity of adolescent leisure behaviour within environmental contexts suggesting that:

"The individual is in constant interaction with the world around him as he changes it. The development of the individual is therefore a continuous dialectical process of interaction between 'individual and environment'. Behaviour is thus affected by processes of interaction both past and present."
(Quoted in Hendry 1983: 147)

Apart from the influence of structure or context, the outcome of young person-environment interactions, in terms of diverse geographies, is also dependent upon his/her personal characteristics such as identity, self esteem, social and environmental competence. These in turn vary according to age, changing life contexts and social influences. The capacity of an individual to act on their own behalf is also contingent upon them having the opportunity to do so. Opportunities, in terms of life chances, are themselves socially structured, for example, according to age, gender, class, ethnicity and location. Equally an individual can transcend his/her structural position according to the capacity of his/her agency. Pertinent to understanding the actions of young people as free agents are the power relations which circumvent or structure the social worlds of young people in these terms. This is, in particular, imperative with regard the way in which young people construct places of meaning within structures and environments created by and for adults and for understanding the conflicts over young people's use of public space, for example, between adults and young people.

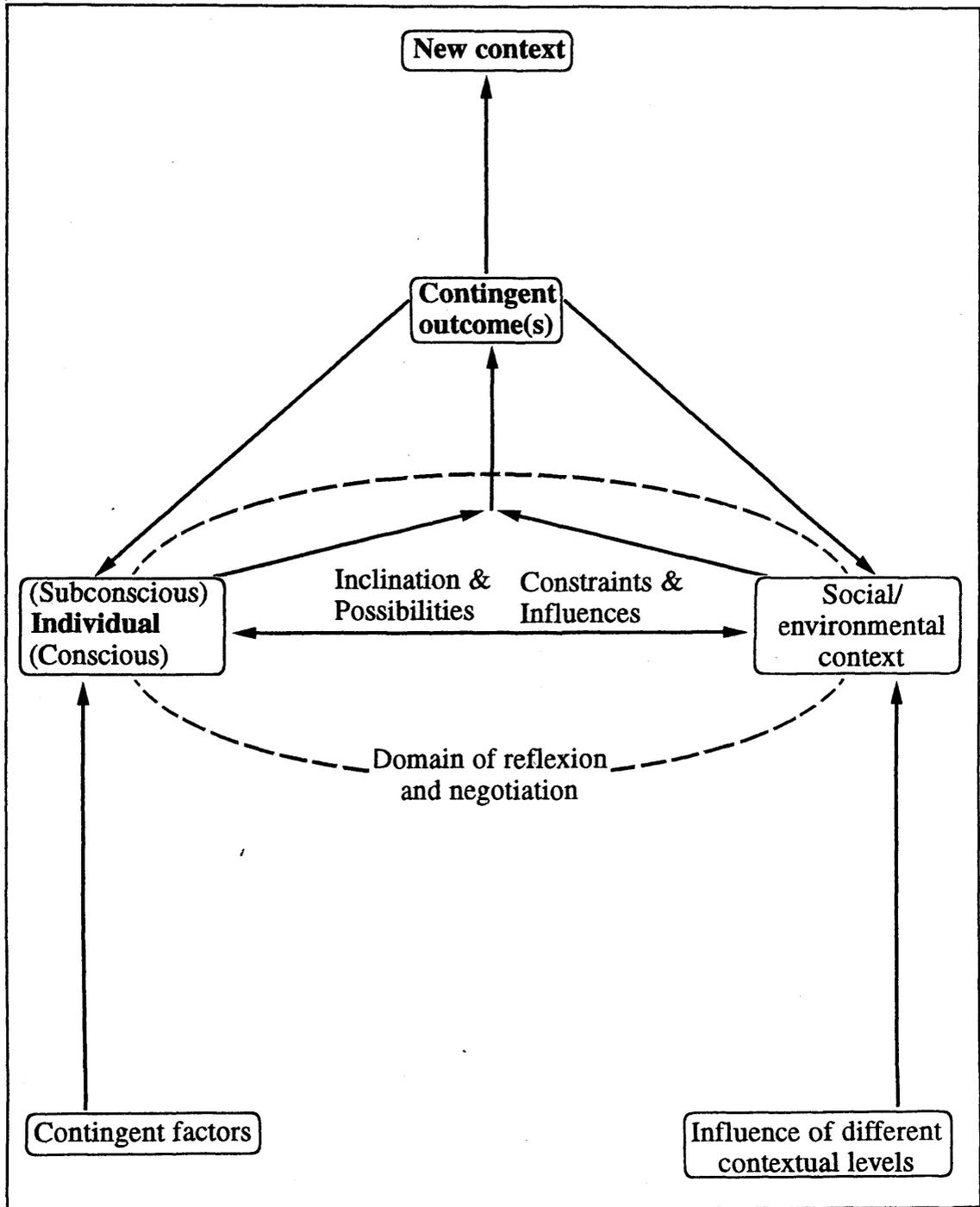
The following section will consider the agency of young people as an agglomerative and holistic process concerning the inter-relationships and contingencies upon and between the individual and the context of the action at any one point in time. In so doing a dynamic conceptual model is proposed in which the relationships young people, in different contexts, have with their environments can be understood and the diversity of young people's geographies explored.

3.4.2 Contingency and reflexivity in the construction of young people's relationships with their environments

Contingent worlds emerge as a result of the interplay between the abstraction of the phenomenological world of the individual and the contextual influences or structures within which the individual acts. These two positions (individual and context) are in turn multifaceted and contingent upon mediating factors. The individual, for example, is not a prescribed social entity rather is the product of, for example, his/her own life experiences, genetics, social biography and phenomenological world. These factors influence the nature of his/her being at any one time, bringing about contingent behaviour in the form of a particular set of intentions and attitudes which incline the individual to a particular course of action. Mediating these scenarios is the influence of the context in which the individual is acting, the interrelationships with other contexts and the nature of the interactional relationship between the individual and his/her context (See also Bronfenbrenner 1986). One dimension to the context in which the individual may act is that of the peer group. Contingent outcomes therefore arise out of the interplay between the contingent actions and intentions of the individual (or group) and the influence of the context within which it occurs, as is shown in the dynamic model of human action in Figure 3.3. In this way context is understood as an amalgam of abstract and concrete processes and structures which together provide a certain condition for action at any one time or place.

Both of these sets of forces are vested with power and meaning which are unlikely to be mutually compatible. The inter-relationship between the young person and neighbourhood space is in turn one of power relations concerning social control and cultural difference. These may, for example, involve parental authority, boundaries between private and public space, local by laws, local authority policy, police practice, national legislation and public policy concerning use (in particular by young people) of the street, and prevailing socio-cultural attitudes towards young people. Interactions between young people and their environment become characterised by disjunctures and cultural discontinuities which in turn give rise to contingency actions to remedy the disharmony.

Figure 3.3: Dynamic-interactionist model of young people's relationship with environmental contexts.



Within this situation the individual has a range of options in the way (s)he responds, for example by conforming, by rebelling or through constructing alternative contingency plans. The choice of strategy will depend on such things as the individual's own experience, personality, aspirations and microcultural group influence. The production of an outcome from the interaction of young people with their environment, in terms of place behaviour, occurs within what can be termed the 'domain of reflexion and negotiation' in which the nature of the power relations and influence between individual and context determines the 'realms of possibility'. The outcome of the interaction between the individual and the context is also contingent upon the reality the individual constructs in the moment. That is to say, the context is not presented as a concrete universal reality but is variably interpreted by individuals as a result of their own consciousness. Individual consciousness is constituted from the product of an individual's life experience including previous interaction with, or knowledge of, similar contexts. This is the educational process which occurs in person-environment interactions and which predisposes the individual towards future action with varying degrees of competence.

The resulting changes in the form of contingent outcomes gives rise to a new reality (to a lesser or greater degree - which may simply involve a change in thought or a change in the course of history) or context within which any subsequent human action occurs. The lifecourse consists of a series of these events over time each of which retrospectively and prospectively influences individual life trajectories. Different life trajectories over time and space are in turn reflexively influential upon each other. This may result in compatible place uses and geographies based on shared values, meanings and experiences between individuals which flow together to constitute diverse microcultures (Wulff 1995b) which, in terms of place use, give rise to different microgeographies of young people (Matthews *et al.* 1998a). Wulff (1995b: 65) suggests that microcultures are characterised by: "the particular combination of personalities, the localities where they meet, and certain momentous events that they experience together". These parallel with the conceptual framework - individuals, contexts and interactions between the two - being adopted here. In this way microgeographies reflect young people facing different contexts which afford different possibilities, which young people are then able to exploit, adapt or change.

There are numerous possible contexts and many contingency factors which impinge on young people's lives. The multiplicity of contexts have already been identified within an ecological framework and the influence of macrostructural changes on young people's leisure and lifestyles has been considered. It has in particular been noted that macrostructural changes have diverse effects on different groups of young people according to how they respond to these structures as well as contingency factors which circumvent their local worlds.

The fact that any human action occurs at a point in time means that it has an historical context. The historical context affects an individual's life trajectory (as a composite series of moments) as a result of the characteristics of the historical context at any one point in time. Historical change exerts a cascading influence on contexts at different points along the continuum between the abstract and the concrete, and at different structural levels or ecological contexts. For example, late modernity brings about changes to social structures, social processes and contexts which impinge upon the worlds of young people at a local level. It also directly affects young people's consciousness of the world around them.

The model put forward in this section suggests that young people carve out their worlds through a process of negotiation and reflexivity in different contexts. Contrary to views that young people may be considered as passive victims of structural determination, young people are, on the contrary, active agents constructing their own life trajectories in an increasingly fragmented, unpredictable and complex world. The extent to which young people are variably positioned to deal with the contexts of their lives depends on an amalgam of contingency factors including locality, social biographies, parental influence and home background, peers and microcultures. The next chapter will consider the influence of some of these different sets of contingency factors on the way in which young people value and use local places.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has set out to define the parameters of a new approach to understanding the lives of young people, which suspends moral judgment and instead provides a dynamic and holistic framework for understanding young people as active cultural agents in their own right. The key agency-structure-contingency debates which have been set out here in the context of childhood and youth research, will remain present throughout this study and will contribute to the theoretical framework in which this research is conducted. One of the problems that has characterised the 'crisis' in the study of childhood and adolescence has been the partial view that singular disciplines have contributed. This study aims to contribute to evolving discourses of children and youth by reinterpreting young people's relationships with local places in terms of the multiple realities and diverse sets of contingency factors which influence the way in which young people reflexively respond to their social and environmental contexts and which bring about a diversity of young people's geographies. The following chapter will review recent studies which focus on the way in which young people value and use local places in different contexts.

Chapter Four

Young people and place

4.1 Introduction

Concern about young people in public places has grown over recent years surrounding, on the one hand, children's safety and vulnerability and, on the other, young people's anti-social behaviour in public places. This ambivalence about young people's use of local places appears to reflect indifference and partiality in understanding the values and meanings young people attach to, and the way they use, local places. Young people's values are under represented on local landscapes. However, there is a lack of recognition of the difference and diversity in young people's relationships with their environments. For example, local environmental planning appears to take inadequate account of differences between the place needs of younger and older children.

There is evidence that society's commitment to environmental provision for young people may be starting to change. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular, has given rise to a range of local developments and initiatives concerned with ways in which young people's views and interests may be better accommodated through their own involvement (see Chapter Five). At the same time young people's patterns of leisure and place use have become more complex and diverse (Valentine 1996a). This study therefore aims to expose the diversity of young people's relationships with local places, in terms of different modes of social and recreational activities in and with local places. To that end this chapter will review evidence to date concerning the difference and diversity in the way in which young people value and use local places.

There is an established literature on children's place behaviour, environmental cognition, spatial competence, sense of place and place use which highlights that young people do not all have the same relationships with their local environments (see for example Blaut and Stea 1971, 1974; Bunge and Bordessa 1975; Coates and Bussard 1974; Moore 1976; Payne and Jones 1977; Moore and Young 1978; Hart 1979; Matthews 1984, 1987, 1992; Downs 1985; Moore 1986; Downs and Liben 1987; Ward 1978, 1990; Spencer *et al.* 1989). These studies indicate variations in young people's transaction with place, for example, in terms of the expanding 'home range' - "the distance children travel away from their home in the course of their outdoor play and leisure pursuits" (Mathews 1992: 19) - according to age and gender.

This chapter will not replicate the reviews of these earlier studies, for this is comprehensively accomplished elsewhere (see Matthews 1992; Aitken 1994 for a review). Instead this chapter will seek to bring this work up to date by considering the contribution of more recent studies to the growing field of children's geographies. In particular it will focus on studies which reflect the themes and issues which have emerged from the empirical research in this study. In Chapter Three attention was drawn to the importance of different contexts for understanding young people's lives with insights provided into the way in which macrostructural forces impinge upon young people's experiences. This chapter, in contrast, will emphasise how variables, such as age, gender, location, micro cultures and parental influence are pertinent to understanding young people's use of local places.

The chapter begins by reviewing evidence which highlights some of the ways in which local places are important for young people. It then explores continuity and change in the general patterns of young people's place use and values. Evidence for the diversity of young people's geographies is then explored according to age, gender, lifestyles, location and parental influence. Finally, attention focuses on the increasing number of studies which address the nature of conflicts young people experience between themselves and with adults in the course of their place transactions.

4.2 The importance of local places for young people

4.2.1 Introduction

A number of writers have highlighted that local places matter to individuals, affording personal identity through attachment, personal development through effective use of local resources and civic and social belongingness through participation (Matthews 1992; Spencer and Blades 1993; Hart 1995, 1997). The extent to which young people identify with local places depends on the sense of community and belonging the neighbourhood offers, the quality and availability of environmental opportunities and the extent to which particular places are valued by young people. The importance of local places for young people therefore depends on the physical, social and perceptual landscapes of different neighbourhoods. This section will consider the importance of local places for young people in terms of sense of community and belonging and environmental opportunities.

4.2.2 Sense of community and belonging

For young people, the value of a community is in the sense of belonging and attachment they feel (Chawla 1992; Heaton and Sayer 1992; Bell 1993; McLaughlin 1993; Hasler 1995; Henderson 1995) and the extent to which they may be able to "learn to experience the benefits of reciprocity and co-operation and to act on them as they grow up" (Matthews *et al.* 1998b: 31; Hart 1992; Henderson 1995). Matthews *et al.*

(1998b: p.8) suggest there is “a need to investigate neighbourhood environments as young people see it, only then will they become full and integrated users of large scale environments”.

The social environment for children concerns the space outside as well as inside the home. Henderson (1995: 1) defines community as entailing a “definite meaning of shared identity (in terms of a community of children) and a strong sense of place”. Whereas traditionally communities may have provided a nurturing and cohesive network of social structures through which the young person can grow, learn and become enculturated in the ways of the community (Blyth and Leffert 1995), in recent decades, the worlds of children and adults have become increasingly more separate and, for children, alienated (Warner 1994). Young people tend not to be treated as part of the community (Henderson 1995), such that they are invariably excluded from community development and local environmental decision making and seen as discrepant on the landscape (Sibley 1995a).

The failure to provide creative, supportive community environments (Zeldin and Price 1995) in which young people can grow as competent citizens with a sense of place, purpose, belonging and self worth, can lead to alienation, disaffection, apathy and dysfunctionality amongst young people (Wyn and White 1997). Garbarino (1995) for example, draws attention to how ‘socially toxic environments’ such as urban ‘war zones’ play out in the lives of young people and the development tolls they extract, particularly in what is interpreted as socially dysfunctional behaviour. Past studies (see for example Willis 1977) have shown how local cultures extend a socialising influence upon subsequent generations such that the everyday life of the community becomes a medium for cultural reproduction. Prevailing local cultures in this way constitute one particular difference in the contingency effect of locality.

Bo (1995) outlines a theoretical model for understanding the interplay of factors concerning neighbourhood quality, network processes and the leisure time pursuits of 15-16 year old boys. She finds that the better the neighbourhood quality, the more comprehensive the development of social networks and young people’s involvement in them and the more pro-social the leisure activities of young people. The quality of the social environment of a neighbourhood could thus be positioned on a continuum between ‘harmony and inclusion’ - in which young people are valued and integrated into community life - and ‘conflict and exclusion’, based on what White *et al.* (1996: 5) describe as “a prior relationship of mistrust and mutual antagonism”, in which young people’s social worlds remain separate from the mainstream life of the community. The extent to which neighbourhood communities acknowledge the difference and diversity of young people and therefore create cultural space for their difference to be articulated, determines the contingency effect of place in terms of the degree to which young people collide, conflict or collude with other neighbourhood groups. Young people’s

relationship with the wider community therefore has implications for their use and sense of place. There is consequently a need to understand young people's sense of community - of inclusion or exclusion (Henderson 1997) - and the way they negotiate and manage neighbourhood and community structures in their production of cultural space. A further way in which local places are important for young people is in terms of the environmental opportunities different localities afford young people.

4.2.3 Environmental opportunities

Young people are the most frequent users of public space for recreational purposes (Rosenbaum 1993; Williams 1995). Ward (1978: 72) states that "children will play everywhere and with anything." The significance of the physical environment for young people lies in the quality and availability of opportunities to engage in recreation and play activities (Berg and Medrich 1980; Gaster 1991; Cunningham and Jones 1991; Noschis 1992; Aitken 1994; Owens 1994; Sebba 1994), for exploration, stimulation and adventure (Hart 1979; Moore 1986; Nabham and Trimble 1994), for social encounters (Hendry 1983; Silbereisen *et al.* 1986; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Lieberg 1995; Cotterell 1996) and for creating a sense of well being (Chawla 1992; Korpela 1992; Owens 1994; Matthews *et al.* 1998a).

In making a connection between agency and habitat Bauman (1992) noted that young people pick among what is available in their surroundings to form their identity. McKendrick (1997) similarly finds that, despite the drabness of the physical environment, children from poor communities enjoy a wealth of environmental opportunities. This he refers to as 'paradoxical poverty'. These echo previous studies which have consistently highlighted the agency and competence of young people in their environments (See for example Lynch 1977; Hart 1979; Schoggen and Schoggen 1985; Moore 1986; Silbereisen and Noack 1988; Silbereisen *et al.* 1988). The way in which young people's agency is articulated in terms of behaviour is therefore dependent to varying degrees on the physical character of the neighbourhood. The quality of life of young people in urban areas cannot be divorced from the changing social, as well as, physical nature of the neighbourhood environment.

The informal educational benefit of neighbourhood play (Ward 1978; Hart 1979) and 'free' play generally is widely recognised (Child 1985; Moore 1986; Cohen 1993; Van Gils 1995) by academics and parents alike. However, the quality and availability of opportunities for play and socialising in a neighbourhood is dependent on the availability of open and green space, recreational facilities and quality of the physical environment. The physical environment can in turn be divided into the built and the natural environment. A number of writers draw attention to children's affinity for nature (Chawla 1988; Simmons 1994; Wals 1994). On the other hand are studies which have highlighted the influence of different types of built environments on the behaviour of young people (Hayward *et al.* 1974; Bunge and Bordessa 1975; Van Vliet 1983; Van

Staden 1984; Cooper-Marcus 1974; Bjorklid 1985; Schoggen and Schoggen 1985; Coffin and Williams 1989; Ware and Cavanagh 1992; Aitken 1994).

The quality and availability of public space is dependent on the way local places are planned and managed. Zukin (1995) notes the increasing privatisation and policing of urban public space particularly through the use of private security personnel and surveillance equipment. Incursions into young people's free range is not only detrimental to young people, but also to communities as young people become alienated from the everyday activities of neighbourhood social activity. Rosenbaum (1993: 64) notes that "if children are to benefit from the facilities provided for the whole community, these need to be physically accessible and convenient for them." Katz (1994), however, highlights how play space for children is being eroded as a result of cuts in investment in community facilities. Urban public space is increasingly being lost with significant repercussions for young people (Karsten *et al.* 1995). One further focus of interest into children and neighbourhood environments has been the declining quality of local places in terms of social dangers and environmental hazards.

Environmental hazards have provided the focus for many studies which highlight the way in which young people's neighbourhood activity space is increasingly being blighted (Bjorklid 1995; Lawson and Edwards 1991; Hillman and Adams 1992; Kendrick 1993; Hillman *et al.* 1993; Rosenbaum 1993; Blakely 1994; Levelt 1995; Valentine 1995, 1996b, 1997b; Valentine and McKendrick 1997). For example Hillman *et al.* (1993) indicates a dramatic reduction in young people's independent mobility between 1971 and 1990 as a result of an increase in car ownership. Other writers have indicated how perceived (if not real) stranger dangers affect young people's environmental range both directly in terms of young people's own environmental anxieties and indirectly in term of parental concerns (Cahill 1990; Blakely 1994; McNeish and Roberts 1995; Valentine 1997b; Valentine and McKendrick 1997). Of interest to this study is how these environmental factors affect the local geographies of young people in different locations.

This section has drawn attention to some of the different ways in which local places are important for young people, but also provides examples of how local places are becoming lost or blighted by environmental hazards and planning. The way in which place factors give rise to diverse geographies of young people will be considered in section 4.4.4. The following section will explore general trends in the places young people value and use.

4.3 Continuity and change in young people's place use and values

4.3.1 Introduction

The environmental and social contexts in which young people live are diverse and changing. The discussion above draws attention to the increasingly hazardous nature of public space and young people's diminished access to neighbourhood space. Macrostructural changes too have provided a different set of contextual factors in which young people spend their leisure time and use public places. For example the increasing pressure to engage in commodified and consumption orientated leisure activities, the expanding range of virtual technologies and information media and the reorganisation of leisure time and space (particularly with respect to the family and public space) are all characteristic of the changing macrostructural influences on young people's place transactions (Stewart 1992; Jones and Wallace 1992; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Naesman 1994; Lieberg 1995; Foernas and Boelin 1995; Furlong and Cartmel 1997; McKendrick *et al.* 1998). Lieberg (1995: 721) suggests that "it is difficult to understand the behaviour and activity patterns of teenagers in public environments without also relating them to issues of modernization and individualization." Furlong and Cartmel (1997: 63) suggest that "... with a growing range of possible activities in which young people can engage, the lives of the younger generation in Britain have changed significantly". Sennett (1977) interprets the impact of late modernity on patterns of urban place use in terms of 'pedagogizing, institutionalising and disciplining public spaces' which coerce young people into new lifestyles, activities and identities.

These assertions suggest that young people's use of public places needs to be understood with reference to these historically specific social, cultural and economic conditions in which they live. Recent studies suggest that despite a degree of continuity in local places used and valued by young people, trends in young people's lifestyles and use of place are also experiencing changes. This section will consider evidence for continuity and change in young people's place transactions. It will consider general patterns in young people's place preferences, reasons why they value particular places and the different ways in which they use local places.

4.3.2 Young people's place preferences

Evidence from recent studies of young people's use of local places suggest an overall continuity in the local places young people value most. Studies by Owens (1994) and Malone (1998), replicating earlier work by Lynch (1977) in a suburb of Melbourne, Australia, reveal that little has changed in the range of places most valued and used by young people. In both of these studies commercial areas, homesites, developed parks and natural places were found to be most valued by young people. Malone (1998) however, found differences between young people's favourite places and the places

they most frequented. For example, whereas 2 per cent of the respondents mentioned commercial areas as their favourite places only 13 per cent frequented these places. Similarly 22 per cent mentioned home sites as their favourite place but in reality a larger percentage of respondents (34%) frequented home sites. These trends raise questions as to why young people are not frequenting the places they would most like to and why they are spending more time in homesite locations.

A number of other studies have equally revealed consistency in young people's leisure setting preferences. Woolley and Amin (1995), investigating the perception and use of public spaces by Pakistani young people in Sheffield aged 7-12 years also found similar trends to Owens (1994) and Malone (1998). They found that neighbourhood parks were visited most frequently (48%) followed by playgrounds (17%), the Sheffield arena (13%) and roads/streets (12%). Hendry *et al.* (1993) conducting a questionnaire survey of 10,000 young people aged 9-20 followed by in-depth research with a panel of 250 boys and girls, found common leisure activities to be visiting friends (85%), hanging about in the street with friends (56%), discos (47%), sports clubs (40%), youth clubs (37%), cinemas (31%) and pubs (29%). However, they also revealed variations according to age and lifestyle in young people's patterns of leisure.

Since the work of Corrigan (1979) and James (1986) there have been few geographical studies which emphasise 'the street' as an important social venue for young people. However, a number of recent studies have been conducted from disciplines such as cultural studies, psychology, anthropology, criminology, social policy and sociology, which reassert the importance of the 'street' for young people (Hendry *et al.* 1993; Wulff 1995; Back 1996; Cotterell 1996; Pearce 1996; Taylor *et al.* 1996; Watt and Stenson 1998). Hendry *et al.* 1993; Lieberg 1995; Cotterell 1996; Pearce 1996; Taylor *et al.* 1996; Herman and Aitken 1998; Malone 1998; Matthews *et al.* 1998a, 1998g; Watt and Stenson 1998). The continuity of young people's orientation to neighbourhood street spaces reflects a continuing need for autonomous space but also the complex ways in which young people's social identities and lifestyles are intertwined with space, place and territory. Herman and Aitken (1998) referred to the street as a 'performance space' in which elaborate roles and activities are created. Recent studies uncover a merging and mixing of cultural identities and place use between different social groups of young people. Watt and Stenson 1998; Wulff (1995) and Back (1996), for example, identify inter racial friendships in street peer cultures. However, as Back (1996) and Watt and Stenson (1998) found, identity and place use is still to a greater extent formed along lines of gender differences.

The general trends in place use outlined here mask the multiple realities and diverse uses of place both within and between different groups of young people. Different places yield different opportunities according to the attractiveness of particular places to young people and their identification with, and motivation towards, different place

transactions. Lieberg (1995), for example, differentiated between 'places of retreat' and 'places of interaction'. Whilst neighbourhood fringe areas are the site for negative interaction with other place users, general public place such as the woods and the dam were important for withdrawing to so as to escape the public attention. The conceptual map of the city for young people is hence characterised as differential "spheres of several linked places" (Lieberg 1995: 722) with different places having different functions for different teenagers at different times. Matthews *et al.* (1998a: 16) follow this trend by suggesting there is a "diversity of 'microcultures' ... into and out of which young people move ... (according to) their own preferences and values for any given situation" at any given time. They suggest four categories of 'special' places which comprise important parts of young people's microgeographies and which vary from person to person. They are: places away from authority (outdoors, woods, fields, streets), places to be with friends (woods, parks play ares, streets, local shops, sport centres, town centre malls, friend's and own house), places for adventure (woods, lake , streets, back alleys, underpasses, building sites, derelict land) and places for solitude (woods, bedroom, backyard, garden). These findings suggest that places are defined in terms of their usage.

The evidence provided here suggests that despite the increasing importance of commercial and institutionalised leisure activities and new cultures of consumption (Featherstone 1991; Nava 1992; McRobbie 1994; Sennett 1977; Lieberg 1995; Valentine and McKendrick 1997; McKendrick *et al.* 1998), young people continue to identify with local neighbourhood places. However, findings from Valentine and McKendrick's (1997) study, investigating parental concerns about children's outdoor play, indicate that young people's patterns of place use are changing, characterised by a retreat indoors into home based and institutionalised activities.

According to Valentine and McKendrick's (1997) research, based on nearly 400 questionnaires with parents of young people between eight and eleven years of age and subsequent in depth interviews, they found that fewer children (23%) are now considered outdoor children in comparison to what Newson and Newson (1976) found in their research (60%). They found that outdoor play is increasingly centred on home sites - places in and immediately around the home - such as the garden or the road outside the home, suggesting that a significant amount of outdoor play is in fact conducted in private rather than public spaces. To compensate for this decline in independent free range they noted an increase in young people's participation in parent-controlled institutionalised activities. This trend they argue is due to the growth in women's participation in the labour force and the decline in after school provision. Young people's play and leisure activities are hence increasingly occurring in child-adult segregated private spaces. Adler and Adler (1994) claim that institutional activities are characterised by being organised, competitive and routinized. The implications of these changes are that young people are being denied opportunities to

develop self reliance, co-operation, problem solving and interpersonal skills, their own understanding of their local environment through spontaneous and carefree play, giving rise to a dislocated sense of space and time (Valentine and McKendrick 1997; Adler and Adler 1994).

The study by Valentine and McKendrick (1997) reveals significant changes to trends in young people's use of place. However, emphasis is on changes to where young people actually spend their time rather than signifying a shift in young people's place preferences. There is a need therefore to investigate young people's perspectives upon these changing patterns of leisure and place use, how they feel about and respond to these arrangements but also how relevant these changing trends are for older children. Valentine and McKendrick (1997: 232) indeed conclude by stating that: "Whilst there is a growing body of work (...) on the experiences of late teenagers/young adults (or youths), there is little work which explores the lives of young teenagers". Furthermore as Conn (1994) argues there is a need to explore further *why* places matter to young people and *how* the relationships of teens with aspects of their environments are formed. The following section will consider evidence concerning the relationships young people have with different places and why different places are valued.

4.3.3 Young people's place values

Identifying place preferences provides only a partial picture of young people's geographies. As Hendry *et al.* (1993: 177) conclude "The interplay of factors from within the individual and from the social environment which directs young people towards particular pursuits in their leisure is important to understand". The values young people attach to different settings are therefore also important in defining young people's geographies. Owens (1994) outlines a number of reasons why young people valued particular places establishing a link between place, activity and psychological impact. In order of importance the most frequently mentioned were: because they could go there with others (91%), to feel better (72%), for recreation (69%), to be with others (63%), because of a sense of belonging (55%), to put things into perspective (49%), to get away from others (36%) and to be with nature (33%). These findings suggest that young people value local places for three sets of reasons: for social reasons, for recreation and for psychological improvement or what Korpela (1992) refers to as environmental self regulation. These will be considered in turn.

Owens (1994) reveals that 'developed parks' were visited primarily for recreation but also to be with other young people. Kleiber *et al.* (1986) found that young people demonstrated a higher degree of concentration and motivation to sports and games than other leisure activities. Fox (1994) suggests that young people's decisions about physical activity are linked to their desire to achieve, to their need for a positive body image and as a result of the need to belong. Harris (1993) found, however, that as with other health related behaviours amongst young people, they are primarily motivated by

the desire for fun and enjoyment and to be with friends rather than intrinsic benefits of the activity itself. However, whereas Malone (1998) also found that young people frequently hung around recreational settings, this was largely the result of lacking the financial means to use the facilities.

The use of venues as meeting places is equally relevant to commercial areas. In a similar fashion to developed parks, Owens (1994) found that commercial areas - including local milk bars, local shops, downtown shopping areas and malls - were used to be with other young people and as places to bring friends and hang out. As places to see and be seen, like the developed parks, commercial areas serve a social function of defining and redefining identities. Hendry *et al.* (1993: 56) echo these findings through their Young People Leisure and Lifestyle project by noting: "Fast-food cafes and bus shelters are not used to buy food or await transport. They are used as "theatres for self-display, observations points for assessing the roles of others and of oneself, meeting grounds for establishing and maintaining solidarity with one's group". Lieberg (1995) notes that a large part of the 'daily fellowship' of young people hanging out outside entails keeping track of each other, joking, talking and arguing about common interests and experiences in their daily lives. The peer group acts as a resource in terms of mutual emotional support, empathy, vital intimate feedback and exchange of values and information on an equal basis, and opportunities for practising new roles and behaviours and developing social skills (Hendry *et al.* 1995: 116). Cotterell (1996: 21) stated that "friendship is not an optional extra in adolescence: it is crucial to achieving many developmental tasks".

The importance of commercial areas for young people have been corroborated by a range of studies (Anthony 1985; Lewis 1989; Shields 1989; Hopkins 1991; Korpela 1992; White 1993) which have highlighted the attraction of the mall to young people. Anthony (1985) for example, found that young people spend large amounts of time watching each other, cruising around playing video games and having occasional snacks. However as will be considered in section 4.5 young people's use of commercial areas, as with many neighbourhood places, are increasingly becoming sites of conflict and harassment. Hendry *et al.* (1993) conclude that although public places such as malls are clearly important for young people little is known about the significance of these places for young people.

The use of places as a process of environmental self-regulation extends analysis of young people's use of local places beyond their symbolic or functional values to embrace the affective relationships of young people with different places. Sommer (1990) for example shows that favourite places for young people can provide respite from daily pressures as well as feelings of well-being, peace and comfort (see also Sobel 1990 and Dovey 1990). Engler (1990) also draws attention to the visceral importance of particular places for engendering a meditative state of mind, for

introspection, which provides an important emotional resource for the individual, and for gaining insights to the solution of inner conflicts. In this way physical environments are important resources to enable the individual to negotiate life contexts (Knopf 1983). Korpela (1992) notes that young people frequently do not identify one particular favourite place rather have many places they enjoy dependent on mood and feelings. In this way Korpela uncovers how young people use different places as means of regulating unpleasant and pleasant feelings, the coherence of self-experiences and self esteem (see also Silbereisen *et al.* 1986; Noack and Silbereisen 1988; Silbereisen and Noack 1988). These may be quiet places to be alone (Hart 1979) or public spaces to be with friends (Owens 1988, 1994). A number of studies indicate that young people frequently search out 'solitary places' (Hart 1979; Owens 1988; Chawla 1988; Matthews *et al.* 1998a). Hart (1979: 171) for example notes that:

"Contrary to the urban and recreational planners' image of children as desiring to continually run, jump and climb, some children search out quiet places to be alone. These places very frequently carry water, dirt or sand and are sites for hours of quiet introspection often dabbling seemingly aimlessly."

Whilst these activities may be seen as unproductive in the eyes of adults they are integral to the young persons means of coping and making sense of the world (See also Owens 1988 and Sommer 1990). Home sites and natural settings are most often noted as places where young people go to be alone. These places are valued because young people can get away from others, put things in perspective and feel better being there. Home sites are also meaningful for young people as a result of a sense of ownership and their sense of having created or changed the place in some way and because, like the street, they have a degree of autonomy (Owens 1988; Hester *et al.* 1988). Typically these places are the back yard, the bedroom or on the street at the front of the house. However, Korpela (1992) suggests that the importance of places for children to be alone requires further research and needs to be taken more account of in environmental planning.

Studies also indicate that young people have a strong affinity for natural places (Chawla 1988; Hester *et al.* 1988; Owens 1988; Korpela 1992; Olwig 1993; Simmons 1994; Wals 1994). In particular evidence suggests that one of the reason young people are attracted to natural places is for their therapeutic benefits (Chawla 1988; Kaplan 1983; Kaplan and Talbot 1983; Owens 1988; Wals 1994). Kaplan and Talbot for example identified how natural environments serve as 'restorative environments' characterised by: a sense of being away, a sense of being in an entirely different world, a feeling of fascination, and compatibility with the environment, individual inclinations and the actions required by the environment. However as Schiavo (1988) notes, the desire to sometimes be alone does not refute the importance of peer groups and the importance of other places, rather, to reveal the multiplicity of adolescent place needs (Owens 1994).

Indeed studies suggest that different places yield a range of different opportunities (Owens 1988; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Matthews *et al.* 1998a). For example, natural places also yield opportunities for adventure or spontaneous recreational activities.

This section illustrates that the motivation behind young people's use of place, varies according to setting. Knopf (1983: 211) views the "recreating human as a purposive actor systematically operating on his or her environment to bring about states of optimality", suggesting that understanding of human-environment behaviour must be understood in the context of 'larger quests'. Silbereisen *et al.* (1986) for example, suggest that young people affect their own development in their choice of place use by harmonising internal conditions with external contexts. Such strategies are ways of negotiating social contexts and achieving personal goals.

The diversity of relationships young people have with local places outlined here echoes previous findings which highlight the richness, diversity and agency of young people's place experiences (Lynch 1977; Ward 1978; Hart 1979; Silbereisen *et al.* 1986; Moore 1986; Bernaldez *et al.* 1987; Schiavo 1988). They also suggest that young people have a strong affective sense of their everyday worlds (Chawla 1992; Matthews *et al.* 1998a). Bernaldez *et al.* (1987) for example, found that children perceive distinct differences in landscape settings, according to levels of fear and anxiety about hazards, people and inconveniences and the availability of facilities that might meet their needs (for example shelter from the rain). As Matthews *et al.* (1998a) suggest, the importance of these different types of place relationships for young people gives rise to a complex web of diverse local geographies.

However, these studies have, with the exception of Moore (1986), Valentine and McKendrick (1997) and Matthews *et al.* (1998a), been conducted in non-UK contexts. Nonetheless the increasingly inter disciplinary nature of studies of young people's lives has given rise to a number of studies conducted from the disciplines of cultural studies, youth and community studies, social work, anthropology, psychology, environmental education, planning, sociology, criminology and social policy which concern young people's relationships with their environment (Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Watt and Stenson 1998; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Pearce 1996; Evans 1994; Cunningham *et al.* 1996; Back 1996; Malone 1998; Jeffs and Smith 1994; Karsten *et al.* 1995; James *et al.* 1998). The value of these studies is in the different perspectives they bring to understanding young people's relationships with place.

Despite, in the main, concerning older teenagers, these studies echo the call from geographers in recognising the need to explore young people's use of place along lines of social and cultural difference. There is however a need to bring studies of young people's use of local places conducted from different disciplines, together within a coherent framework of young people, space and society. This study seeks to contribute

to this endeavour by uncovering some of the diverse environmental experiences of different groups of young people. What follows is a review of evidence to date concerning diversity in young people's place preferences with respect to age and gender. Subsequent sections will explore the contingency effects of parental and locational influences upon young people's place transactions.

4.4 Exploring diversity in young people's place use and values

4.4.1 Introduction

The review so far has focused on general trends in place use and values of young people as a generational group. Young people do not all share the same patterns of place use or leisure activities, nor spend their time in the same way. Young people's geographies are therefore characterised by multiple realities. Furlong and Cartmel (1997: 54-55) state that "... while some spend much of their leisure time in informal pursuits or solitary activities, others participate in a range of organised and group activities". This section will consider the diversity in young people's place use and values in terms of age, gender, spatial cultures, location, class and parental influence.

4.4.2 Age variations

A significant dimension to young people's place preferences is the distinction between boys and girls and between younger and older children. There is a sufficient body of literature which demonstrates that young people's environmental range increases with age (see for example Coates and Bussard 1974; Newson and Newson 1976; Payne and Jones 1977; Moore and Young 1978; Hart 1979; Matthews 1984, 1987, 1992; Schiavo 1988). Hart (1979) found that at the age of ten young people's range suddenly expanded. Matthews, in contrast, found that it was between eight and nine that parental restrictions on range became more relaxed. Matthews (1992: 21) states that: "as children grow older so their opportunities to encounter and explore large-scale environments increase". Whilst it is acknowledged that young people of different ages may have different environmental ranges, these may be considered as primarily determined by environmental competence and parental controls rather than patterns of cultural difference. Understanding young people's relationships with place also necessitates recognising the diverse cultural preferences and therefore different patterns of place use of young people of different ages.

The place behaviour of younger children up to (approximately) 12 years of age tends to differ from that of teenagers. Moore (1986) worked with ninety six young people aged 9-12 in three different urban settings to uncover the nature of their relationships with their everyday neighbourhood environments. Based on children's drawings of their local area he found a similar range of favourite places in each of the three locations,

with homesites, open spaces, natural places paths and associated spaces emerging as the most important types of local places. As young people become teenagers place preferences switch to places providing commercial entertainment and private meeting places (Silbereisen *et al.* 1986). Based on a study of the favourite leisure settings of 1300 young people aged 11-15 in Berlin (Silbereisen *et al.* 1986), Silbereisen and Noack (1988) found that the primary activity at different commercial leisure settings revolved around informal social contacts and communication using the settings as hang outs, a place for socialising, with the official program of minor interest (see also Malone 1998). This finding is echoed by Furlong and Cartmel (1997) who suggest that by the age of 15 years young people place a greater emphasis on social activities.

Coleman and Hendry (1990) propose a 'focal theory' in which different issues, interests and relationships come into focus (in the sense of being most prominent) at different times and at different ages for different individuals. Hendry *et al.* (1993), building on this idea, suggest that the leisure patterns of young people move through three age-related stages: 'organised leisure', casual leisure' and 'commercial leisure'. Organised leisure includes clubs (such as uniformed groups) and sports club activities. Hendry *et al.* (1993) found that 75% of 9-10 year olds belong to at least one club (including youth clubs), however this level declines with age as organised activities give way to informal neighbourhood encounters. However, participation in sport remains popular through out the age ranges. Casual leisure includes hanging around with friends either in each others homes or around the local neighbourhood. They find that visiting friends houses remains popular throughout the age ranges. Home based activities, such as television viewing, also remain popular throughout the age ranges. Listening to music increases in popularity whereas reading and hobbies decrease in popularity with age. At the age of 15 commercial leisure becomes the predominant form of leisure activity extending young people's range beyond the neighbourhood to encompass visits to the cinema, discos, and pubs. Willis (1990) notes that approximately three quarters of 16 -24 year olds visit pubs at least four times a week.

These findings underline the increasing importance of social as opposed to environmental transactions with age, also noted by earlier studies (Cooper-Marcus 1974; Moore and Young 1978; Csikszentmihalyi and Larson 1984). Moore and Young (1978) referred to this as environmentally independent behaviour wherein the environment accommodates a predetermined set of behaviour. This is not to suggest that the environmental location is not important, instead it's importance shifts from one of stimulus to one of setting, in which young people have the space to engage in social interaction without adult interference.

Age related trends in young people's relationships with place are however also subject to the influence of other factors such as gender, class, location and parental influence. Valentine and McKendrick (1997) argue that trends in young people's outdoor place

activities are mediated more by class, gender and environmental location than age. Hendry *et al.* (1993) also note that after the preadolescent years clear patterns begin to emerge in young people's leisure, which reflect gender, age and social class. However, Valentine and McKendrick (1997) state that "there is little work which explores the lives of young teenagers".

4.4.3 Gender variations

Recent studies of gender variations in young peoples place use have tended to corroborate earlier work (Coates and Bussard 1974; Payne and Jones 1977; Hart 1979; Van Vliet 1983; Matthews 1987; Cunningham and Jones 1991) which indicates that boys are permitted a freer roaming space than girls (Katz 1993; Owens 1994; Valentine and McKendrick 1997; Pearce 1996; Malone 1998). Hart (1979) argues that this is due to differences in caretaking practices of boys and girls, with boys enjoying more flexibility. Whereas boys are increasingly given more freedom with age, parents exercise a higher degree of vigilance and control over their daughters. For some (Loyd 1975; Hart 1979; Moore 1986; Peters 1994) these differences are seen as arising out of the gender roles learnt in the home and a belief that girls are more vulnerable to sexual assault and less able to defend themselves against attackers.

Mowl and Towner (1994) also suggest that it is patriarchal relations, reproduced in the home and community, which limit the access of females to environmental and leisure pursuits. However changes to the macro-environmental context of place use (such as on holidays or with special events) have been shown to reduce these gender differences as a result of the relaxing of parental constraints on place use (Cotterell 1991; Pugh 1998). Time, as well as space, is an important determining factor in young people's place use. Girls pursuing outdoor activities are more likely to be accompanied by parents than boys, whilst after dark activities of girls tend to be centred more on indoor activities with friends or parents (Cotterell 1991).

Pearce (1996) follows the feminist tradition (for example Rose 1993) in suggesting that gender differences in place use are linked to the production of environmental knowledge dominated by a masculinist tradition in which:

"... male truths create the norm, as maps impose their explanations on subjective and female locations. These maps chart the environment as if male inscriptions were defining the contours of the female body."

(Pearce 1996: 2).

Katz (1993) in a similar vein draws on cross-cultural analysis to show that restrictions on girls movements are concerned primarily with access to girls' bodies. A number of studies have shown how, as a result of their (real or perceived) greater vulnerability in public places, that female fear in itself is a constraint on leisure activities (Valentine

1989; Mowl and Towner 1994; Goodey 1995). The association between access to urban space and control over access to women's bodies, as is articulated for example in the way attitudes to the vulnerability of women from attack in public places, is paradoxical in two ways. First, because statistics show that it is young men that are most in danger from attack in public places and second, that young women are most vulnerable within the home (Mooney 1995). In spite of statistical realities males in contrast have fewer restrictions placed on them. However, recent work by Valentine (1996a, 1997b) suggests that parents influence on the range of boys and girls is narrowing. She suggests that this shift reflects equal concern for the vulnerability of boys and girls than a liberalising of control over girls. Others have also identified a blurring of gender distinctions. Furlong and Cartmel (1997: 63) for example note that "although gender differences remain powerful, there is evidence that they have weakened".

Gender divisions also emerge in the patterns of leisure activities of boys and girls (Garton and Pratt 1991; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1995; Pearce 1996; Furlong and Cartmel 1997). Studies suggest that males and females engage in highly gendered sets of activities giving rise to an indoor/outdoor gender division of leisure. Whereas girls spend more time engaged in more social activities such as sitting and talking, visiting friends, going to parties, discos or the cinema; boys tend to be engaged more in active pursuits such as playing and watching sports or hanging around neighbourhood streets (Medrich *et al.* 1982; Garton and Pratt 1987,1991; Glyptis 1989; Furlong *et al.* 1990; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1995, Pearce 1996). Many social and leisure settings are predominantly male preserves (Hendry *et al.* 1993). Pearce (1996) noted that for young males the places noted as being of greatest importance were youth club (76%), friend's home (52%), park (52%) and sport place (36%); whereas for young females the emphasis was on indoor places: friend's home (50%), own home (44%), shops (44%), park (38%) and relative's home (22%). These results parallel other findings (Hendry *et al.* 1993; Owens 1994; Malone 1998). Owens found these trends in place preference to be consistent over time with the exception that girls now tended to use commercial areas to a larger degree.

Some writers have noted how inclination towards leisure and recreational activities, in particular sports, is constrained by gender roles (Henderson 1991). As a result, the leisure activities of girls tend to centre more on the home environment (Deem 1986; Green *et al.* 1990). Furlong and Cartmel (1997) suggest that leisure opportunities are restricted through conventions governing the use of space, which inhibit women's freedom of access. Coakley and White (1992) for example highlight conventions which tend to prevent young women entering snooker clubs.

In spite of the constraints of gender on public place use, she argues that girls develop skills in negotiating their spatial and temporal constraints to colonise and sometimes

control specific inner urban environments (see also Wulff 1995b). Pearce (1996) illustrates how young people cooperate to provide themselves with intimate social space with boyfriends using a rota system. Also, the way in which they devise activities to deter younger kids from provoking older male youths. These strategies include negotiation of safe access into certain estates as well as individual access to boyfriends. In this way young girls are able to move from private domains into the public domain. However, Pearce (1996) suggests that they are central to development of the skills that women need for self preservation and to gain access to the wider world, for example, communication and negotiation with male counterparts and organisation and regulation of domestic space.

The public and private dimensions to young people's use of places is worthy of further consideration. Pearce (1996) draws out gender differences in the importance of public place use. She suggests that the credibility of boys is constructed out of presence in public domains such as the street. The identity of girls, on the other hand, tends to be constructed within the private domain of indoor spaces such as the home, friends' homes or shops. The bedroom becomes a place for young women, within which plans are made, arguments had and preparations for the outside world occur. Within 'bedroom cultures' (McRobbie and Garber 1976; Frith 1984) girls engage in activities such as sharing, swopping and trying on clothes, make up and perfumes in ritualistic cultural practices of 'getting all dressed up with nowhere to go' (Pearce 1996). Apart from the bedrooms of others they perceive themselves as having few other places to go. Pearce (1996) suggests that the patriarchy in the creation of gender maps may be changing as a result of the 'stress of difference' between male and female selves and convergence and divergence in the significance of how people experience place and space (Rose 1993: 43). Pearce (1996: 2) thus espouses the need to retheorise the divisions between indoor and outdoor space. Valentine (1996a) too suggests a need to reassess the private/public dichotomy in young people's use of place by stating: "... young people often paradoxically experience the home as a public space and the street as a private space" (p.213).

Other significant private venues for young women include shops where they spend large amounts of time window shopping or chatting to the shop keepers. Purchases are minimal, instead the attraction of these places are alternative nodes of social activity. However, although young females are more likely to spend time in homesites than boys, homesites are still important for boys (Hendry *et al.* 1993; Pearce 1996). Pearce (1996) found that the most significant indoor space for both sexes are friends' homes, although for different reasons. With the exception of watching television and listening to music (the most preferred activity for boys and girls), levels of interest and participation differed considerably between the sexes (Fitzgerald *et al.* 1995). Hence whilst young women visit friends' houses to chat and meet other friends, boys meet to watch TV, play computer games or to collect mates before going out again. Studies also

show that, whereas girls tend to be more involved in books, music and socialising with friends, boys are more likely to maintain interest in hobbies (Hendry *et al.* 1993; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1995).

What these studies illustrate is that, although both sexes reveal a desire to be with friends, the way in which they use their space and time together differs. Reimer (1995), studying the lifestyle of youth in Sweden, identified that gender differences were clearest between working class boys and middle class girls, with the former engaged in more popular cultural activities such as watching higher levels of television and videos and the latter spend more time listening to music or going to the theatre. These studies suggest that although gender orientations to leisure pursuits and places exhibit strong gender divisions, there are also commonalities. Patterns of leisure and place use appear to be more complex than simple gender analysis reveals, necessitating consideration of contingency factors such as peer cultures, location and parental influence. The next section will consider diversity in terms of what can be called lifestyles or spatial cultures of young people.

4.4.4 Representations in space: difference and diversity in the spatial cultures of young people

It has already been shown that young people exhibit varied patterns of leisure activities and place which differentiate between the geographies of individuals and groups alike. Instead of seeing young people as all sharing the same sets of values, diversity and difference in youth cultures needs to be acknowledged (Hendry *et al.* 1993; Lieberg 1995; Reimer 1995; Matthews *et al.* 1998a). Patterns of young people's place use are neither predictable nor uniform rather, instead they depend on the values, identities and lifestyles which characterise the difference and diversity amongst young people at leisure. The meanings young people attach to different places may vary between groups and over time giving rise to diversity in teenage cultures. Matthews *et al.* (1998a) suggest there is a diversity of microcultures which provide the basis for a temporal culture (James 1995) into and out of which young people move.

Matthews *et al.* (1998a), building on the concept of microcultures put forward by Wulff (1995), use the term 'microgeographies' as a way of differentiating between the different spatial cultures of groups of young people. Wulff (1995: 65) states that microcultures are: "... flows of meaning which are managed by small groups of people that meet on an everyday basis" which arise out of particular combinations of personalities, localities and collective experiences. Hence as Matthews *et al.* (1998a) contend "contingency and action are significant to both cultural production and microgeographies". The reality of young people's social worlds is one of particularities and specific orientations rather than generalities.

One of the salient features of the post modern world is the difference and diversity in sub cultural styles which exists, and the heterogeneity and fluidity of contexts and lifestyles which cut across traditional social parameters. This is not to suggest that young people's place use is unrelated to structural factors rather, that the contexts of young people's lived worlds have become complex and multi-faceted, giving rise to new ethnicities and multi cultural geographies (Amit-Talai 1995; Back 1996). Wulff (1995) states that: "Cultural and ethnic mixtures are particularly obvious among young people in urban areas". She, for example, identifies how inter-racial friendships amongst young teenage girls in South London arose out of a local girls club and was maintained by way of composing their own kinds and combinations of youth styles.

Fine and Mechling (1993: 135) in a similar vein talk in terms of 'idiocultures', which they interpret as consisting of: "a system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviours, and customs that is shared and referred to by members of an interacting group and that serves as the basis of further interaction". They state that central to the success of the idioculture is the creation of meaningful relationships or friendships (Erwin 1993). Relationships are built on common experiences and cemented through cultural practices such as nicknames, slang, customs, jokes, songs, gestures, narratives, ceremonies and material artifacts (Bronner 1988; Widdecombe and Wooffitt 1995). Knowledge and acceptance of a group's idioculture distinguishes members from 'outsiders' (James 1986). Evidence highlighting the difference and diversity of children and youth cultures in terms of personalities, lifestyles and localities is as yet still limited. The remainder of this section considers studies which have attempted to understand diversity in young people's local geographies in terms of contrasting spatial cultures.

Lieberg's study of teenagers use of public space in Sweden provides a useful starting point. According to Lieberg (1995), patterns in young people's place preferences depend on whether young people are 'peer group oriented', 'association oriented' or 'home oriented'. Different orientations in place use are guided by variable inclination towards places according to their perceived opportunities and the synergy with group identity. The peer group oriented youth are seen to have a strong attachment to the neighbourhood, in which a large proportion of free time is spent hanging out with the group outside the home in public spaces. Such groups have a core membership around which others, normally of similar social characteristics, phase in and out of association with the group. The larger group is characterised by smaller sub groups united by gender or the focus of a particular set of motivating factors. Activities of this group tend to be spontaneous and related to performances which maintain the identity of the group. Activities such as pranks, making a noise, making gestures or teasing adults in order to gain attention. Such activity could cross over into criminal activity including vandalism or minor theft.

Mitterauer (1991) noted that informal neighbourhood peer groups tend to have marked territorial character - the streets or the block - and consist of teenagers from the urban lower classes. For the peer oriented neighbourhood group, an intimate local knowledge is gained which is important in their everyday lives. For them the city centre is a potential source of danger from other groups, a hostile place within which they engage in alternative, non productive activities. Pearce (1996) also showed how young people develop a detailed knowledge and affinity for a small local geographical area, such that out-of-area provision becomes inappropriate.

The association oriented teenager on the other hand have a wider sphere of influences on their place use gained from group activities. For them, other parts of the city other than the neighbourhood became more important as social venues. For this group the city centre is a place to meet friends and spend time in using the public life of the shopping mall as a stage (Anthony 1985; White 1993; Lieberg 1995). Anthony (1985), for example, revealed the importance of shopping malls for young people characterising these types of place users as 'mall rats and bunnies'. The association-oriented group seek out the alternatives of the 'fun city' through engaging in consumption activities such as fast food or cinema. For these individuals the city centre is a place they can easily relate to, collect information and knowledge, meet new people, see new experiences and find excitement. The home oriented teenager contrasts with the first two groups in that both neighbourhood and city centre public spaces are of less symbolic importance. For these young people free time is spent with just one or two close friends, but for whom public places are threatening and therefore unattractive. Trips outside of the home tend to be for functional reasons such as going to the cinema, the disco or to go shopping and may involve being escorted by parents.

All these groups have different time-space configurations in their activity patterns, each constituting 'subgroups in the larger teenage public' (Lieberg 1995). Lieberg, for example, found that young people are attracted to places with different qualities and where special things happen, which vary between groups. Reimer (1995) suggests that outside of the 'fixed' parts of daily life most young people want to have fun, to amuse themselves, to seek pleasure and meet friends. He suggests that "this orientation unites youth: it exists almost independent of socioeconomic background" (p. 135). In reading urban space as a stage (Goffman 1963), the city and the neighbourhood take on a social dimension within which the young person can act and spectate, an arena in which the demands and expectations of family and school life give way to a free space in which they can test out different actions and identities and make sense of life situations (Lieberg 1995). Lieberg (1995: 724) notes that "it is in the public realm and the realm of leisure that young people explore and define self-identity and group identity." Knowledge of local variations in social and environmental contexts of different groups of young people is essential in understanding the way in which they construct identity and produce cultural space.

This section has provided insights into aspects of the spatial cultures of young people. Social variables do not all affect individuals in the same way. The lives of individuals sharing the same social biographies may be differentiated according to how individuals respond to their situation and the contingent effects of other factors which mediate their life experiences, in particular the phenomenological differences between individuals, location and variations in cultures of parenting. Although there is greater likelihood for two young people from the same social background to have the same social cultural values than two that don't, within the constraints of structurally determined conditions, individuals have considerable flexibility for different modes of action and behaviour. Pearce (1996) argues that what is important is a recognition of the difference and diversity in individual and group experiences in the construction of specific and situated knowledge. The behaviour of young people is not, however, simply a result of what is there rather, it is dependent on contingency factors, such as location and parental influence, which mediate the way in which young people process and act on these opportunities. These will be considered in the following sections.

4.4.5 Locational influences on young people's geographies

Section 4.2 has already outlined the way in which local places are important for young people. The extent to which changes at the macro structural level are experienced at the local level varies according to the way in which contingency factors, operating at different contextual levels, mediate the lives of young people in different locational contexts. Reimer (1995) suggests that "Lifestyle is ... the specific pattern of everyday activities that characterises an individual". Daily life of young people takes place in social and spatial contexts that have meaning for them on a symbolic level (Lieberg 1995) derived through developing place attachments. Location is therefore an important contingency factor affecting young people's place behaviour (Lynch 1977; Van Vliet 1983; Van Staden 1984; Schoggen and Schoggen 1985; Spencer *et al.* 1989; Gaster 1991; Cunningham and Jones 1994). This section will consider evidence concerning the influence of residential setting as a variable affecting young people's geographies.

Despite there being few recent studies of the influence of locational influences on young people's environmental transactions, there is significant evidence to suggest that residential settings have a profound effect on opportunities for young people's play, exploration and environmental interaction (Cooper-Marcus 1974; Moore and Young 1978; Michelson and Roberts 1979; Berg and Medrich 1980; Van Staden 1984, Schoggen and Schoggen 1985, Schiavo 1988; Coffin and Williams 1989; Gaster 1991). These studies illustrate the ways in which different built environments, in terms of housing density and estate design, affect young people's patterns of place use. Matthews (1992) provides a review of much of this work, however, it is pertinent here to draw attention to one particular model which highlights how different settings affect young people's environmental opportunities.

Michelson and Roberts (1979) propose a four-fold classification into which residential settings can be located according to the presence or absence of hidden or intended play spaces. In the first instance they indicate well planned urban settings with a broad range of amenities, where facilities have grown organically, but children still can create their own environmental opportunities. Second, they identify settings such as inner city locations which have few intended amenities for children, but in which children can eke out rich environmental experiences by using alleys, vacant sites and informal spaces. Third, they highlight the sterile and uniform environments which characterise new residential developments with few natural amenities and informal play places. Play grounds may eventually be provided but otherwise these environments are unstimulating for children. Fourth, they outline places with the least environmental opportunities such as public sector housing estates. These environments lack both informal spaces and formal play amenities and consequently offer a bleak environment for young people. Michelson and Roberts (1979) suggest that ideally children should have the opportunities to benefit from both types of environment.

Most of the studies of young people's environments have been conducted in urban settings, few studies have concerned young people in rural settings. None the less Philo (1992) draws attention to the 'neglected rural geographies of young people'. One of the most celebrated texts on young people in rural areas is Ward's (1990) *The Child in the Country*. In this, he explodes myths about rural childhood, revealing the stark realities of young people faced with declining access to rural space and at the same time limited alternative opportunities in rural locations. In documenting the plight of 'trapped teenagers' he states:

"... children who live far from big metropolitan centres yearn to break out of their social desert, overwhelmingly conscious that they have outgrown the narrow range of contacts and opportunities that the all-too-familiar local environment provides".

A recent report by the National Youth Agency (Phillips and Skinner 1994) provides a more recent investigation of young people's lives in rural areas. They found that changing land use and a lack of acknowledgement of young people's needs means few play or activity opportunities exist for many young people in rural areas. They highlight problems of accessibility and limited opportunity for these young people, a more limited field of experience and limited opportunities for privacy outside of the home. Access to sport and leisure opportunities, mainly located in towns, becomes problematic for young people both in terms of cost and time and creates a powerful sense of isolation. For these young people there is a reliance on family members to facilitate take up of opportunities. Despite perceptions of rural areas providing a better quality of life, young people appear to be in many ways disadvantaged in comparison to young people in urban areas.

4.4.6 Class variations

The influence of location on the spatial activity of young people is also dependent on class factors, in particular class culture and the availability of material resources. Few studies, however, have considered the effect of social class on young people's environmental experiences (Matthews 1992). Van Vliet (1983) investigated the effect of class on the home range of city and suburban teenagers aged 14 and 16. He found that young people from higher social classes had a wider home range than those of lower social classes. Ward (1978: 47) also drew attention to "the large proportion of inner city children who grow up unable to manipulate their environment in the way that is taken for granted in the middle class home." More recent studies have focused on the influence of social class background on patterns of leisure activities.

Hendry *et al.* (1993), considered the impact of social class on young people's leisure interests and found that middle class teenagers were more likely to be involved in organised adult leisure pursuits and clubs and less likely to be engaged in peer-oriented casual leisure activities such as hanging around on the street. These findings have been corroborated by a study conducted by Bo (1995) who found that young people from low risk neighbourhoods (those with few social problems) were more likely to be involved in organised leisure activities. Valentine and McKendrick (1997), in a similar vein, also found that social class influences the nature of young peoples leisure patterns. They found that middle class children are more likely (80%) to be involved in organised play activities compared with those from low income families (60%) and more likely to engage in activities outside of their neighbourhood (87%) than working class children (46%). This they suggest is due to higher levels of income and mobility amongst middle class families.

Reimer (1995) suggested that the influence of class is most notable in the cultural orientation of young people in defining their patterns of leisure activity. He found that young people coming from middle class backgrounds are more culturally active, visiting commercial amenities such as the cinema and theatre more often, but watching far less television than those from working class backgrounds. In seeking to explain these patterns Reimer (1995) draws on Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural capital. What he suggests is that cultural capital is highly important for young people's choice of leisure settings, but that the division was not necessarily due to class rather more a product of the educational background of young people's parents. Furlong and Cartmel (1997) also suggest a link between education and leisure activities by stating that young people with low educational attainment, who are predominantly from working class families, tend to lead more narrow and less enriching leisure lifestyles.

A second dimension to social class influences on choice of leisure settings is material wealth. Furlong and Cartmel (1997) suggest that although there is evidence that the relationship between class and leisure activities has weakened, the range of choices and

decisions with respect to leisure participation continues to be influenced by class cultures and young people's access to material resources. They state that "Those from working class families tend to lack resources to participate in certain activities they associate with the middle classes". However, the paucity of studies of the influence of class on young people's leisure activities suggests that the evidence is inconclusive. Indeed a number of writers contend that the relationship between class and leisure activities is weakening (McRobbie 1993; Roberts and Parsell 1994; Furlong and Cartmel 1997). Furlong and Cartmel (1997: 62) propose that "Those who have access to the necessary resources are able to participate in youth cultures that cut across class boundaries". Hendry *et al.* (1998) employing Abel and McQueen's (1992) conceptual framework of resources, orientations and behaviours, suggest that lifestyles emerge out of the interplay of structurally rooted lifechances (based on education) and individual life conduct (in terms of orientations towards social institutions). Hendry *et al.* (1998) suggest that what emerges is a situations whereby social class continues to be important in defining leisure patterns amongst young people, but within social classes variations in leisure lifestyles may occur giving rise to complex lifestyle orientations demarcated according to a dynamic interplay of factors involving class and gender.

These studies suggest that the influence of class on young people's patterns of leisure activity is unclear. However, when taken in conjunction with gender, differences emerge in young people's leisure lifestyles within class boundaries. Hendry *et al.* (1998: 147) stated that "we should accept that there can be differences in values, attitudes and behaviours between youths from the same social class backgrounds (...) and that youth lifestyle development can occur to a small extent across class boundaries". However, Hendry *et al.* (1998) conclude by suggesting that the need for greater understanding of how different lifestyles emerge necessitates a switch in focus from indicators to processes in understanding young people's lifestyle development. One further influence on young people's environmental experiences, which may be associated with class, is the role of parents.

4.4.7 Parental influences on young people's use of place

Valentine (1997a, 1997b) argues that parents are one of the largest influences on young people's geographies. Parents influence young people in two sets of ways. The first concerns the indirect influence of social class through the availability of material resources (Brown *et al.* 1993; Best *et al.* 1994; Peterson *et al.* 1994) and the influence of social cultural values through the process of cultural transference - whereby the values of parents, in terms of cultural orientation are transferred to their children. The influence of socio-cultural values is particularly important with respect to the nature of young people's behaviour (Bo 1995) as well as expectations with regard gendered behaviour (Peters 1994). These were considered in the previous section. The second set of ways that parents influence young people's geographies is in terms of caretaking practices. This effect will provide the focus of this section.

Parents are one of the most important influences on how young people spend their leisure time, on where they go and when they go out (Baumrind 1971; Blakely 1994; Valentine 1996a, 1997a, 1997b; Valentine and McKendrick 1997). Many studies have found that the permissible range of children's activities beyond the home increases with age (Anderson and Tindall 1972; Rivlin *et al.* 1973; Coates and Bussard 1974; Hart 1979; Parkinson 1987; Schiavo 1988; Chawla 1992; Matthews 1992; Hendry *et al.* 1993). Social behaviour and environmental range is also structured according to gender (Peters 1994) with boys allowed to go further and go out more often than girls (Hart 1979; Van Staden 1984; Matthews 1987, 1992; Cunningham and Jones 1991; Sebba 1994; Karsten *et al.* 1995). Hart (1979) suggests the difference is due to greater concern for the safety of girls outdoors than for boys and also the constraints of domestic duties on girls which restrict time spent outside of the home. Valentine (1996a) suggests that caretaking practices revolve around 'repetitive acts' of parenting according to 'regulatory regimes', such as media influence and local cultures of parenting, which affect the way parents set boundaries, supervise and discipline their children. According to Valentine (1997b) boundaries are set by individual parents according to their own perceptions of the age, gender and competence of the child but also on social and physical characteristics of the neighbourhood, time of day/year, knowledge of recent incidents and their own social and cultural values and fears. These will be considered in turn.

Common parental fears are abduction and traffic (Cahill 1990; Blakely 1994; Valentine 1997b; Valentine and McKendrick 1997). Parental influence according to age and gender are therefore dependent on their perception of the ability of boys and girls to negotiate dangers in public space (Valentine 1997a, 1997b; Valentine and McKendrick 1997). Girls for example, are considered to be at greater risk than boys when outdoors. Valentine (1997b) suggests that parents share general concerns, but these are mediated by place variables concerned with the physical and social character of the neighbourhood, such as the presence of gangs, traffic, the layout of the estate and the provision of play opportunities. Valentine and McKendrick (1997), in their study of 400 parents from middle class and working class backgrounds, found that the majority of parents are dissatisfied with public provision and to a greater extent in working class (96%) than middle class areas (70%) and in urban (87%) rather than rural (72%) areas. In conclusion Valentine and McKendrick (1997: 232) suggest that "when considering children's play, research must (...) be receptive to general (space) and particular (place) variations".

Blakely (1994) found that parents shared common geographies of danger, identifying similar places that caused them most fear. These included going to parks and playgrounds alone for fear of drug addicts, rapists and kidnappers and local convenience stores because of men hanging around drinking and drug taking. However, Valentine (1997b) states that there is a certain paradox in that statistically

young people are more at risk from adults they know than strangers.

In response to these fears Valentine (1997b) has identified strategies parents adopt for controlling young people's use of space. She notes how parents increasingly employ subtle care strategies and mechanisms of control to structure their children's time. Ennew (1994) refers to this as the 'curricularisation' of young people's free time. By using the attraction of computers, stereos and televisions in bedrooms to encourage young people to spend more time in the home and 'keeping young people busy' in adult-run institutional leisure pursuits, parents are actively dissuading their children from street activity (Buchner 1990; Wyness 1994; Valentine 1996a, 1997b; Valentine and McKendrick 1997). These strategies accentuate the dichotomy between public dangers and private safety (Sibley 1995b; Valentine and McKendrick 1997) and give rise to a dislocation of the child from their environment. As Buchner (1990: 79) states "spaces in between (supervised activities) rush past and are often perceived only superficially, with the result that a child's map becomes a patchwork (...) consisting of islands of apparently unconnected space". None the less in their study Valentine and McKendrick (1997) found that only one in twenty parents considered their child to be an 'indoor child'.

The variation of caretaking strategies according to local cultures of parenting give rise to parental peer pressure about 'proper' parental competence based on "common sense understandings of local geographies of risk" (Valentine 1997b: 73). Valentine (1997b) thus found that for middle class parents, for example, that parents may treat their offspring as more incompetent and vulnerable than they actually perceived them to be, tending to impose strict restrictions on young people's outdoor activities and chaperoning them to and from out of home activities. In contrast, amongst working class parents there is peer pressure to grant their children independence (Valentine and McKendrick 1997). As a result young people from working class backgrounds tend to benefit from a richer environmental experience (Valentine and McKendrick 1997). However, as Dyck (1990) and Valentine (1997a) have found, the way local cultures of parenting are defined and contested vary over time and space (Ambert 1994). Valentine (1997a: 38) suggests that to be a 'good parent' is to "walk a tightrope between protecting children from public dangers by restricting their independence, whilst simultaneously allowing them the freedom and autonomy to develop streetwise skills and to become competent at negotiating public space alone". However, there is evidence that parent's attitudes to risk and competence with respect to boys and girls is changing (Valentine 1997a; Valentine and McKendrick 1997). Valentine (1997a) states that "parents now hold a more complex and contradictory view of gender than previous studies have suggested". Boys and girls are now seen as equally vulnerable in public space (Valentine 1997a). However, evidence suggests that parents are moving towards less gender-differentiated child-rearing (Valentine and McKendrick 1997). Despite this Valentine and McKendrick (1997) found that boys are more likely to be described as

outdoor people than girls.

An important contribution to knowledge about parental influence on young people's geographies is family status (Valentine and McKendrick 1997). They found that children of lone parents have a more extensive outdoor experience, whilst at the same time lone parents are the most dissatisfied with local play provision. They suggest that whilst these young people may gain from richer environmental experiences they miss out on the "enhanced cultural capital' acquired by middle class children when participating in institutional activities" (Valentine and McKendrick 1997: 231).

In seeking to make sense of different cultures of parenting two models offer useful insights. The first is put forward by Beavers (1981). Beavers proposes two dimensions to parenting style characterised as competence and family style. Competence relates to power structures within the family, the degree of negotiation and encouragement of autonomy. Style reflects the tendency of a family to be inward- (centripetal) or outward- focused (centrifugal). Whereas 'healthy', or 'low risk' (Bo 1995) families achieve a balance between activities focused on the family and on outside (non family) activities, 'unhealthy' or 'high risk' families are low in competence and tend to be either centrifugal or centripetal in nature.

The second model has been put forward by Baumrind (1968, 1971). Baumrind uses two dimensions to parent child relations - parental acceptance and parental control - to identify four parenting styles - authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and neglectful. The authoritarian style involves rigidly enforced rules with low acceptance levels. The authoritative style involves setting firm limits but demonstrating high levels of acceptance through explanation, reasoning and negotiation. The permissive style involves providing a high level of autonomy but with few boundaries and controls. The neglectful style reflects little concern in either placing limits on the child's activities or in acceptance of what they do, giving rise to young people becoming autonomous early but without necessarily demonstrating responsibility. Noller And Callan (1991) and Baumrind (1971) found that young people raised according to the authoritative style were the most autonomous and content.

Matthews *et al.* (1998b) synthesise these models into one integrated model of parental styles. In doing so they draw attention to notions of the centripetal effects of fear and attachment which many children experience and centrifugal impulses of parents whose lifestyles are not domicentred. The interplay of factors involved in the parent-child interaction thus emerge as complex issues surrounding 'rules, roles and spatial margins' (Matthews *et al.* 1998b). However, as Hendry *et al.* (1993) note parenting styles tend to vary according to age, gender and class. For example, they found that with boys an authoritative style prevails with younger males, whilst the permissive style tends to characterise older males. At the same time authoritative styles tend to

characterise middle class families whilst permissive styles characterise working class families. They also found that authoritarian styles are more likely to be found in working class families and neglectful styles with boys from working class families.

The way parental influences affect the geographies of young people however, still requires closer attention (Valentine and McKendrick 1997). An increasing area of interest concerning children's geographies draws attention to the way young people negotiate or subvert parental authority in the course of constructing their geographies (Katz 1991; Sibley 1995b; Valentine 1997b). Sibley for example, draws attention to the way young people negotiate the way in which parents construct their competence levels and are able to influence decision making in the home. Valentine (1997b) suggests that a common way in which young people, do this is to demonstrate their competence to parents before asking for permission. Herman and Aitken (1998) found that young people were able to 'work the margins' filling in the spaces between the home and running errands to the shops. Another is to play one parent off against the other, illustrating 'a sophisticated knowledge of parental relationships, power dynamics and conflict in the household' (Valentine 1997b).

A number of writers have revealed how adolescents' perceptions of parenting may stand in contrast to that of their parents (Paulson and Sputa 1996; Dusek and Danko 1994). The implications of such discontinuities for young people's behaviour will depend on the dynamics of the family system and the flexibility of, and power relations within, the parent-child relationship (Gavazzi and Sabatelli 1990). Six possible types of response or coping strategies can be identified: conformity, acquiescence, rebellion, negotiation, manipulation and self-empowerment.

Conformity may be voluntary or enforced. In the case of the former, young people on reflection express a willingness to accept parental rules. In the latter, the young person conforms begrudgingly as a result of the unrelenting hegemony of the parents. The *acquiescent* response entails cases where parental authority is not necessarily dictated authoritatively, and young people neither agree nor challenge parental authority, but go along with parental rules all the same. The *rebellious* response is simply an outright defiance of parental rules, either as a reaction to an overbearing parent and/or, because of an over-riding belief in the paramountcy of his/her own viewpoint at that time. The *negotiated* response entails the young person responding with an alternative agenda, but with a desire to gain parental approval of the alternative course of action through a process of negotiation and/or pleading. The resultant outcome in these cases will depend on the flexibility of the parent and may result in a compromised solution. In the event of the young person being unhappy about a decision, but with no possibility or inclination for renegotiation, the young person may *manipulate* the situation by appearing to accept the conditions but in actuality pursues his/her own course of action anyway. This may occur in situations whereby the young person is only allowed out

under specific conditions (for example to specific places or within a specified time span), which are perceived unattractive to the young person, but who accepts the conditions simply as a means of being allowed out. The final response is where the young person pursues his/her own agenda irrespective of whether it coincides with the wishes of parents or not. This can be termed the *self empowered* response.

What has emerged from this discussion concerning the influence of parents on young people's geographies is a number of diverse cultures of parenting contingent upon local conditions, parental fears, values concerns and experiences and the competence, age and gender of the child concerned. However, within the regimes laid down by parents, young people have a degree of flexibility in how they respond to parental structures giving rise to geographies which are negotiated and contested by young people, overtly through interaction with parents and covertly through their contingent place behaviour.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined recent research concerning young people's use of place. What has emerged is that the geographies of children and youth appear more diverse than hitherto has been acknowledged. Whereas there is clear evidence of differences arising in terms of age and gender differences, geographical diversity comes about as a result of a more complex interplay of factors concerning location, parental influence and multiple lifestyles. However, this chapter has also revealed how young people's geographies are shaped and influenced by social practices and local cultures based on multiple constructions of childhood and youth. In acknowledging the complexity and diversity of young people's geographies this study will use ethnographic research methods to explore in detail the nature of young people's diverse, multiple geographies in two contrasting locations according to age and gender. It will in particular emphasise how young people mediate the influence of locality, parents and conflicts in public places, which impinge on their neighbourhood place transactions.

The epistemological basis for understanding young people's lives has, however, shifted over the last decade. Contemporary discourses of childhood and youth have to a large extent been influenced by the global children's rights movement, which has brought to the fore the need to reflect on society's obligations towards children, their citizenship status and possibilities for enhancing their participation and representation in society. These developments are especially pertinent to this study in that they highlight the need to reconsider the relationship between young people, space and society. It is to debates concerning the rights, participation and citizenship of young people that attention in the following chapter will turn.

Chapter Five

Young people: rights, participation and citizenship

5.1 Introduction

The review so far has drawn attention to the way young people's use of place is mediated by structure, agency and contingency effects. One of the most decisive ways in which young people and their environments may be harmonised is in terms of the realisation of their participatory rights of citizenship. However, there is considerable debate surrounding young people's rights and participation, consequent upon varying attitudes to the social status of young people and conceptions of their right to participate. Young people's rights and participation are embedded in notions of citizenship (itself culturally variable), and the rights and responsibilities that accompany it.

Britain's commitment to children has been questioned recently (Williamson 1993; Kumar 1993; CRDU 1994; Save the Children 1995), with mounting concern about the protection of young people from hostilities, hazards and dangers in society and from abuse and exploitation by adults (Hewlett 1993). In addition, escalating moral panic about young people in public places has raised questions about the quality of neighbourhood, community and social provision for young people and opportunities for citizenship. However, evidence suggests that attitudes towards the status of children and youth in society in the fields of academia and practice are changing (see for example recent ESRC research programmes 'Children: Growing into the 21st Century' and 'Youth, Citizenship and Social Change').

This changing consciousness has been characterised by calls for new paradigms for childhood (James and Prout 1990) and ways of 'rethinking youth' (Wyn and White 1997; Jones and Wallace 1992; Cohen 1997; Roche and Tucker 1997), which are informed by the lived experiences of young people (Wildermeersch and Leiman 1988) and provide new frameworks for interpreting the lives of young people as active 'citizens in their own right' (de Winter 1996; James and Prout 1990). Interpretations of 'youth as a problem' are starting to give way to more positive notions of 'youth as potential' (de Winter 1997) who, with appropriate support and tolerance, may be redefined as active and equal citizens. In the context of young people and urban place use a growing number of studies (see for example Jacobs and Jacobs 1980; Moore 1986; Hart 1987, 1992, 1994, 1997; Malone 1996; Kytta and Horelli 1997; Save the

Children 1995, 1997a, 1997b) draw attention to the developing competence of young people as active social agents in community development, environmental design and management projects. These help redefine the citizenship status of young people and inform debates about the role and potentialities of young people in new modes of local governance.

These theoretical developments have been matched by the 'children's rights movement', spurred on by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, which promote the participation of young people in local affairs. In particular they specify the 'right' of young people to participate in decision making about matters that affect their lives and the central role that young people should play in implementing global environmental initiatives at the local level. However, the progression towards implementing children's rights has been undermined as local policy making machinery has come under increasing pressure. This has occurred as a result of central government cuts on local authority budgets and policies which have restricted local authority power. At the same time local authorities are faced with a growing urgency to develop effective ways for dealing with what are perceived and scandalised (in the press especially) as 'youth problems'. Rather than facilitating young people's rights, some (Fox-Harding 1996; West 1997) have argued that government policies - for example the withdrawal of welfare benefits for sixteen and seventeen year olds - have tended to exacerbate youth problems such as unemployment, crime, homelessness as well as feelings of alienation, disaffection and apathy (Wyn and White 1997).

The result of these developments has been to place children and youth high on the political agenda. However despite growing awareness about the rights, status and competence of young people, children are still marginalised (Matthews 1995) and 'tokenised' (Hart 1992, 1997) in the processes of local governance. Impeding the implementation of young people's participatory rights is an apparent lack of commitment to young people in Britain today (Bradshaw 1990b; Hewlett 1993; Kumar 1993; Williamson 1993; Leach 1994; CRDU 1994; Wilkinson 1995; Save the Children 1995) as fellow citizens (de Winter 1996), a failure to provide adequate environments for young people to grow up in and paternalistic constructions of childhood and youth. Moreover, Lansdown (1995) suggests the lack of children's participation is part of a wider 'culture of non-participation' endemic in Britain today.

This chapter will begin by reviewing the changing emphases of the children's rights movement and the impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on policy and practice. It will go on to explore the theory and practice of children's participation, identifying successful examples which have occurred in Britain and in so doing expand current discourses about young people's participation in environmental design and management to embrace notions of citizenship. The chapter will conclude by

considering some of the obstacles to young people's participation being achieved and the possible forms that new models of 'child-friendly' local governance and new spatial divisions might take.

5.2 The rhetoric of children's rights

Increasing concern about the well being of children has given rise to spiralling debates about children's rights and participation (see for example Archard 1993; Lansdown 1995; Franklin and Franklin 1996; de Winter 1996; Hart 1997). In this section the key elements to these debates will be examined by first of all charting the evolution of the children's rights movement and subsequently by providing a moral case for children's participatory rights with respect to competing ideological perspectives.

5.2.1 The children's rights movement

The defining characteristic of the children's rights movement is an overriding concern with the principle that "in decisions concerning children the prime need is to promote the 'best interests of the child' " (Franklin and Franklin 1996: 95; Freeman 1996). Article 3 of the Convention states that:

" In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."

This is problematic, in that the sentiment 'the best interests of the child' is culturally variable in its conception, tending to depend on prevailing adult constructions of childhood (Eekelaar 1994). West (1997) aptly states 'the problem is that children's views are acceptable when they correlate with those of adults, but not otherwise'. Freeman (1996) noted that Article 3, as with the English Children Act (1989), only stipulate that 'the best interests of the child' principle need be '*a*' primary consideration rather than '*the*' primary consideration. In education, judicial proceedings, the penal system, divorce, housing and the health service the best interest principle has not prevailed (Freeman 1996). Nonetheless Franklin and Franklin (1996) draw attention to basic human rights which have been availed to children such as: the right to life, to health services, to education and an acceptable standard of living. These rights of citizenship may be conceptualised as *passive* or *liberal* concerned with levels of provision and protection for children; and contrast with more *active* or *radical* rights (Franklin 1986) such as the right to vote, to express opinions, to assembly and to access information. These differing notions of children's rights reflect how attitudes to children, childhood and children's rights have changed over time. Franklin and Franklin (1996) identify three recent phases in the development of the children's rights movement.

The first phase in the 1970s was characterised by the libertarian movements for children in particular in education (see for example Neill 1968; Farson 1978; Holt 1975; Postman and Weingartner 1978). The ideology of the libertarian movement was built on the ideas of the 'deschoolers' Illich (1973) and Freire (1972) and centred around the objective of allowing children to grow up as critically active, politically effective, social agents through the exercising of their participatory rights. This phase was characterised more by what could be seen as experiments (see for example Neill's 'Summerhill School', 1968) rather than a sea change in children's rights.

The International Year of the Child in 1979 heralded the second phase in the children's rights movement by shifting emphasis away from a preoccupation with liberal education to the social and welfare arena (Franklin and Franklin 1996). The ethos of the second stage mirrored concern for the protection of children as individuals which prevailed in the early twentieth century (Franklin and Franklin 1996; Freeman 1983). The swing towards an ethos of child protection was initiated by a series of events such as the Cleveland affair¹ and a growing catalogue of child abuse cases sensationalised by the media (Davis and Bourhill 1997). A number of child advocacy agencies emerged during this period such as the Children's Legal Centre and Childright and Childline to advise and offer support on children's rights. The initial concern for child protection during this period gradually changed towards a situation whereby the children themselves were being encouraged to actively 'look out' for their own rights. Indeed, in the wake of the Cleveland affair Lord Justice Butler-Sloss asserted: "children should be seen as persons not objects of concern" (cited in Freeman 1996: 93).

The third phase in the children's rights movement resulted from a growing realisation amongst many children's advocates that the only way children's protection could be adequately ensured was through children speaking out and participating in decision making about matters that affect them. Against this however, stands the enduring and prevailing paternalistic culture which upholds the importance of adults 'acting in the best interests of children'. As a result of these binary perspectives there has been a divergence of opinion about children's participatory rights. This most recent phase in the children's rights movement in Britain was given momentum by two events in 1989 - the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (see section 5.3) and the UK Children Act. The guiding principle of the Children Act is that the "child's welfare is paramount" and is supported by the clause "where possible and appropriate the 'ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned should inform decisions' " (Children Act 1989, Sect 1(3) a). However as Lyon and Parton (1995) noted this was not an avowed expression of a commitment to children's participation rather, a way of legitimising parental intervention to ensure their protection. Nonetheless, debates about

¹ In 1987 the Daily Mail broke the story of 200 youngsters who were taken into care by Cleveland Council as a result of being diagnosed as sexually abused. It later emerged that despite there being a significant number of child abuse cases, disruption had been caused to families through professional mismanagement and media scandal

participatory rights for children had been rekindled.

5.2.2 Children's participatory rights: a moral case?

What has become clear from this review of the children's rights movement is that there are varying ideologies and distinctive value positions with regard to children's rights and participation (Farson 1978; Holt 1975; Franklin and Franklin 1996). On the one hand, the liberal 'caretaking' thesis suggests that children have rights to protection and therefore is premised on a 'paternalistic' ideology where caretakers make decisions for children (Archard 1993). In spite of the irony of the contradiction posed by many aspects of social policy which undermine the ability of parents in protecting their children and the ability of young people to operate effectively as self-determining individuals (Fox Harding 1996), there appears to be a general consensus upon these 'welfare rights' and the right of the child to protection (Franklin 1995). Participation rights, or 'liberty rights' (Franklin 1995), on the other hand, are contested by liberals largely in terms of children's perceived capacity to participate, wherein it is argued that children's irrationality and incompetence to make informed decisions (Scarre 1989) justifies them being 'protected from the dangers of their own fallibility' (Franklin and Franklin 1996). Opposition to this line of argument has been posed by 'liberationists' (Farson 1978; Holt 1975; Archard 1993; Franklin and Franklin 1996), who draw attention to inconsistencies in the 'protectionist' / 'caretaking' thesis. Franklin and Franklin (1996), drawing on the works of Farson and Holt, highlighted eight strands to the libertarian counter-argument. For the purpose of this chapter these arguments will be reviewed in terms of the two key terms 'incompetence' and 'irrationality'.

The liberationists argue that conceptualising children as incompetent is flawed for a number of reasons. First, competence *per se* is not the issue, rather as Farson (1978) declares, children should have the vote not because they are as able as adults but "simply because they are members of society and affected by the decisions of its elected government" (cited in Archard 1993: 48). Secondly, they argue that it is a mistake to call children incompetent, as it evaluates their ability from an adult position rather than a child's position. Archard (1993: 50) qualifies this by stating that "children should have rights just as adults do, but for reasons which have to do with their nature as children". The Children's Rights Office (1995) bolstered this argument by drawing attention to the fact that Article 12 provides for a right to 'participate which is not contingent on a judgment of the competence of the child, simply that he or she is capable of forming his or her own views'. Denying participation rights to every under 18 year old fails to recognise the plurality of children's intellectual and emotional needs, skills, competencies and achievements (Franklin and Franklin 1996) and that children of all ages are already making informed decisions about a variety of matters in their everyday worlds (Ward 1978; Hart 1997).

Third, allocating rights according to age is incoherent and arbitrary as it currently stands, with different rights (for example the right to drive, engage in sexual activity, vote, etc.) achieved at different ages (Farson 1978; Holt 1975). It could also be argued (Franklin and Franklin 1996) that by excluding children because they are too young is unfair because they can do nothing to rectify the situation that excludes them. Moreover age is not in itself a suitable criteria for exercising rights since adults may just as easily make poor decisions (Franklin 1995).

A fourth flaw in the 'paternalist' view revolves around the contention that children should not participate in case they make mistakes. If this is accepted as a valid argument then by the same token many, if not all, adults should be barred from decision making. Adoption of such a value position shifts the importance away from the benefits for children of participating, to a preoccupation with adult conceptions of 'right outcomes' and 'best interests of the child'. Such a value laden determination of the importance of 'doing right' reinforces the paramour of adult agenda and adults' control over outcomes from social learning. Placing conditions on 'undesirable' or unexpected outcomes in the form of mistakes, denies children the opportunities to learn effectively through experience, in particular the means through which rights may be exercised responsibly. Archard (1993: 55) argues that "autonomy is greater the larger the number of options open to them". Feinberg (1980) in this sense talks of a child's right to an 'open future'. Archard (1993: 53) states that "anyone who fails to display the requisite rational autonomy may be treated paternalistically". However he goes on to say that "only a paternalism which is limited to the prevention of mistakes which may seriously jeopardise future well being is justified".

The use of the term 'rationality' as a basis for decision making competence is also flawed in its adult-centric conception which judges children against a supposed ideal adult state. It could be argued that it is not a question of children 'not having' something that adults have, rather that they have something different (Matthews *et al.* 1998b). It also implies that rationality is the only basis for decision making. For many children, 'intuition' may well be used as the basis on which favourable decisions are made. In this way it could be stated that children have something that adults have lost in the process of the lifecourse.

These points serve as a powerful case for children's participation which "expose assumptions that children are incompetent as a key ideological feature of the modern conception of childhood" (Archard 1993: 49) and which fail to acknowledge the innate abilities of children. As Holt (1975) and Farson (1978) claim: " 'childishness', connoting vulnerability, frailty and helplessness, is not a natural quality of children but rather an ideological construct which helps to support the denial of their proper rights" (Archard 1993: 49).

This review of the contrasting ideological positions about children exercising their participatory rights has suggested that there are strong moral arguments for perpetuating the children's rights movement, (for example through action by organisations such as Article 12), and create a more solid foundation upon which children's realisation of their rights can unfold.

5.3 Global frameworks for children's rights

Arguably the most significant boost to children's rights being realised in practice has come through a series of global initiatives and recommendations, notably the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit and Habitat II Conference, all of which have clearly specified the participatory role of children in the future development of communities. This section will elucidate the contribution to the development of ideology and practice of children's rights that these global initiatives have made and highlight Britain's position with respect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5.3.1 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and currently ratified by 191 countries, has been one of the most important milestones in providing impetus to achieving rights for children (Lansdown 1995). It serves as a manifesto for children's rights and provides a framework for guiding and reshaping societies' commitment to children. Implicit in the Convention is the need for social policy to take full account of children's interests, needs and perspectives as equal citizens. The Convention interprets children as individuals who have rights to protection and provision, but also to participation (Newell 1991; Mayall 1998).

The basis for the UNCRC is the notion of 'human rights' in particular as set out in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights 1946. It is considered for example children have a 'basic human right to life, health services, education and an acceptable standard of living'. However some have argued that children's rights go beyond their 'passive' rights to protection and provision, to include participatory rights concerned with children's right to influence decisions about matters that affect their lives (Lansdown 1995; Franklin 1986, 1992). Increasing recognition of the value and competence of children as actors in their own right in determining their own lives, has focused attention on the importance of children's right to participate in decision making about matters that affect their lives. Children's right to express their opinion and have that opinion taken seriously is encapsulated within Article 12 of the UNCRC and has frequently been cited as the most significant expression of children's participation. This Article is "a powerful assertion of children's rights to be actors in their own lives and

not merely passive recipients of adults' decision making" (Lansdown 1995: 2). Pais (1992) argued that the child's right to have a say laid down by Article 12 is of symbolic importance as it 'converts the child into a 'principal' in the Convention.

However the extent to which young people are able to practise their rights depends on the extent to which adults create the conditions and space for young people's social and political participation. Nonetheless Article 4 states that governments are obligated in providing the necessary structures to meet children's needs and encourage them to participate in the lives of their communities. If children's rights are to be realised, a child-friendly culture needs to be created wherein adults recognise both the rights of children and a commitment to achieving them.

5.3.2 Child Friendly Cities

In response to the need to create appropriate conditions in which children's rights can be realised, UNICEF (1996) developed the 'Child Friendly City Initiative' in which the child's right to a secure, healthful and nourishing environment is acknowledged. The initiative supports the view that children should grow up in an enabling society, a society which understands the mutuality and reciprocity associated with justice and democracy and where young people are empowered to play a full and active role in local governance. UNICEF's Child Friendly City Initiative has duly been signed by the World Federation of Mayors committing every town mayor to meeting its recommendations. In setting out a case for child-friendly government structures Hodgkin and Newell (1996: 15) note that in reality "children's interests are all too often neither seen nor heard in government policy making and review".

Despite this, plenty of evidence exists to illustrate how young people are already participating to some extent within their communities. Hart (1997) for example draws on numerous cases from both 'North' and 'South' whereby children's participation has been significant in bringing about change at the community level. There are however fewer examples whereby the 'community power' of young people has been integrated into wider structures of local governance, particularly in the 'North'. A further international development which has provided impetus to children's rights has been the declaration on Human Settlements agreed at the Habitat II conference.

5.3.3 The Children's Rights and Habitat Declaration

The Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, agreed at the Habitat II conference in June 1996, constituted a new social contract towards improving the world's cities, towns and villages for its inhabitants, including children and youth. In particular it states that:

“The needs of children and youth, particularly with regard to their living environment, have to be taken fully into account ... attention needs to be paid to the participatory processes dealing with the shaping of cities, towns and neighbourhoods ... in order to secure the living conditions of children and of youth and to make use of their insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment.

(United Nations Centre for Human Settlements 1997: 13, para 13)

The Habitat agenda provides another link to the global frameworks which have direct implications on the rights and well being of young people. However the extent to which the Habitat Agenda, like the UNCRC, are implemented depends on the support national governments offer to local authorities in working towards the principles of sustainable human settlements. None the less a framework exists in the form of Local Agenda 21 within which structures can be developed.

5.3.4 The Earth Summit and Local Agenda 21

Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) is the process by which the environmental agenda (agreed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992) is implemented at the local level (Freeman 1996). In 1992, the participants at the Earth Summit put forward a mandate to all local governments to work collaboratively with all sectors of the community to create a “Local Agenda 21” (environmentally sustainable development) action plan. Sustainable development can be defined as ‘development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED 1987). The guiding principle of LA21 is only when individuals and communities are *empowered* with the capacities to live sustainable lifestyles will they use environments sustainably (Hart 1997). Young people’s effective and responsible use of local places is fostered by a sense of belonging, a sense of worth in their communities and a sense of ownership and identity, in their place affiliations. LA 21 emphasises the key role of children in sustainable environmental planning:

“ It is imperative that youth from all parts of the world participate actively in all relevant levels of decision making processes because it affects their lives today and has implications for their futures. In addition to their intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilise support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account.”

(Agenda 21, para 25.2)

There is an obligation on all those concerned with implementing Local Agenda 21 to ensure young people’s participation in decision making processes (LGMB 1996). Governments are therefore exhorted to:

“ establish a process to promote dialogue between the youth community and government at all levels ... establish procedures allowing for consultation and participation, promote dialogue with youth organisations ... incorporate into relevant policies youth perspectives on social and economic development and resources management.” (LGMB 1992)

Despite Local Agenda 21 and the requirement that each local authority was encouraged to put in place a sustainable development strategy by 1996, strategies for involving young people in local decision making are incipient, sporadic and uncoordinated. Freeman (1996: pp 44-45) noted that “the development of a child-orientated Agenda 21 is not an easy task, due to stresses within the Local Agenda 21 process itself, and due to the challenges faced when pursuing participative practices which bring together children and professionals in new and untried ways.” The uncertainty of Local Authorities about how to begin working with young people needs to be matched by central government support, for example, in training of local bureaucrats to work effectively with young people. Hodgkin and Newell (1996: 17) noted that “without commitment from the highest level - including the support from the prime minister of the day - new structures are unlikely to have real impact.” Hence there have been a number of calls for new governmental structures or public bodies to promote the rights and interests of young people including: a Minister for children (Hodgkin and Newell 1996), a Children’s Rights Commissioner (Rosenbaum and Newell 1991) or a children’s ombudsperson (Flekkoy 1991). These will be considered in section 5.8 on new models of child friendly local governance.

5.3.5 From ideology to policy: the case of Britain

The UNCRC is a set of recommendations which, when ratified, commits States to: review all aspects of its law, policy and practice concerning children; propose measures to guarantee compliance; and make a full report to the appropriate UN Committee after two years, then subsequently every five years (Franklin and Franklin 1996). However despite the establishment of the Children’s Rights Development Unit (CRDU) in 1992 with a specific brief to ensure the fullest possible implementation of the Convention, the UK government’s first report in 1995 was heavily criticised (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 1995). They claimed that the British government breached the spirit of the Convention drawing attention to the “clear dissonance between a professed commitment to children’s welfare and the effective implementation of that commitment” (CRDU 1994: xiii).

The CRDU vindicated these assertions by stating that the UK government’s report was complacent (Lansdown 1995) and “dishonest by omission, highlighting particular laws and statistics that indicate compliance, without adequate recognition of gaps, inconsistencies and blatant breaches” (CRDU 1994: xi). As a result CRDU published *The UK Agenda for Children* - a ‘damning indictment’ of the British government’s indifference to children’s rights issues (Franklin and Franklin 1996). It concluded with

the allegation that the government had failed to show any serious attempt to implement the Convention.

The lack of commitment shown by the British government to implementing the UN's recommendations reflects a pervading lack of respect for young people as citizens in their own right (CRDU 1994). Consultation with young people undertaken by CRDU in the course of writing the *UK Agenda* revealed adult's failure to listen, respect, take seriously, or value what children and young people have to say is widespread across all sections of society. As a response *Article 12* emerged as a new non governmental organisation concerned with giving young people a voice, articulating their concerns and promoting children's participation rights. Despite the potential fragility of Article 12's organisational status, groups such as this are crucial to the process of achieving in practice, full participation rights for young people.

5.3.6 Shortcomings of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The recommendations and frameworks which have resulted from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child have given rise to a number of emergent problems and evident shortfalls in the Convention (Freeman 1992; Toope 1996) as nations seek (in varying extents) to implement children's rights. The equivocation of the UNCRC in terms of ideology and practice may be conceptualised as the *limits to children's rights* and can be clarified with regard a number of inconsistencies with the Convention. Toope (1996) for example draws attention to an initial problem with the convention in terms of Article 1. Article 1 concerns the definition of children as persons below the age of eighteen years. However this notion undermines the very nature of childhood as a culturally variable social construction, which may give rise to differing conceptions of childhood according to social and cultural contexts. Toope (1996) thus talked in terms of a failing of the drafters of the Convention to come to terms with the issues of 'cultural pluralism'. It is also problematic from the outset in assuming that the disjuncture between childhood and adulthood is clearly defined and therefore transgressed via a linear uni-dimensional transition. On the contrary, the boundaries between childhood and adulthood are multi-faceted (Jones and Wallace 1992; Roche and Tucker 1997) and ambiguous.

Two observations about the Convention are pertinent here. First, that the convention is only a set of recommendations. Whether the rhetoric of the Children's Rights Convention will bring about real changes in the lives of young people depends on the integrity of individual governments to enshrine the principles within legislation, develop active policies and provide concomitant structures. The majority of countries who have ratified the Convention have been slow to respond in this way.

A second but associated point is whether the Convention can be seen to provide legitimacy over and above the cultures and traditions of individual countries. One view might suggest that because children's rights are based on the universal principles of fundamental human rights acknowledged by the United Nations, they should predetermine any country's policy towards children. A contrasting view however may suggest abstract notions of human rights only have meaning when articulated within a social and cultural context. The fact that the UNCRC is based on 'Western' views of children's rights (Hart 1997) could undermine the legitimacy of the convention in non-western cultures. Barsh (1989) notes that the conception of the family used in the Convention appears to be the late nineteenth-century European ideal of the nuclear family; that there is little recognition of the important role of the extended family in many cultures of the 'South'; and that there is too much emphasis on individualism and autonomy which may be incompatible with non-European cultures.

Toope (1996, however, argues that the biggest problem with the Convention is not cultural but financial; given the reality of the cost of implementing it. This is especially true for the poorer nations of the 'South' who are constrained in their ability to reallocate or raise revenues. Olsen (1991) draws attention to social inequalities existing even within nations that undermines the Convention's 'universal child' ideal. She argues that as well as being biased towards the 'North', it is also biased towards the middle classes, giving rise to a 'tendency to dichotomise children's rights' into an 'our children' / 'their children' syndrome. The variable and unequal social contexts in which children are expected to realise their rights is seemingly glossed over by the moralistic stance of the Convention which posits an 'ethical universe' in which "all children are entitled to respect and in which they may claim a fair share of the world's resources" (Toope 1996: 47). West (1997) has drawn attention to similar inequalities in the context of Europe. The implications of such an assertion at best poses an enormous challenge to governmental policies (Toope 1996) and at worst devalues the convention completely.

A further irony is manifest by the Convention being constructed by adults for children rather than with children. This irony raises a number of questions about the meaning of participation, the purpose of participation, the nature of participation and appropriate levels of participation. These issues will be considered in the following section.

5.4 Young people and participation

Participation has already been noted as being the most contested part of the children's rights movement. None the less the movement towards expanding opportunities for young people to participate in different ways in their communities has been given credence by mounting evidence which highlights the competence of young people. This section will make a case for young people's participation. It will begin by exploring what is meant by participation, and go on to illustrate children's developing capacity to participate. Lastly, a rationale for children's participation will be provided.

5.4.1 The nature of participation

Participation may be defined as "opportunities for children and young people to be actively involved in (the decision making on) their own living environment" (de Winter 1997: 24). A distinction can be made between 'political participation' - the behaviour of citizens aimed at influencing the political decision making process directly or indirectly; and 'social participation' - concerned with influencing policy that affects daily life directly for example in work, school or the neighbourhood (Castenmiller 1989 cited in de Winter 1997). Since the 1960s, active social participation has become an increasing political phenomena which has influenced the process of local governance in many western countries (de Winter 1997). Hart (1992: 5) emphasises the democratic importance of participation by stating that participation is:

"a fundamental right of citizenship ... referring generally to the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured".

The notion of democratic citizenship as an 'active' process, is characterised by participation in societal processes for different purposes. These can be grouped within three categories within which both social and political action may occur. These categories are not mutually exclusive, indeed may presuppose participation at a different level. The first relates to the nature and extent of participation in the everyday human activities of community life. This may be termed *subjective participation* and concerns the activities undertaken by individuals in public settings. Whilst not directly part of social structures for political participation, subjective community participation is important in providing opportunities for neighbourhood learning and developing the skills of citizenship (Hart 1992).

Archard (1993) draws attention to three ways in which the quality of a young person's upbringing may be evaluated with regards self-determination in the context of caretaking practices. These are just as valid when viewed in the context of the neighbourhood generally. First he suggested that a young person's experiences should provide moral learning, inculcating a sense of good and bad through consistent

exposure to good rather than bad ways of living - to gain an appreciation of culture, a respect for the environment and a love of humanity. Secondly he stated that humans have a need to belong, to have a sense of themselves as members of particular communities with shared values and history. Thirdly, he stated that an upbringing should realise the child's innate potentialities. These dimensions of self-determination through neighbourhood participation are manifest in the variable use of local places according to the motivations of the individual, the interpretations they attach to the landscape and the course of action upon which they have decided.

Due to the particular needs of children as 'special citizens' (Chawla and Kjørholt 1996) young people have a need to use their neighbourhood in ways that are distinct from the way adults value and use local places (Matthews 1992; Matthews *et al.* 1998b). Unlike adults, their participation in neighbourhood activities is important not only in the 'here and now' (Matthews *et al.* 1998b) of their existence but also for their future lives. Young people have been identified as being the most regular users of neighbourhood space mainly for the purpose of play and recreation (Ward 1978; Williams 1995; Moore 1986). Play and recreation are fundamental to the healthy development of the young person. Young people therefore have specific as well as generic place needs constructed around their use of places for play and socialising. The right of the child to play and participate fully in cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities is set out in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Full participation therefore necessitates young people's access to a range of safe play provision and play opportunities in proximity to their home (Coffin and Williams 1989) as well as access to social activities of their community.

The second mode of participation can be termed *objective* in that it involves taking part in projects or research activities with an intended outcome in terms of action to change their conditions. Playing an active role in decision making in communities or undertaking community action research are examples here (see for example Malone 1996; Hart 1997). Hart (1992) notes that young people do not acquire the skills of citizenship by virtue of their 'coming of age', but through practice in the day to day activities of their communities. Others go as far as to say that social change is facilitated by the enthusiasm of youth (Davis 1990; de Winter 1997). The third category of participation is *institutional* involving participation in decision making about matters that affect their lives within established political structures at local authority level. Youth Councils and Local Agenda 21 fora are examples of this level of participation and in contrast to community level participation run a greater risk of being tokenistic as a result of occurring in predetermined adult structures (West 1997).

Young people may participate for different reasons at different levels within society giving rise to varying 'modes' of participation. Modes of participation are in turn determined by local circumstances, prevailing norms and purpose of participation. In

keeping with prevailing notions of childhood and youth in Britain, it is only now in the 1990s that young people are beginning to become involved, at least through consultation, in significant ways in local affairs. One of the best ways of conceptualising the nature of children's participation is as a 'relational process' (Pilcher 1995) vis-a-vis adults.

One of the most frequently cited models of children's participation is Hart's ladder of citizen participation (Hart 1992) which adopts a 'relational perspective' to conceptualising children's participation. Hart extended the 'ladder of citizen participation' analogy that Arnstein (1969) developed for depicting levels of adult involvement in community decision making to provide a typology for understanding children's participation in community development projects and activities. His typology was based on the relational processes between adults and children involved in participation, in particular who initiates participation, the degree of self determination the young person retains in the process and the integrity afforded to the young persons involvement. Hart described eight levels of community participation divided into three lower levels of 'psuedo' participation in which children take part but are denied the opportunity to exert a direct influence on the proceedings; and five upper levels of 'real' participation wherein children are given sufficient insight into the intentions of a certain project or activity (see figure 5.1). The different levels of participation are summarised as follows.

1. **Manipulation:** children are 'used' to take part in activities for adult benefit without understanding the issues and therefore without understanding the implications of their participation.
2. **Decoration:** children are recruited to take part to bolster the (adult) cause in an indirect way without knowing what the event is for. In contrast to manipulation however, in this situation adults do not pretend the cause is inspired by children.
3. **Tokenism:** Adults are seen to give children a voice in the interest of adults' child-friendly image rather than the benefit of the children. In this instance they have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions.

Hart (1992) outlines four requirements for a project to be truly participatory. First that the children understand the intentions of the project; second that they know who made the decisions concerning their involvement and why; third, that they have a meaningful (rather than decorative) role and fourth, that they volunteer for the project *after* the project has been made clear to them.

The Ladder of Participation

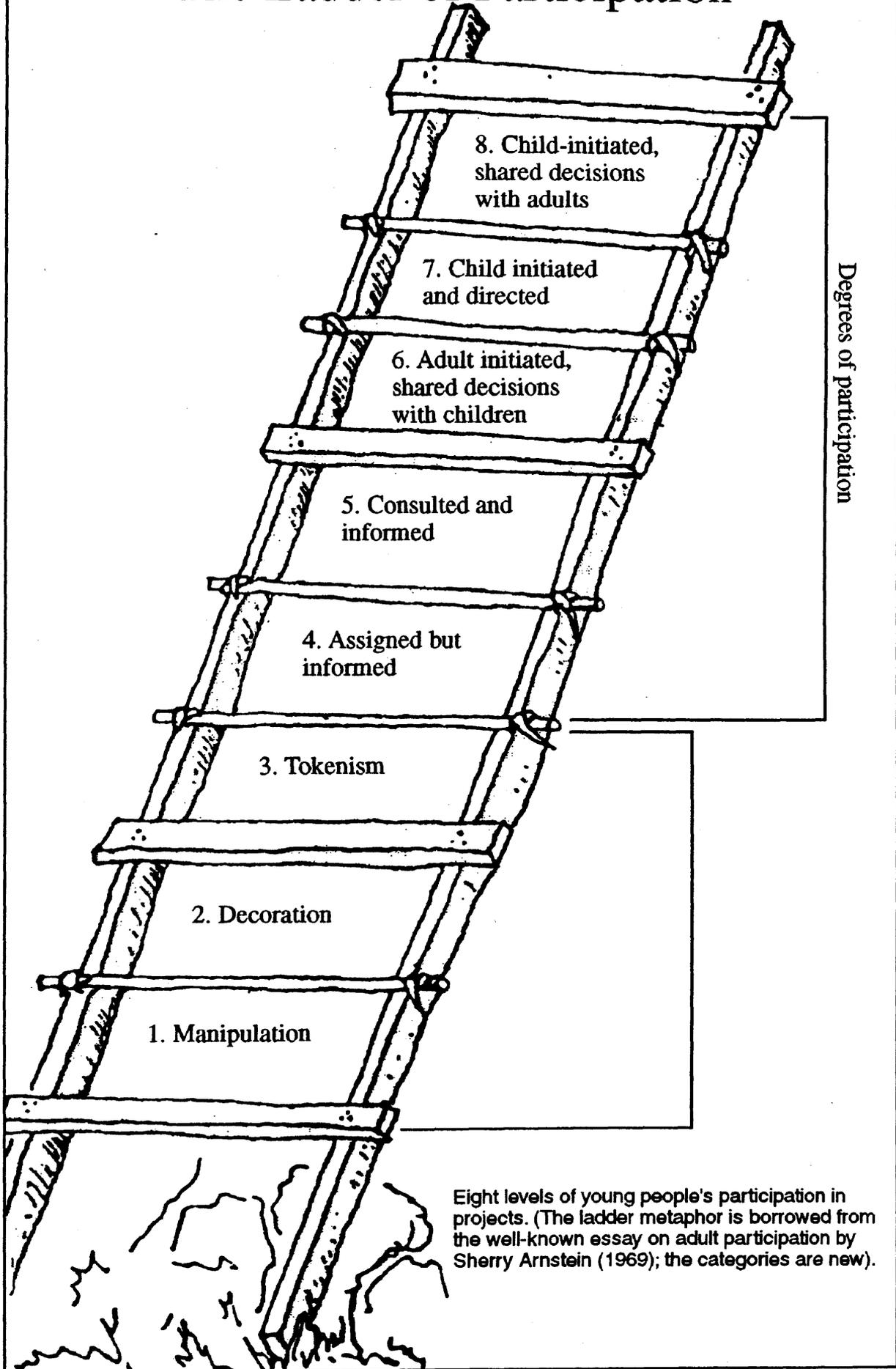


Figure 5.1: Levels of children's participation. (Source: Hart 1992:9; adapted from Arnstein 1969)

4. Assigned but informed (social mobilisation): In cases where children have not initiated a project but have been fully informed about it, they may feel sufficient 'ownership' of the issues at stake to play an equal, though not necessarily decisive, part in the project.

5. Consulted and informed: Children may be extensively consulted for their 'expert' opinions on a project designed and run by adults. In these situations children are not involved in every stage of the project (for example in analysis and policy formulation) but are involved with integrity as consultants.

6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children: This level is particularly relevant to community projects designed for all participants to take part on an equal footing. In Britain the use of 'Planning for Real' (Gibson 1994) is a good example whereby young people have been able to participate on an equal footing with adults, despite adults initiating the project.

7. Child initiated and directed: A rare form of children's participation is when children conceive, organise and direct a project without adult interference. Hart notes that when conditions are supportive, even young children can work cooperatively together, for example as seen in children's play.

8. Child initiated, shared decisions with adults: This is the highest level of participation since it necessitates adults making a commitment to working with children as 'animators.'

Rather than see these levels of participation hierarchically, they should be seen as providing a range of choices for 'maximising the opportunity for a child to choose to participate at the highest level of his ability' (Moore 1996, personal communication) according to individual competence and cultural context. These dimensions to participation also reflect the multi-faceted nature of participation and the many reasons that a child may wish to interact with their environment or get involved in a particular venture. Whereas one child may wish to take a leading role in a community development project, another may be happy simply to provide an opinion on the issue(s) at some stage. What is at issue here is the freedom to choose the extent to which participation may occur and whether participation is meaningful or not. Such a decision will in part depend on the perceived and latent capacity of the individual's own competence and of young people at large.

5.4.2 Children's developing capacity to participate

Dominant social attitudes about the competence of children as social beings has been heavily influenced by the work of Piaget (1954) and has tended to emphasise a universal, linear development of the child's intellect. Whilst it may be true that a general

sequence of development can be identified, not all children develop in the same way or at the same time. Hart (1997: 27) suggested that multiple intelligences exist in each individual such that:

“... children living in different cultures, environments, and social classes are exposed to different materials, experiences, and informal teaching by their families and neighbours, and this results in the appearance of different competencies at different times”.

In this way children may develop different forms of competence according to social and environmental opportunities and the innate capacities of each child (Hart 1997).

One of the primary influences on a child's developing competence is their socialisation within the home. Hart (1992) suggests that social class background and cultures of child rearing are fundamental to the developing child's conception of personal competence. He exemplifies, for example, how families with adequate economic resources tend to value independence and autonomy in young people, whereas low-income families place higher value on obedience. Lack of independence and self determination at an early age has a direct bearing on young people's future inclination and capacity to participate. A further sociological variance which affects the young person's capacity to participate is gender. For girls, socialisation emphasises protection and dependency rather than autonomy (Hart 1992).

Within these social and cultural variations there are developmental processes which young people experience as they gain personal and social competence. Hart (1992) notes that the motivation behind a child's behaviour is just as important as their ability to think and speak. The emotional and identity development of the child and his/her sense of self worth is critical to the child's developing capacity to participate. Indeed Hart (1992: 37) noted that “self esteem is perhaps the most critical variable affecting a child's successful participation with others”. Children with low self esteem are more likely to be poorly equipped with the skills to participate as a result of lack of confidence in their abilities and belief in the worth of their contribution. Feelings of powerlessness together with cultural norms and expectations may in turn reinforce a lack of a sense of self worth and personal competence (Hart 1992). Experiences which allow the child to develop personal competence through self determination at an early age are essential building blocks for participation later in life (Erikson 1963).

Two phases of identity development are particularly significant to the young person's developing capacity to participate: middle childhood and adolescence, both necessitating different types of participation (Hart 1992). From 8 to 11 years of age children are industrious and outward looking, keen to put into use their individual talents and demonstrate competence and gain recognition for their individual mastery and self image. Adolescents on the other hand are more inward looking as they reflect on their

identity with respect to others. Attachment to, and acceptance by, peers is a motivating characteristic of adolescents which may define the nature and extent of their participation. Adolescents seek to consolidate their social roles and develop their identities and actions in the world in ways that are consistent with their own culture. Hart (1992) notes that if adolescents are to participate they need to be given the opportunity to play a range of different roles, and the chance to be expert in them.

In practical terms one of the most effective ways that young people can be influenced in their developing capacity to participate is in critical analysis of their own daily activities in their local environment. Satterthwaite *et al.* (1996) illustrate children's developing capacity to participate in the development and management of community environments by showing how the child's understanding of the environment develops over time, from the age of six to fourteen (see Figure 5.2).

A further key factor influencing young people's capacity to participate is their basic competence in perspective taking (Hart 1987, 1992, 1997). The ability to participate depends on being able to consider the viewpoint of others and to see things in a different way. Hart drawing on the ideas of Selman (1980), identifies five sequential levels of development of social perspectives. During the first level (between three and seven years of age), the child gradually becomes aware of the feelings and thoughts of others, although may be unable to separate themselves from their behaviours and actions. The second stage (between four and nine years of age) gives rise to the developing capability to clearly differentiate the physical and psychological characteristics of people such that the child becomes aware of individual differences in perspectives. Participation during this stage is based on physical acts of reciprocity. During the next level (between the ages of six and twelve) the child starts to recognise that others may share the same thoughts and feelings. Cooperation tends to be based around incidents or issues of shared appeal, though the child cannot simultaneously coordinate the perspective of self and others.

The next level (between the ages of nine and fifteen years of age) gives rise to an appreciation of the perspective of a third party and the ability to spontaneously coordinate their own perspectives with that of others. Hart (1992) notes that this 'mutual perspective-taking' or sharing is necessary for children to be able to organise themselves into enduring democratic groups based on shared beliefs. However the reflective capacities developed at this time also allow young people to consider the value of their contribution relative to others and therefore whether or not they wish to participate. The final level (from twelve years of age to adulthood) is what Selman calls 'societal-symbolic perspective-taking' wherein the individual is able to take the perspective of what is good for society.

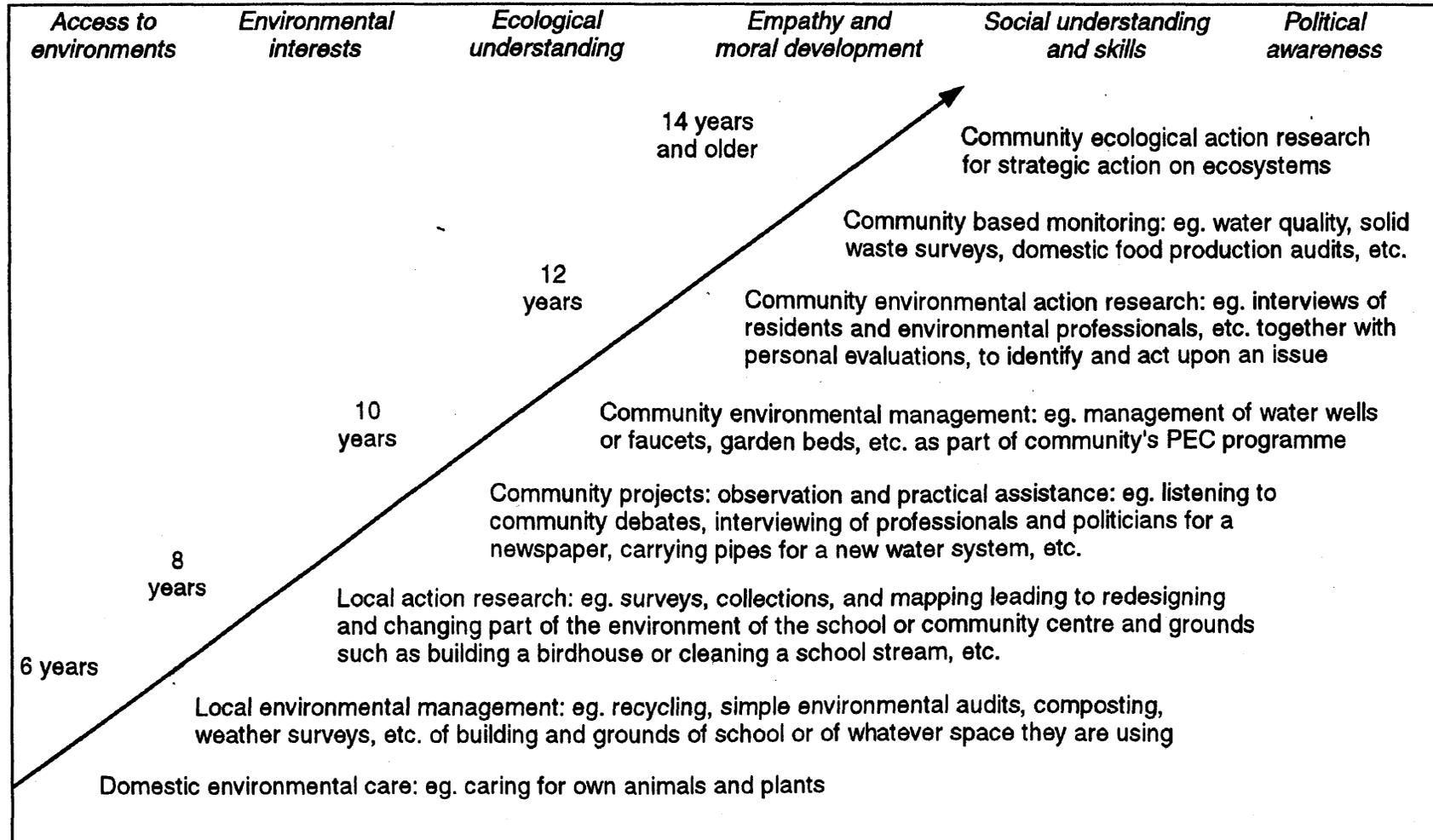


Figure 5.2: Children's developing capacity to participate in the development and management of communities.
(Source: Hart *et al.* 1996: 251)

What this illustrates is that at an early age children are able to work with adults, though not with the same degree of competence, for the common good. Hart (1992) notes that even in infancy a child discovers the extent to which their own voices influence the course of events in their lives. Whilst possibly not being able to organise or coordinate group activities until early adolescence, children are still able to take part in such activities. The evidence reviewed here demonstrates comprehensively that children have abundant capacity to participate long before they become adult. As such there is abundant justification for constructing a case for children's participation.

5.4.3 The rationale for children's participation

The rationale for children's participation is intertwined with issues concerning the purpose of participation, the social and cultural contexts in which participation is to take place and the significance of the role played by the participating child(ren). In practice the participation of children as active and equal citizens is often a troublesome affair (de Winter 1997) involving critical reflection on the status of young people and prevailing power relations in society. The social constructions of childhood and youth, in particular as relational concepts vis-a-vis adults, impose a problematic for debates surrounding the philosophical basis for children's participation. For children, the very act of participating may be an enjoyable learning experience as well as satisfying their psycho-social need to extend the scope of their abilities (Erikson 1963). For adults, the prevailing view of young people as 'incompetent' and 'inexperienced' may render children's democratic participation as unnecessary, thus compounding the 'culture of non participation' (Lansdown 1995). Participation is therefore likely to vary in meaning between adults and children and indeed between different groups of young people and adults.

In seeking to identify the rationale for children's participation a number of questions appear pertinent. What are the motives for encouraging children to participate? Should young people be burdened with the responsibility of making decisions? For whose benefit are children participating? At what age and in what forms should children's participation take place? What if any conditions should be placed on participation, and who by? What are the limits to participation? What are adults/society's obligations with regard children's participation?

In response to questions such as these concerning children's participation a number of writers (Hart 1992, 1995, 1997; Council of Europe 1993; Save the Children 1995; Edwards 1996; Hodgkin and Newell 1996; de Winter 1997) have made a case for children's participation highlighting the benefits of participation for young people and society. The Council of Europe (1993: 7), for example, state that "young people have a right to be included, to be allowed and encouraged to assume duties and responsibilities and to make one's own decisions". Hart (1995: 41) goes further by stating:

“We cannot rely upon the traditional approach of social science which observes children’s lives and reports it to policy makers in the hope that they will improve children’s conditions. We now need a more radical social science research with children in which children themselves learn to reflect upon their own conditions, so that they can gradually begin to take greater responsibility in creating communities different from the ones they have inherited”.

The following points reflect a consensus of views concerning the rationale for children’s participation.

1. **Development of personal and social competence**: Hart (1992: 5) notes: “It is unrealistic to expect them suddenly to become responsible, participating adults at the age of 16, 18 or 21 without prior exposure to the skills and responsibilities involved. An understanding of democratic participation and the confidence and competence to participate can only be acquired gradually through practice.” Participation is an integral part of the personal and social development of young citizens. Lansdown (1995: 7) states that “if children are denied any opportunity to contribute to decisions that affect their lives, if adults operate with a presumption of children’s incompetence, then those children will be denied the opportunity to develop a belief in themselves as actors rather than recipients of protective services”.

2. **A moral right**: Children have a human and moral right to participate in decisions that will impact on their lives (Council of Europe 1993). Participation provides education for democratic citizenship through practice (Hart 1992) and is outlined by Article 29 of the UNCRC.

3. **The value of children’s contributions**: Children have much to contribute (Hart 1992; Save the Children 1995). In poorer countries of the world the participation of children could be crucial to the survival of a household (Save the Children 1995). At a community level the active involvement of children can act as a catalyst for community development (Hart 1992, 1997; de Winter 1997). At a project level children can provide valuable insights which adult decision makers may otherwise be unable to see.

4. **Specific needs of children**: Children have specific needs and interests that differ from adults (Michelson and Roberts 1979; Matthews 1995; Matthews *et al.* 1998b). Failure to engage children is likely to give rise to ineffective policy formulation (Edwards 1996). Planners and policy makers can more effectively respond to the needs of young people if their perspectives are accounted for (Hart 1997). On the other there are high economic and social costs attached to the neglect of young people (Hodgkin and Newell 1996) in terms of the psycho-social implications of marginalisation.

5. Sense of worth, sense of belonging: Involving young people in productive activities and decision making enables the development of a sense of self worth through personal empowerment, sense of belonging through community attachment and ownership and therefore the basis for responsible citizenship (Hart 1997). Studies show that through involvement and ownership vandalism and inter-generational conflict are reduced (Michelson and Roberts 1979). If children are involved in research, then conclusions can carry more power since those conducting the research are those that are affected by it (West 1996).

6. Empowerment and emancipation: As the worlds' largest minority group, the failure to engage children is a failure in the democratic process (Hart 1992). Freire (1972) noted that youth are one of the oppressed groups in capitalist society in need of liberation. Participation provides a means for emancipation and empowerment by providing the individual with the opportunity to gain insights into the power over one's reality. As Young (1992) puts it 'empowerment is necessary to combat the potentially divisive nature of citizenship, exclusion and stigmatisation'.

The rationale for children's participation as set out above suggests that participation is not an end in itself rather has a particular educational purpose (de Winter 1997). But education for what? Individuals have an innate predisposition for learning (Erikson 1963). But more than that, individuals seek to develop personal and social competence so that they may find meaning and purpose in their own lives and as citizens. Sense of belonging and self worth are relational concepts with respect to social circumstances and prevailing cultural values. Participation is consequently only meaningful within the context of citizenship - that is to say "relationships, roles and duties of individuals at different levels within society" (de Winter 1997: 28). It is therefore with respect to citizenship that debates about children and youth participation need to be conducted.

5.5 Young people and citizenship

5.5.1 Passive and active citizenship

Citizenship denotes the relations between individuals and society (de Winter 1997) and involves a collection of (culturally specific) entitlements common to all members of society (Dahrendorf 1988). Entitlements are normally recognised through a package of political rights (suffrage, freedom of speech and rights of assembly) and social civic rights (access to social services, health and education). The exercise of citizenship rights however come with responsibilities in the form of civic duties for example to pay taxes and be law abiding. Citizenship therefore involves participation in the functioning and everyday life of communities as well as consenting to be governed. The ability to be actively, critically and autonomously involved in the functioning of the community depends on individual competence. The competence of citizens can be interpreted by an

individual's readiness to bear responsibility in their own environment, groups, organisations or political structures and the tolerance and respect for the diversity of identities, opinions and behaviours (or the plurality) of society (de Winter 1997). Citizenship depends on opportunity and choice which are socially unequal in their distribution. 'Standard' models of citizenship tend therefore to be adult focused and mask class differences, gender inequalities, racial differences and the marginalisation of economically inactive persons and dependents. This is the case for the increasing proportion of marginalised young people who are excluded from the means by which they may play a full and active part as citizens and in the shaping of the context of citizenship. What emerges in reality is a 'myth of citizenship' (Hartman 1989), a *sliding scale of citizenship* wherein the rights and responsibilities which result from citizenship are socially variable.

5.5.2 Young people, marginalisation and citizenship

Citizenship, as an ideal embracing democracy, responsibility, autonomy, plurality and respect for the integrity of others, sits in contrast to the socially divisive nature of citizenship in reality - between active and inactive citizens, between the powerful and powerless, between those who are independent and those who are dependent and between adults and children. Matthews (1995) talks of children as 'outsiders,' those whose voices are seldom heard, (in contrast to 'insiders,' those close to the centre of decision making), who, in sharing much with other minority groups, live 'on the edge of society, within a marginal world whose visions comprise values often at odds with the mainstream.' Citizenship therefore is a contested social practice which has been "fragmented into a great diversity of interests of differing groups and categories, which have come to be in a competitive situation with one another." (de Winter 1997: 29).

Jones and Wallace (1992) note how the package of rights and responsibilities that characterise citizenship are transmitted with age and therefore talk in terms of 'citizenship by proxy' whereby it is assumed that young people derive their citizenship rights through the family. Mayall (1998) stresses true participation depends on there being provision and protection for children and childhood. Others may argue that participation as an independent autonomous agent has to be an integral part of citizenship (de Winter 1997). More radical critics go further by arguing that participation is an ongoing process of enlightenment, empowerment and emancipation (Malone 1996) in which young people become active in reshaping their worlds in order to achieve an enhancement in the quality of their life experiences. The extent to which children are provided with the opportunity to participate in society is however, tied up with prevailing cultural constructions of childhood and the consequent rights of citizenship that are bestowed upon young people. In Britain young people, on the whole as well as differentially between socially diverse groups, tend to be unrepresented as citizens in their own right and as such become marginalised in social and political life.

Children are seen as being without the necessary competence for citizenship and therefore denied participatory rights. At the same time they are expected to exercise responsibilities as citizens, for example by being law abiding. Expecting children to act as responsible citizens without providing the rights to do so appears ill-fated. Franklin and Franklin (1996: 101) protest that "exclusion on the basis of age is unfair because children can do nothing to alter the circumstances which exclude them". However mounting evidence suggests that disaffection, disaffiliation and apathy maybe mediated by new forms of participation in decision making that affects their lives (Hart 1997; Roche and Tucker 1997; Wyn and White 1997). "If they (young people) are to gain any sense of the obligations of citizenship in society, they must be treated as equal citizens and granted the rights of citizenship" (Jones and Wallace 1992: 154). In this way Jones and Wallace (1992) argue that rather than marginalise young people, citizenship can potentially offer new opportunities for redefining and restructuring the concept of youth, as a process of achieving citizenship rather than adulthood. This, however, is progressively more problematic as a result of social and economic changes which are constantly redefining the nature of and means by which citizenship may be acquired.

5.5.3 The changing nature of citizenship

Attaining the full rights of citizenship has tended to be synonymous with being economically active. However in the current era of 'late modernity' (Giddens 1991), as a result of economic and social restructuring, traditional sources of social and community identity and means for achieving citizenship are being fragmented and restructured according to an ethos of 'individualisation' and 'individuation' (Naesman 1994). Social roles are being redefined and new 'post modern' maps of meaning are being drawn across the traditional socio-cultural terrain. Consumption (and therefore the means to achieve material wealth) rather than roles in the production process is increasingly providing the means through which full citizenship is achieved only with economic independence (Lister 1991; Wallace and Cross 1992). A number of writers have noted the importance of consumption patterns and styles in the developing identities of young people (Stewart 1992; Nava 1992; Ganetz 1995) giving rise to what Jones and Wallace (1992) call youth as 'consumer citizens' engaged in 'symbolic work' (Willis 1990). Whilst the creation of a youth consumer market is noted as not being a recent occurrence, its implication for young people in achieving citizenship is a contemporary phenomenon.

However as a result of widening structural inequalities, a failing youth labour market and ineffective youth policy (Wallace and Cross 1990; Williamson 1993), the tensions and contradictions between citizenship rights and responsibilities and social inclusion and exclusion are becoming more acute. In response to calls to 'rethink youth' as a relational process between groups of young people and with adults (Jones and Wallace 1992; Griffin 1993; Pilcher 1995; Wyn and White 1997), emerging research is suggesting that the process by which young people achieve citizenship status is neither

normative nor linear. Instead it is experienced simultaneously as an holistic, multi-faceted *and* fragmented process (Roche and Tucker 1997) set within the context of wider social processes (Wyn and White 1997).

5.6 Young people's participation in practice

5.6.1 Dimensions of children's participation

Britain has received admonition for its lack of commitment with regards making progress towards implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRDU 1994). Despite these generalised criticisms, localised examples of initiatives exist which have encouraged young people's participation in environmental care, community development and local decision making, providing a beacon for others to follow. In Britain, examples of young people's participation take a number of different forms according to who has initiated participation, for what purpose and at what level in society. Matthews *et al.* (1998c) for example categorised youth councils/forums into six types according to the roles they served. These categories will be adapted and reformulated to accommodate more temporary and localised cases of children's participation. Broadly, two levels of participation can be identified: participation in community development initiatives and participation in local authority related activities. These broad categories should not however be seen as mutually exclusive since actions at one level will inevitably have repercussions for those at other levels. Different forms in which the participation of young people has occurred will be considered in turn according to these two categories.

5.6.2 Young people, environment and community based initiatives

Hart (1992; 1997) and Save the Children (1995) provide a catalogue of evidence of community development projects involving children which can be sub-divided according to purpose and scale. A further distinction could be made between those with an explicit environmental focus and those concerned with social provision. However the boundaries between these two areas have become increasingly blurred as the term 'environment' has come to embrace social as well as physical environmental characteristics.

In most cases community development initiatives have been initiated by local authorities and often as part of a broader strategy for urban redevelopment. Examples include the numerous Single Regeneration Budget schemes in Britain where the voices of youth have been sought particularly with respect to specific issues such as housing, employment or the environment. Few cases exist however where young people have initiated action themselves in response to a problem or issue.

a) Issue specific projects - Young people are most likely to participate in community development activities if there is a pressing issue which affects them. The Somers Town Youth Forum in London and Manningham Forum in Bradford for example came about as reactions to racist incidents (Matthews *et al.* 1998c). Young people may also be involved with more proactive activities which entail them constructively participating in bringing about change. Extensions to school project activities provide excellent opportunities for young people to actively participate in research and programming in their neighbourhoods. Hart (1997) provides examples in the USA where children have been engaged in environmental care and monitoring projects or have redesigned public areas to use as play areas or develop as 'green spaces'. Similar projects in Britain include the Knowsley Neighbourhood Health Hazard Action Research Project which adopted the 'Child-to-Child' approach (see section 5.8.2) in resolving health hazards. Children identified the issue of dog excrement as a serious issue for them and with the help of teachers developed a 'multi-pronged research, public awareness, planning and design project to deal with the problem (see Hart 1997 for a review).

Local environmental and community planning initiatives may be project focused as with the Knowsley project, or may be institution based such as the Notting Dale Urban Studies Centre. The Centre provides a base for young people to conduct research on the local environment. It provides opportunities for young people to learn the traditional concepts and skills of geography, environmental studies and local history as well as to experience investigating a real local issue (Hart 1992). In this situation children undertake and analyse research (see also Glaister 1968) with guidance and support from adult staff. Finally their research is documented in some form or other, which then contributes to the development of a local archival and survey resource which can be used for political purposes in community participation (Hart 1992).

Peace Child International is another type of issue-based organisation which supports projects undertaken by young people. In 1994, a team of young people from 21 countries designed, wrote and illustrated a children's edition of Agenda 21 (Peace Child International 1994). This was followed by a sustainability indicator pack by and for young people to help look at aspects of their environment and create their own indicators of what is happening in their communities. Other organisations and schemes which have a clear commitment to and a successful record of encouraging young people to participate in a meaningful way in environmental issues include: CEE (Council for Environmental Education), Green It, Learning through Landscapes, the Groundwork Trust, BTCV, WWF UK.

The participation of young people in projects such as these provide valuable opportunities to develop social competence and community awareness about local environmental issues and a springboard for further participation. Satterthwaite *et al.* (1996: 250) note that: 'Evaluating play and recreational needs in their community and

developing planning proposals for improvement ... offers children the opportunity to speak out clearly about issues which they and their peers have the most obvious right to speak about." Encouraging children to be active in their local environment provides the basis for more informed approaches to environmental planning and management related more specifically to children's worlds and from which young people can more easily become involved in issues of more general concern to the community (Satterthwaite *et al.* 1996).²

b) Participation in community service provision - A second form of community participation in which young people have access to participatory opportunities is through local community organisations. Young people are arguably best placed to provide services for young people. Examples from Save the Children's work corroborate this assertion. The Children's Participation Project in Kirklees for example involved children from 5-11 in making decisions about the type of activities and facilities available in their out-of-school clubs. On the Niddrie Estate on the outskirts of Edinburgh a similar child-centred approach has been adopted to develop a forum for young people to influence the design and management of services for young people. In Sunderland Save the Children undertook consultation with 12-18 year olds on key estates to find out what they think about their area, levels of provision and potential changes that could be made to benefit them (Nevison *et al.* 1996). However, it is important that young people are not constrained simply to respond to consultation rather become active in service provision for young people. Save the Children (1997a) note that many practitioners working with young people are now using participative methods which provide opportunities for young people to become more active in service provision and communities at large. This has partly been brought on by the recognition of the fact that intervention services will be more effective if the target user group is involved in its design and management as has been the case with young people in and leaving care (West 1996).

Save the Children's (1997a) publication 'All together Now: Community Participation for Children and Young People' provides three examples of services which are run by young people. BYPASS (Bolton Young People's Advice and Support Service) for example depends on user involvement in deciding what services are offered and how it is managed and developed. Half of the volunteers are former users of the centre which creates a dynamic sense of community through which young people can improve their own lives and that of others. The End House in Durham provides advice and support but also emergency services for young people such as overnight accommodation. It is connected to the Durham City Youth Project and has young people represented on the centre's management committee. The Nucleus in Northern Ireland is a drop-in centre devised by, created for and run by young people in Londonderry to advise on rights,

² For other examples of issue-specific youth consultation programmes see Matthews *et al.* 1998c.

provide counselling or simply to hang out. Young people have been involved at every stage of the creation of Nucleus and have control over running it. Despite the success of these initiatives and their importance within the context of community service provision and issue specific objectives, they remain relatively powerless with regard to local authority decision making.

c) Neighbourhood / estate based initiatives

A third form of community development initiatives concern neighbourhood improvements to whole estates rather than indirect benefits to the community through service provision. Amongst the better known community development initiatives that young people have been centrally involved with are the Bentilee Neighbourhood Project in Stoke, the Camden Goods Yard Estate project in London, Edenhill Estate in Peterlee, Langley Children's Project (1994), Kingston-upon-Hull Youth Forum (Save the Children 1995). These have all emerged with the aim of creating an opportunity for young people to express their local place needs and to influence the way their neighbourhoods are developed and managed. Some of these projects maybe one-off affairs whilst others may develop into something more enduring. They tend to be of educational benefit as well as being action-orientated to bring about tangible results.

5.6.3 Young people and local authority decision making

Young people are not enculturated to participate in local authority related activities. Incidences in which young people have taken part have therefore been largely initiated by the local authorities rather than young people. There are however exceptions whereby local authorities have linked up with autonomous voluntary groups which serve as recognised authorities which influence and complement local authority policy and provision. In Northampton for example a number of such organisations exist in the youth service sector. These are the Northampton Association of Boys Clubs (NABC), the Northampton Association of Youth Clubs (NAYC), the Northampton branch of NCVYS (National Council for Voluntary Youth Services) and the Northampton Youth Coalition.

a) Feeder groups

These may or may not be initiated by local authorities but more than likely are. They may have come about in response to a specific need or issue (in that forums or consultation exercises may be established to deal with a specific issue), or may constitute an attempt to create permanent structures through which young people can communicate their views and concerns to the decision making machinery of the local authority. The Right On Youth Network in Cardiff involving 1000 young people across the city, is supported by Save the Children and Children in Need, and has developed with the aim of providing opportunities for the under 25s to improve provision for young people through involvement in the planning and design of services (Save the Children 1997a). Article 12 formed with the clear aim of providing a medium

(nationally) through which Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the child's right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken seriously in any matter affecting the child) could be realised. They act as a voice for children offering advice on empowerment to children and young people, raise public and organisational awareness of children's issues, conduct relevant research and publish research outcomes and literature concerning children's rights.

Organisations and schemes such as have been outlined under 'Issue specific projects' (section 5.6.2) above may also develop intermittent or permanent roles as feeder groups influencing local governance. Other examples of feeder groups which have emerged with a clear commitment to young people, in particular those generated through young people's concern for the environment, have included city wide consultation programmes and Local Agenda 21 forums.

b) Consultation exercises

A common way in which young people have participated in local decision making has been through consultation exercises initiated by local authorities around specific issues such as crime, community safety, drug abuse and the environment. The Leeds Environment City Initiative's action-research project concerning Children, Young People and the Environment (Ruse 1997) and the Leeds Listens ... to Children and Young People report (Burden and Percy-Smith 1996) in Leeds are perhaps amongst the better known cases of city-wide consultation with young people. The establishment of partnerships between these projects and the City Council ensure the research is policy-orientated towards the Leeds Children and Young people's Strategy, which seeks to develop a permanent mechanism for consulting with children and young people in environmental planning (Burden and Percy-Smith 1996). They also contribute to the Local Agenda 21 process in Leeds by determining partnerships with children and young people which will link with existing City Council Committees and City Partnerships (Ruse 1997). What this suggests is that if city wide initiatives are to be effective, support from the Local Council is imperative.

Nottinghamshire's 'Youth Environment Action Plan' (YEAP), Derbyshire's Young People's Healthy living and Environment Project (LGMB 1996), Blueprint for Leicester, Sheffield Living City and 'Connect Youth' in Scotland (which came about as a result of the Scottish Office Crime Prevention Unit's concern for community safety, Matthews *et al.* 1998c) are other examples of environmentally generated city wide initiatives. As Ruse (1997) suggests, projects such as these provide a solid basis for feeding into Local Agenda 21 initiatives.

More recently as a result of a growing ethos in local authorities of recognising young people's participatory rights a number of local initiatives have sought to explore how young people feel about participating and opportunities available to participate. In the

north east of England, Save the Children (in conjunction with the Participation Event Group which is led by young people) ran a series of workshops to set an agenda for children's participation. In a similar fashion Birmingham City Council, together with Save the Children, have set up a three year project to consult with young people and to explore structures and methods of increasing young people's participation in local government. Part of the brief of this project is to consider the effectiveness of a local commissioner in coordinating and promoting developments in children's participation.

c) Youth and Local Agenda 21 Forums

Youth and Local Agenda 21 initiatives have provided a potentially effective forum for the participation of young people. The best example is that of Manchester which funded a Youth and Local Agenda 21 officer to work as a young people's advocate in the Local Agenda 21 process. The Manchester Young People's Forum was one of the significant outcomes, which provided a focus through which young people could articulate their views and opinions about matters important to them. The forum gives young people confidence in speaking out and break down barriers around local authorities. Young people in Manchester are now advising on local health authority service provision for young people. Other Local Agenda 21 youth initiatives have been attempted in County Durham, South Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire (LGMB 1996). In the majority of cases whilst having been initiated by local authority departments LA21 youth groups have not received the necessary political and financial commitment and have been attempted without adequate community representation and support. The most successful LA21 youth forums, such as in Manchester, (see also 'Right On Youth Network' in Cardiff) have been developed through a multi-agency approach.

d) Shadow organisations/Youth Councils

Matthews *et al.* (1998c) identified an incipient structure of youth councils and forums in the UK serving different purposes and therefore taking different forms. These occur at different levels from Parish Youth Councils (Eg Woodford Halse in Northamptonshire) to Local Youth Parliaments (Eg in Stirling) and complementary County Council Youth Councils (Eg Devon Youth Council). In Northern Ireland the Department of Education established the Northern Ireland Youth Forum to provide a national platform for young people's issues, with a brief to develop a Network of Local Youth Councils (Matthews *et al.* 1998c). The proactive work of the NIYF across major public policy sectors has brought about a heightened awareness of the value of young peoples involvement. In Wolverhampton an area based approach has been established by setting up consultative committees with young people in different locations. This model has been reproduced elsewhere for example with Dorset Youth Service's 'Speak Out' initiative, from which it is intended that a county youth council will emerge. Milton Keynes has one of the largest local authority supported youth forums with over 200 members in 1995 between 13 and 25 years of age (Matthews *et al.* 1998c).

Despite the sporadic and haphazard emergence of youth councils, there are as yet few cases where young people have unambiguously been provided with genuine opportunities to work alongside local authorities in a meaningful way. (Devon Youth Council is an exception rather than the rule in this case). There is also a danger of tokenism with Youth Councils unless as with Devon Youth Council there is an expressed political (and financial) commitment to children's participation. Participation may also be restricted to an unrepresentative group of motivated young people, to the detriment of more marginalised or disadvantaged individuals and views and decisions taken by Youth Councils may not be taken seriously by adults or indeed considered at all. West (1997) highlighted a problematical aspect of children's participation in terms of the reliance on unattractive but existing adult structures and models which appear inappropriate to many young people.

All the same Youth Councils, Fora and Agenda 21 focus groups provide useful models for children's participation as long as they are taken seriously by local authority officials. Groups such as these are important catalysts in raising the profile of children on local agendum. Indeed enduring structures for children's participation are only likely to be successful if built up from the community level (Hart 1997). Matthews *et al.* (1998c) noted that any problems there may be in establishing structures for the participation of children and youth revolve around who has initiated participation, the process of participation and the outcomes of participation. If structures are inadequately constructed and outcomes fail then the problem of youth disaffection will be compounded. It is therefore essential that the integrity of children's participation is respected by creating meaningful interchange, making the process and setting child friendly and providing the necessary resources and structures necessary for participation to occur.

For many children however, local authorities are conceptualised as some kind of all powerful abstract phenomena which effects their lives and provides services for them. Many young people appear resigned to the fact that local affairs are decided by someone else somewhere else and that they have no part to play in the process. In contrast to many European countries (for example Sweden where structures operate throughout schools and youth organisations to promote the participation of young people) in Britain a 'culture of non-participation' (Lansdown 1995) prevails amongst young people leading to apathy and disaffiliation from civic life (Wyn and White 1997; Roche and Tucker 1997). Despite this, there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate the competence and willingness of children to take a more active and responsible role in local decision making (see for example Hart 1997), but traditional structures tend not to be conducive to facilitating their participation. Policies at national, regional and local levels have as yet been slow in turning the rhetoric of the UN Convention into reality. So often the rhetoric of children's rights and participation that many local authorities embrace gives rise to a range of piecemeal responses which do not always lead to

genuine opportunities for participation but remain at best on the fringes of local government and at worst tokenistic.

What emerges from the debate about the participation of young people is that it is not a smooth process, rather one that is entangled with established traditions of local governance and negative social constructions of young people's competence and readiness to participate as equal citizens in their own right. An elucidation of some of the major facets of the barriers to children's participation in local governance will provide the focus for the following section.

5.7 Barriers to children's participation

Despite the growing recognition of children's competence as actors in their own right and the value and importance of their democratic involvement in local affairs, young people tend to remain largely excluded from the local democratic process. There appears to be a number of reasons for this which can be divided into three main categories: those based on negative social attitudes towards young people, those relating to the structure and functioning of local authorities, and those associated with the low status of young people on political agenda. The dimensions to these barriers will be considered in turn.

1. Social attitudes towards young people

- * Children are viewed as being immature, incompetent, irresponsible and irrational and therefore lacking the credentials that adults have in making responsible decisions (James and Prout 1990; Jenks 1996; Pilcher 1995).
- * Adults feel that because they have been children themselves that they are in a position to act for them (Save the Children 1995).
- * Children are seen as by products of families and as such are treated as passive dependents on parents (Jones and Wallace 1992).
- * Prevailing negative social attitudes of young people in many countries tend to give rise to ideologies which condemn and contain rather than encourage and empower young people. For many adults, allowing children greater power to participate is seen as a threat to the power relations between adults and young people.

2. Low political priority

- * There is a lack of an overt political commitment to children (Hodgkin and Newell 1996).**
- * Children tend to be seen as economically unproductive contributing little to national wealth. Local government policy tends therefore to be reactive rather than proactive and geared more to economic rather than social objectives with little recognition of the valuable contribution children may make to society.**
- * Since the objective for capitalist society is the accumulation of capital, social policy tends to be dominated by legislation and procedures which safeguard profit accumulation at the expense of social well being and adult over children's agenda.**
- * Since children do not get the vote (until at least 16 in some countries) their needs and interests are subordinated to that of voting adults.**

3. Exclusionary structures and functioning of local authorities

- * A 'culture of powerlessness and non-participation' exists (Lansdown 1995) such that paternalistic attitudes of bureaucrats tend to prevail, premised on the supposition that as servants of the state they are given the legitimacy to take decisions for children based on adult rather than child perspectives.**
- * Entrenched bureaucratic structures simply do not have the facility to allow children to participate. Many social and political institutions are hierarchical with little accountability to those they are serving (Save the Children 1997a).**
- * Legislative frameworks prohibit participation (Franklin and Franklin 1996)**
- * Children tend to be invisible in statistical accounting (Qvortrup 1990; Hodgkin and Newell 1996).**

There is a strong moral case as well as clear social and economic benefits in taking the necessary steps to surmount these barriers and promote children's participation. One of the aims of effective government structures for children would be to encourage and prepare children for responsible participation in a democratic society (Hodgkin and Newell 1996) as soon as the young persons developing capacity permits. Developing opportunities for real participation for all children and young people however involves challenging established social norms and values and implanting a new consciousness

which gives a higher profile to children, places children at the heart of the policy making process and creates new structures of local governance which are accessible to young people.

Such fundamental changes are unlikely to happen quickly or easily and as yet there are no local authorities in the UK who have fully developed a coherent and comprehensive model for children's participation. Evidence to date does however suggest a number of guiding principles for promoting children's participation which may inform emergent models of child-friendly local governance.

5.8 New models of local governance

5.8.1 The changing nature of local governance

If conflicting values and attitudes between adults and young people over urban public space use are a spatial expression of cultural difference, then the interpretation and amelioration of these differences is a political process. Young people's urban place use is therefore mediated by 'politics of culture' (Stephens 1995) in which urban landscapes reflect the decisions of dominant social interests in society. The pertinent question here is the nature of the politics and underlying social relations that shape the world of young people and the relevance of participation to this debate. New models of local governance need to address the generational power differentials between adults and young people, in which decisions about young people become decisions with young people.

The review of existant forms of young people's participation has already concluded that the most successful attempts have been based on multi-agency approaches. This suggests that new models of local governance should involve cooperation between different agencies as well as between young people and adults. Indeed Chapter Seven of Agenda 21 flagged the idea of an 'enabling approach' involving a partnership between the public, private and community sectors, which emphasises participation in the decision making process of community parties such as the elderly and young people. Creating a culture of children's participation, however, entails more than the provision of appropriate structures. It also necessitates local authorities adopting different ways of working - as facilitators and resources rather than providers and controllers.

One possible model for a child friendly form of local governance is the 'network model' suggested by Stoker (1988). The network model sees effective policy implementation as flowing from the cooperative efforts of different interests and organisations in a partnership of mutual dependency, which encourages long term commitment beyond the sphere of normal statutory responsibility. In contrast to hierarchical or market models of local government the cooperation implicated in the

network model is based on reciprocity, solidarity, loyalty and trust and is achieved through discussion, negotiation, open communication shared knowledge and experience. Such a model is highly appropriate to realising children's democratic participation and citizenship rights. The problem however appears to lie in achieving such an ideal type situation.

The creation of a children's agenda for participation at the local authority level calls in turn for the support of central government. Since much of the legislation that affects children's participation is enacted at national level, and in the absence of a clear and concerted manifesto commitment to children, the role of a minister for children or an independent statutory officer for children (such as a children's commissioner or ombudsperson) is imperative (Rosenbaum and Newell 1991; Hodgkin and Newell 1996).

5.8.2 Effective government structures for children

The creation of a children's agenda for participation necessitates appropriate democratic structures and legislation at national and local authority level. Hodgkin and Newell (1996: 13) state: "every citizen deserves sensitive government structures to meet his or her needs (and that) lack of or inadequate co-ordination across government is a potential problem". Hodgkin and Newell (1996) put forward a number of proposals for government structures for children including prime ministerial advisors, a senior Cabinet minister with responsibility for children, a designated Minister of State for children a standing Sub-committee for Children, and a Parliamentary Select Committee on children linked to the Governmental Strategy for UK Children.

In concluding his review of England's position with respect to the Convention Freeman (1996) put forward three suggestions for a structure to protect the interests and further the rights of children in England. He stated that the UNCRC should be incorporated into English law. Second, that child-impact statements should be introduced such that all legislation should be accompanied by an assessment of its effect on children. Third, that an ombudsman for children should be established that would champion the cause of children's rights and monitor the UK's compliance with the Convention. Rosenbaum and Newell (1991) likewise argue the case for The Independent Office of Children's Rights Commissioner, with a brief of: 'promoting children's rights and interests throughout the UK amongst children and adults alike; promote compliance with the minimum standards set by the UNCRC and other relevant international treaties or agreements, by influencing policy makers and practitioners to take greater account of children's rights and interests; oversee children's access to, and the effectiveness of, all forms of complaints and advocacy systems and where necessary provide appropriate support; and conduct official enquiries, investigations and research where relevant (Rosenbaum and Newell 1991). These ideas are compliant with the UNCRC and the Council of Europe Strategy for Children and mirror successful structures for promoting

children's rights in other countries, for example in Australia, New Zealand, Israel and Norway (See Verhellen and Spiesschaert 1989; Flekkoy 1991; Rosenbaum and Newell 1991; Franklin 1995 for a review of these).

In Britain the idea of a Commissioner for children has been developed at local levels in the form of Children's Rights Officers, for example, in Leicestershire County Council (Lindsay 1988) and Leeds (Ellis and Franklin 1995). They have tended to be concerned with processing the complaints of children in care; but have also sought to develop and promote an awareness, sensitivity and respect for the rights and interests of children in care generally.

5.8.3 Principles for children's participation in local governance

The forms which new modes of child friendly governance might take are likely to differ from place to place and across cultures. However an acknowledgement of the universality of children's rights and the obligation countries have to meeting them suggests a number of imperatives guiding the principles for policy and practice in bringing about children's participation. These are set out below.³

- * ensure that children are included directly in research and needs assessment
- * promote their direct participation in the design, development, management, running and evaluation of programmes
- * invest in training and capacity building among development workers, service providers and researchers so that they are able to involve, listen to, communicate with, and interpret children's views, as well as facilitate their direct representation
- * provide opportunities for key local authority officials to reflect on their own values and realise the value and importance of involving children in local affairs
- * where appropriate, appoint staff or independent statutory officers with special responsibilities for consulting children, for example local ombudspeople, children's rights commissioners or youth and Local Agenda 21 officers
- * develop methods and approaches which enable and support children to express their own views and interests, especially in judicial or administrative

³ These are based on the seven responsibilities for local decision makers identified by Save the Children (1995).

procedures

- * produce an annual policy review and budgetary statement of financial support for the development of structures of participation for children
- * where appropriate, ensure adequate data collection, that children have a right of access to information held about them, and that support is provided in accessing such information and understanding its implications
- * develop permanent mechanisms to include children's views in decisions which affect them, as well as to provide them with opportunities to exercise their rights as citizens in public debate
- * build on and adapt existing structures and departments so as to provide the necessary conditions and support for extending local authority activities to include children's participation.
- * ensure legislation is fully compatible with the UNCRC
- * promote effective coordination between government structures and departments

Whether these principles are met or not, will depend on the political will of local and national government officials. However growing awareness of the moral, social and political expediency of adopting a stance which facilitates rather than thwarts the implementation of children's rights and pressure to comply with international recommendations may provide the social and political space in which children's rights may be realised.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has set out some of the issues and debates surrounding young people's rights, participation and citizenship. In particular it emphasises the need to challenge existing forms of local decision making and to set in place structures which would enable the meaningful participation of children in local governance. However despite the success of many children's initiatives, these have tended to remain outside of the realms of local authorities. More information and exchange is needed about successful experiences of involving children in local governance, such that a situation is reached in which the participation of children becomes familiar as the norm rather than the exception. In particular research needs to identify what children and young people in different social settings see as favourable conditions for participation; the functional impediments within local authorities to widening participation in local governance to include children and the potential role that NGOs and community groups can play in bridging the gap between grass roots initiatives and local government. Through investigating the complex, multi-faceted and socially variable worlds of young people, in particular through engaging with them as partners in the research process, lessons can be learnt about ways in which young people can be provided with appropriate opportunities to play a more full and active role in their communities and as equal citizens in their own right. This project is committed to that end.

Chapter Six

Methodology

6.1 Introduction

The review of literature conducted in Chapters Two to Five has drawn attention to the complex and multi-dimensional nature of childhood. In particular the review highlights the need to understand children as social actors in their own right. The methodology adopted in this project is guided by some of the theoretical and conceptual parameters which prevail in contemporary research on children and youth, in cultural geography and in discourses of children's rights and participation.

This chapter outlines the methodological approaches employed in this study. It begins with a statement of the objectives of the empirical research before going on to provide a description and rationale for the sample populations and the locations selected for study. What follows are comments on the research process, the rationale for the chosen research methods and consideration of questions relating to procedure, access and ethics. Finally, it concludes with a guide to the way in which the results are analysed and presented in the course of the thesis.

6.2 Objectives of the empirical study

The overall aims of this study were outlined in Chapter One. The specific research questions are outlined below.

1. How do young people 'see' the local areas in which they live?
2. What places and aspects of their local environments do young people especially value?
3. How do young people feel about the environmental opportunities and quality of their local areas and how would they change them if they could?
4. How do young people most like to spend their free time?
5. What is the nature of the relationship young people have with particular places?
6. How and why do young people use their local places in the way they do?

7. What are the similarities and differences in the way young people use local places?
8. What experiences do young people derive from their particular uses of place?
9. What are the motivations, influences and restrictions on where young people go and what they do in their free time?
10. How do parents and peers influence how young people use local places?
11. What is the nature of the relationships between young people and adults in the context of their use of local places?
12. How do young people negotiate the tensions between their own desires and aspirations and the social and environmental structures that constrain them?
13. How do young people feel about their position with respect to local decision making and what ways do they suggest they could be more involved?

The themes of the chapters which follow have been selected so as to address these research questions within the parameters of the issues which emerged in the course of the empirical study. Research questions are not specific to any one chapter, instead different chapters may provide contrasting perspectives on, and different dimensions to, any one research question.

6.3 Study locations

This section begins by outlining the rationale for the selection of the two study locations. It then provides a visual comparison of the two locations using systematic photographic surveys. Finally, socioeconomic, demographic and environmental characteristics of the two locations are considered based on Census data and local surveys.

6.3.1 Selection of study locations

The selection of locations for study was based on two considerations. First, it was intended that the main focus of the study was to be on a low income working class neighbourhood. This decision was based on increasing concern and moral panics about young people hanging out in low income neighbourhoods and the subsequent associations of young people in these neighbourhoods with increasing levels of crime and anti social behaviour. One of the aims of this study was to investigate the nature of these problems from the perspective of young people living in this type of area. The second reason for the selection of a low income working class neighbourhood was an acknowledgement of studies which draw attention to the way in which poverty and inequality impact on the lives of young people (Cashmore 1984; Coffield *et al.* 1986; Bradshaw 1990b; Bates and Riseborough 1993; Kumar 1993) and the growing concerns about social exclusion (MacDonald 1997; Wyn and White 1997). Taking these two influences together there appeared a need to investigate the spatial dimensions to young people's experiences growing up in areas of social disadvantage in terms of the way in which they value and use local places.

The decision to choose Semilong came about as a result of consultation with the youth service as well as a personal knowledge of the area. Since Hart's (1979) seminal work in Vermont, U.S.A. in which he lived as part of the 'Inavale' community, few studies of children's geographies have been undertaken since then with the researcher resident in the community.

The second consideration, was to study an area which would provide a contrasting socio-demographic and environmental context. As a result the suburban area of East Hunsbury was chosen, once again through consultation with the youth service. The aerial photographs (Plates 6.1 and 6.2) provide an overall impression of the layout of each area. Note the high density and regular street patterns of the inner city area and the clustered nature of suburban housing interspersed with open green spaces. Figures 6.1 and 6.3 provide a cartographic representation of both areas together with reference points for the systematic photographic surveys of both locations shown in Figures 6.2 and 6.4. An outline of the demographic, socioeconomic and physical characteristics of the two locations are provided below.

Plate 6.1: Aerial photograph of inner city neighbourhood of Semilong, Northampton.



Plate 6.2: Aerial photograph of suburban district of East Hunsbury, Northampton.



Figure 6.1: Photogrid survey points for inner city district of Semilong, Northampton.

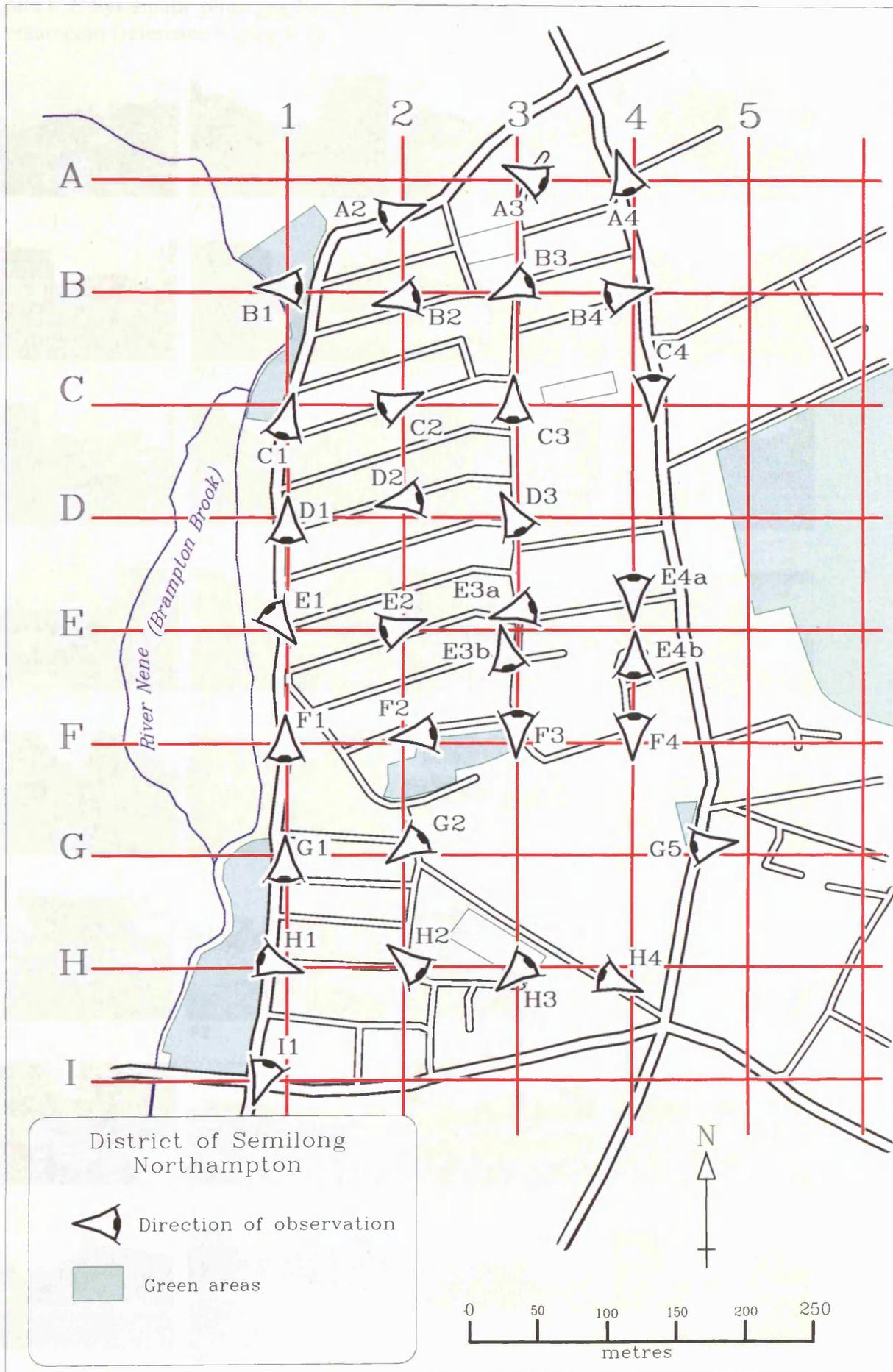


Figure 6.2: Systematic photographic survey of inner city neighbourhood of Semilong, Northampton (reference Figure 6.1)



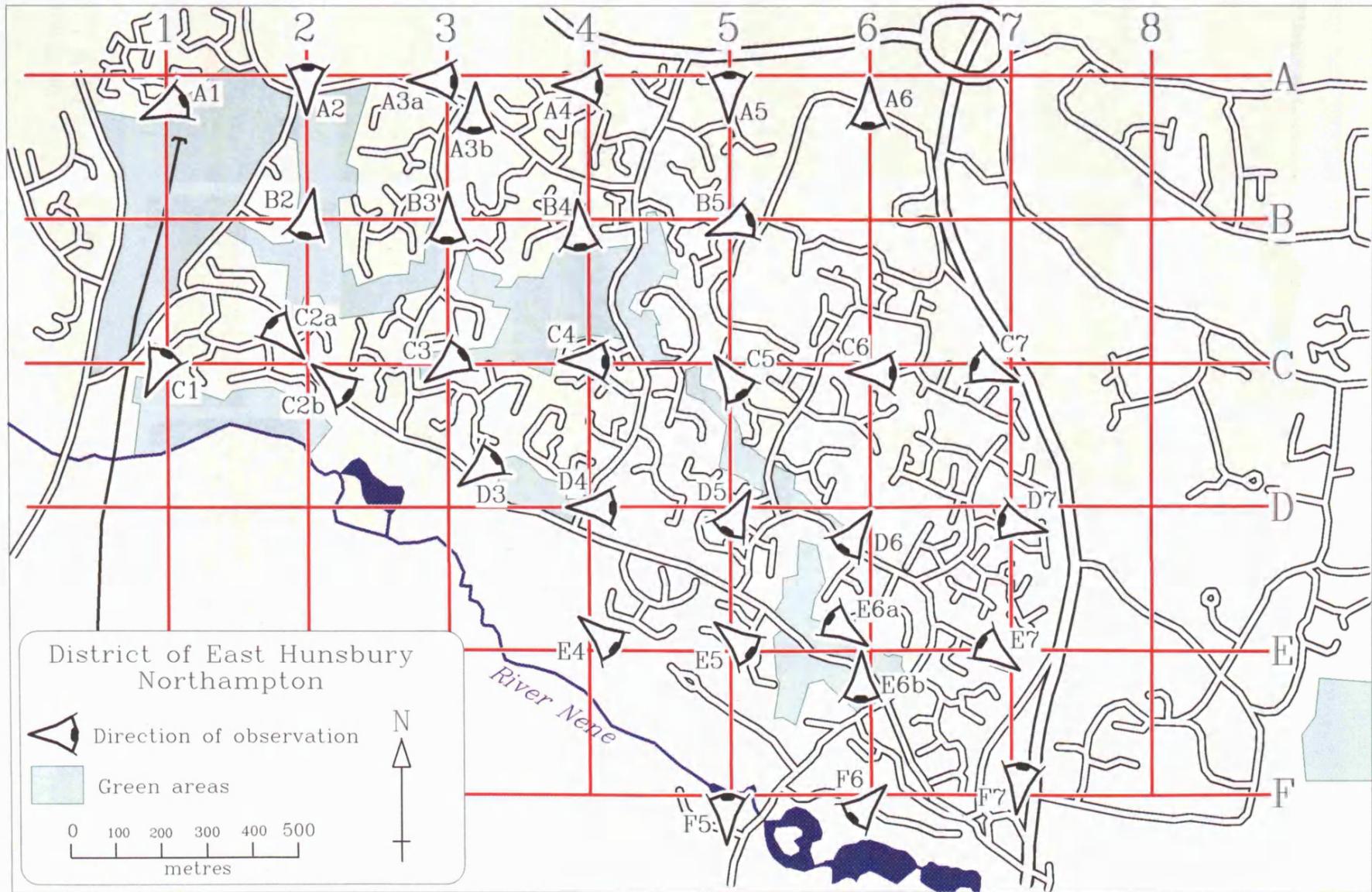


Figure 6.3: Photogrid survey points for the suburban district of East Hunsbury, Northampton.

Figure 6.4: Systematic photographic survey of suburban district of East Hunsbury, Northampton (reference Figure 6.3)



6.3.2 The inner city area of Semilong, Northampton

Physical characteristics

Semilong is a densely populated area bounded by three busy main roads. It is a predominantly residential area of low cost¹, terraced, Victorian and Edwardian housing (see Plate 6.3) coupled with 1970s local authority apartment blocks (Plate 6.4). Some of the privately rented accommodation lacks basic household amenities (see Table 6.1) and is of poor quality. There are two recent developments of flatted accommodation blocks on both the north and south ends of the area. Local authority housing is generally well maintained and mainly occupied by older residents and/or single occupants. A number of buildings are derelict such as factories, houses and the local church (shortly to be demolished).

The dense layout of the built environment means there is little green or open space within the area. Plate 6.5 shows a typical terraced family home in Semilong, with front access opening straight out onto the street and, at best, small back yards (Plate 6.6). The roads are congested by parking and are regularly used as short cuts from one side of the area to the other. Three open green spaces are located on the periphery of the area (OGS 1, OGS 2, OGS 3 in Figure 6.5), access to which, in each case is gained by crossing busy main roads. The open green spaces (OGS 1 and OGS 2) border onto a polluted river and all three are awash with litter, broken glass and dog excrement. The green areas (OGS 2 and OGS 3) are frequented by drunks, drug takers and adults perceived as potentially dangerous. The green area OGS 3 has a history of assaults.

The red light district intermingles with the southern border of Semilong around a new factory estate (see Figure 6.5) attracting kerb crawlers as well as drug users which together exacerbate the 'seedy' nature of this part of the area. As with many parts of the area used syringe needles, beer cans, used condoms and discarded furniture add to litter and dog excrement to lower the environmental quality of the area. In a recent environmental survey of the area (Buchanan *et al.* 1996), general satisfaction was expressed about level of facilities and friendliness of the people and the desirability of Semilong as a place to live. Yet major dissatisfaction was expressed about the general poor environmental quality of the area and litter, graffiti, street cleaning, street lighting, the decaying urban fabric and lack of maintenance of the streets and pavements were mentioned as primary concerns. Four out of five people in the survey said the area was unattractive. (There were no respondents under the age of 16 in the survey).

¹ The average price of a two bedroom terraced house in Semilong is £42,000 (Source: Arans Estate Agents 11/12/98).

Plate 6.3: Street of terraced housing in inner city Northampton.



Plate 6.4: Local authority flatted accomodation in inner city Northampton.



Plate 6.5: Typical family home in inner city Northampton.



Plate 6.6: Little room to play: a typical backyard in the inner city.



Figure 6.5: Semilong: youth and recreational provision.



Social and demographic characteristics

Table 6.1 illustrates the general social and demographic characteristics of Semilong. The local population is heterogeneous in its social mix in terms of age and ethnicity. There is a significant proportion of the local population who are socially disadvantaged such as lone parents on benefits, unemployed single people, homeless families living in bed and breakfast and bedsit accommodation and individuals who have been discharged into the community from psychiatric institutions according to the principle and directives of 'care in the community'. According to Northamptonshire County Council's young person's support index², Semilong falls within the eighth most deprived ward in Northampton (out of a total of 21 wards), with a high deprivation index of '+ 1736'. One local worker suggested that as many as 85 per cent of the population have some sort of family problem that significantly affects their lifestyle such as alcoholism, children with learning difficulties, domestic violence or family break down. Alcohol and substance misuse including intravenous drug taking are a significant problem in Semilong, some of which is perceived to be connected with prostitution on the southern end of the area.

Crime and the fear of crime are significant social problems. Many residents feel the area is not safe to walk around at night and the view has been expressed that the locality will become less safe over the next three years. Major crime problems include burglary, theft from cars, criminal damage and petty vandalism (Buchanan *et al.* 1996).

Residents of Semilong tend to be either trapped in the area by poverty, family circumstances or negative equity. The increase in privately rented accommodation available has attracted a transient population for example of students and single manual workers on short term contracts. There are, however, still many older residents who have lived in Semilong all their lives and many families have relations in the area giving rise to close knit social support networks particularly amongst the Irish community.

The social and demographic heterogeneity of the area gives rise to a diversity of attitudes about the local community. A recent survey (Buchanan *et al.* 1996) has found that whilst some talk of the 'village like' identity of Semilong, others point to the loss of community feeling and the replacement of a loosely integrated collection of individuals. On the whole, people felt a strong attachment to the area. Older residents tended to find the area a warm and friendly place, however, younger people complained about the lack of opportunities and the hostility of adults and older residents.

² NCC Corporate HQ Policy Division (1991) Census Atlas of Northamptonshire, Section 30 and Data Section, page 30.

Table 6.1: Social and demographic profile of Semilong (numbers with percentage values in brackets)

| | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Total population: | 3451 | Total aged 10-15: | 131 (3.8) | |
| Age: | 0 - 4 | 258 (7.5) | 45 - 59 | 396 (11.4) |
| | 5 - 15 | 268 (7.7) | 60 - 74 | 475 (13.7) |
| | 16 - 24 | 693 (20) | 75+ | 260 (7.5) |
| | 25 - 44 | 1111 (32.1) | | |
| Ethnic minorities: (% population) | Black African | (3) | | |
| | Asian | (2.6) | | |
| Total dwellings: | 1823 | Total households: | 1613 | |
| Household size: | 1 person | 577 | (35.5) | |
| | 2 persons | 610 | (37.5) | |
| | 3 persons | 238 | (14.6) | |
| | 4 persons | 202 | (12.4) | |
| Average household size: | 2.14 people. | | | |
| Household type: | 1 adult with children | 56 | (3.5) | |
| | 2+ adults with children | 272 | (17.1) | |
| | 2+ adults - no children | 544 | (34.2) | |
| | Lone pensioner | 251 | (15.8) | |
| | Lone non pensioner | 328 | (20.6) | |
| | 2+ pensioners | 141 | (8.9) | |
| House tenure: | Owner-occupied | 1057 | (65.5) | |
| | Public rented | 265 | (16.4) | |
| | Private rented | 246 | (15.3) | |
| | Housing association | 45 | (2.8) | |
| Household amenities: | No central heating | (39.8) | | |
| | Over 1.5 persons per room | (1.5) | | |
| Car ownership: | No car | (47.7) | | |
| | More than one car. | (10.2) | | |
| Labour force activity: (% of economically active labour force) | 80.8 employed in full or part time work, 11.5 are unemployed 6.8 are self employed | | | |
| Socioeconomic group: | Professional | (2) | | |
| | Managerial | (25) | | |
| | Skilled manual | (24) | | |
| | Skilled non-manual | (20) | | |
| | Unskilled | (10) | | |
| Source: 1991 Census statistics. | | | | |

Local amenities

There is a selection of local shops in Semilong - a Coop general store, 4 local shops, 2 takeaways, a chemist, 2 doctor's surgeries, a dentist, a post office, a launderette, 2 pubs, a working men's club and a number of garages and small industrial units. There are a range of religious centres including the Catholic Cathedral and social club, a Bengali Mosque and a Sikh Temple and community centre and St Paul's Congregation which meets in the lower school. There are two schools within the area and two community centres. Despite these facilities there is a general sense of a lack of social provision and a feeling of powerlessness, with a quarter of the population wishing to be more involved in community planning (Buchanan *et al.* 1996). For non-car users such as young people, the disabled and parents with young children, there is a shortage of adequate transport facilities with the local public transport bus routes skirting Semilong. The area is however only 1 mile from the town centre.

Environmental opportunities: youth and recreation provision

In spite the three green areas there are few appropriate outdoor facilities for young people in Semilong. For example, there is no suitable area for playing sports. There is a play area at one end of Semilong (PA1 in Figure 6.5) in poor condition and with poor quality play equipment. Given the limited amount of suitable space for young people and proximity to nearby housing this area is a site of conflict between younger and older children and young people and adults. To the southern end of St Andrews road there is another small park known variously as Miller's Meadow, Paddy's Meadow, St Andrews Park or the 'Bottom Park'. This park hosts a small play area (PA2) as well as an open green space with bushes providing some protection from the road.

Semilong has been recently given a boost in terms of youth provision with the work of the youth service providing for 9-13 as well as 13-25 year olds (although few over the age of 16 attend). The youth project is open on Monday night (7.30-9.30pm) for 13-25 year olds and Tuesday night (7.30-9.30pm) for 9-13 year olds. In January 1997 a new youth and community centre opened (Plate 6.7 and YC 1 in Figure 6.5) funded by Single Regeneration Budget block fund money with an explicit remit for youth provision. Since its opening the number of young people using youth service provision has expanded dramatically to include a broader spectrum of young people. A young mums group has been set up and an after school club established. The centre is managed by local residents but without young people represented on the management committee.

There are a number of uniformed groups in the area including beavers, cubs and scouts for boys and rainbows, brownies and guides for girls. Despite the popularity of the younger groups, the guides and scouts hold little appeal for young people particularly beyond the age of thirteen. All the same, army cadets (located just outside of Semilong) attracts some 13-15 year old teenagers.

Plate 6.7: New youth and community centre in inner city Semilong.



In St Georges Street to the southern end of Semilong the Sikh Community Centre provides activities and facilities for young people including a gym and pool table. Although the facility is said to be available for any young people, inevitable ethnic tensions preclude non sikhs from using the facility. The Cathedral has a youth group (as opposed to a youth club) which operates from the Upper Room on Barrack Road, but membership is for young people aged 13 and over who regularly attend the cathedral and are therefore practising Catholics. However, few young people attending come from Semilong and numbers during 1998 dropped to as low as six. Emphasis is on looking at the catholic faith coupled with ancillary activities such as swimming and sports. Adjacent to Semilong in Kingsthorpe Hollow is a large skateboarding park of national and international reknown which charges a minimum of £4 entry fee. However skateboarding has a limited appeal to certain groups of young people.

6.3.3 The suburban development of East Hunsbury

Physical characteristics

East Hunsbury is a modern suburban residential development to the south of the Northampton ring road. The majority of homes have been built within the last 20 years as a result of the Southern Northampton Development Corporation and have been designed to meet a range of more middle class private housing³ needs including starter homes, family residences of various sizes and some flatted accommodation mainly catering for older citizens. Housing development continues on four sites. Plate 6.8 shows a typical family home. Properties have only small gardens (Plate 6.9), however, many of the streets are arranged in cul-de-sacs providing relatively safe and quiet places for young people to play (Plate 6.10). The main roads through the area are busy with good access to the national motorway network. An abundance of landscaped open green space breaks up an otherwise uniform and homogeneous built environment of tightly packed housing (Plate 6.11).

Social and demographic characteristics

Table 6.2 illustrates the social and demographic characteristics of East Hunsbury. The local population is characterised by a predominance of families with 25 per cent of the population under 15 years of age and only 6 per cent over 60 years. Due to the large sprawling character of East Hunsbury, many talk of a lack of a community feeling. This is partly caused by its dormitory nature with a large proportion of the population commuting outside of East Hunsbury for work. Consequently during weekdays there is a lack of community activity. In contrast to Semilong, East Hunsbury falls into the third least deprived ward in Northampton with a young person's support index of ' - 1359'.

Local amenities

There are two nodes of retail activity (RET1 and RET2 in Figure 6.6) including a Tesco supermarket, a local convenience store, two petrol stations, a Burger King, a chip shop, a video shop and a range of smaller shops. There is a large leisure centre (LC 1), a library, two pubs, a doctor's surgery, a dentist, two community centres and three schools. To the south of the area is a private golf course. Access to the town centre is good for car drivers, however, for non car users local public transport offers limited services.

³ The cost of a 2 bedroom property is £52,000 (compared to £42,000 in Semilong), however, a majority of homes are 3/4 bedroom properties which range from £75,000 to £110,000 (Source: Arans Estate Agents 11/12/98).

Plate 6.8: Typical suburban family home in Northampton.



Plate 6.9: Suburban garden: room to play.



Plate 6.10: Tightly packed housing and grassed area in suburban Northampton.



| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|------|--------|
| | 2+ adults with children | 77 | (34.2) |
| | 2+ adults - no children | 969 | (34.2) |
| | Long perioder | 56 | (15.8) |
| | Long term residents | 415 | (20.6) |
| House tenure: | Owner-occupied | 2364 | (91) |
| | Public rental | 65 | (2.3) |
| | Private rental | 243 | (9) |
| | Housing association | 1 | (0) |
| Household size: | No shared housing | 3 | (0) |
| | Over 1.5 persons per room | 30 | (1) |
| Car ownership: | No car | 3 | (0) |
| | More than one car | 30 | (1) |
| Labour force activity: | 57 employed in full or part time work | | |
| (% of economically active labour force) | 4 unemployed | | |
| | 3 self-employed | | |
| Employment: | Professional | | |
| | Manual | 141 | (5) |
| | Skilled manual | 714 | (27) |
| | Skilled non-manual | 1235 | (47) |
| | Unskilled | | |

Source: 1991 Census analysis

Table 6.2: Social and demographic profile of East Hunsbury (numbers with percentage values in brackets)

| | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------|-----------|
| Total population: | 8664 | Total aged 10-15: | 504 (6.8) |
| Age: | | | |
| 0 - 4 | 822 (9.5) | 45 - 59 | 920 (11) |
| 5 - 15 | 1028 (12) | 60 - 74 | 392 (4.5) |
| 16 - 24 | 879 (10) | 75+ | 102 (1) |
| 25 - 44 | 4521 (52) | | |
| Ethnic minorities: | | | |
| Black British | 94 (1.3) | | |
| Asian British | 133 (1.8) | | |
| Total dwellings: | 3030 | Total households: | 2837 |
| Household size: | | | |
| 1 person | 512 (18) | | |
| 2 persons | 1062 (37) | | |
| 3 persons | 522 (18) | | |
| 4 persons | 593 (21) | | |
| Average household size: | 2.61 people. | | |
| Household type: | | | |
| 1 adult with children | 68 (2.4) | | |
| 2+ adults with children | 57 (2) | | |
| 2+ adults - no children | 969 (34.2) | | |
| Lone pensioner | 56 (15.8) | | |
| Lone non pensioner | 446 (20.6) | | |
| House tenure: | | | |
| Owner-occupied | 2584 (91) | | |
| Public rented | 65 (2.3) | | |
| Private rented | 143 (5) | | |
| Housing association | 1 | | |
| Household amenities: | | | |
| No central heating | (3) | | |
| Over 1.5 persons per room | (0) | | |
| Car ownership: | | | |
| No car | (5) | | |
| More than one car. | (46) | | |
| Labour force activity: | 87 employed in full or part time work, | | |
| (% of economically | 4 unemployed | | |
| active labour force) | 8 self employed | | |
| Socioeconomic group: | | | |
| Professional | (5) | | |
| Managerial | (41.5) | | |
| Skilled manual | (14) | | |
| Skilled non-manual | (28.5) | | |
| Unskilled | (2) | | |
| Source: 1991 Census statistics. | | | |

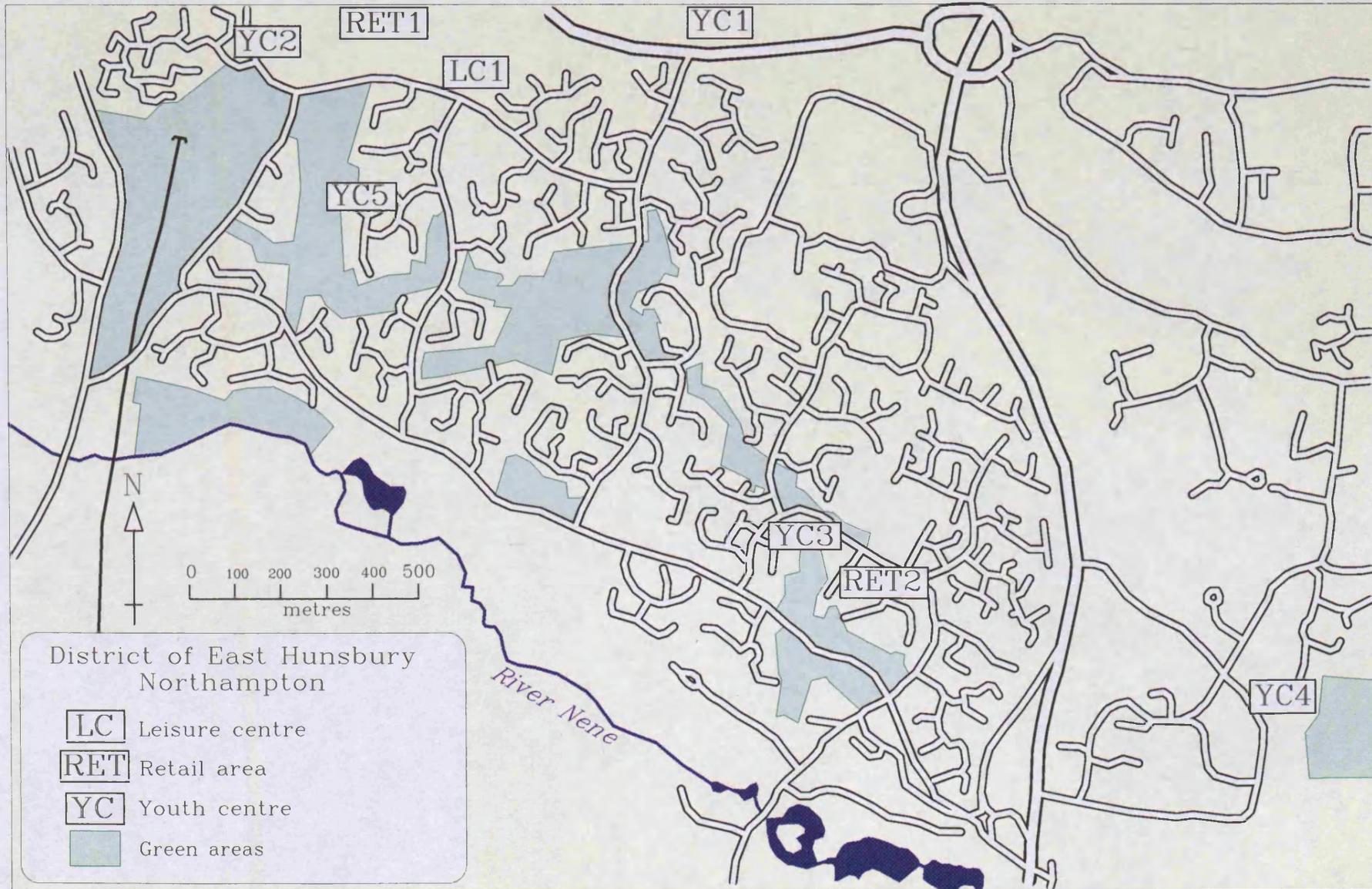


Figure 6.6: East Hunsbury: youth and recreational provision.

Environmental opportunities: youth and recreation provision

Compared with Semilong, there is a greater abundance of open green space in East Hunsbury, a large leisure centre and five different youth club facilities. Mereway Upper school (YC 1 in Fig 6.6) is home to one of the youth clubs open 3 nights a week. The Abbey Centre is affiliated to the local Baptist church and offers a range of activities for young people (YC 2 in Fig 6.6) including music and drama, martial arts, two open youth clubs (one for over 12s and one for 11-15s) and a number of uniformed groups including boys brigade, brownies and guides. Statutory youth provision has been extended to the Blackymore centre (YC 3 in Fig 6.6) which is open from 6pm-8pm on a Thursday. Nearby Wootten village, where many young people meet, is also host to a local youth club (YC 4 in Fig 6.6). The fifth youth facility is provided by local residents on the Grangewood estate (YC 5 in Fig 6.6) on a voluntary basis and is only available for resident members.

As a result of increasing concerns about young people hanging around the Blackymore community centre the Parish Council has erected palisade fences to keep young people out and are planning to install a skate boarding facility for young people. Many of the green areas have an undulating topography making them unsuitable for many recreational and sport activities. Some green areas have been provided with a token range of play equipment. The Danescamp leisure centre offers a range of recreational pursuits including a fun pool, sports hall, gym and specialist activities such as ballet.

6.4 Sample populations

The target group for this study is young people aged 10 - 15 years. This age range spans the period in which young people experience a transition from being young children to being young adults. It is marked by personal and social changes in the young person concerned with identity development and an increasing separation from the home (Coleman and Hendry 1990). During this period places beyond the home take on more meaning as young people construct their own social networks and come to terms with the world around them, giving rise to an expanding environmental range and a more diverse spectrum of environmental transactions according to their changing needs (Hart 1979; Matthews 1987, 1992). The sample population for this project has therefore been selected in order to better understand the way in which the geographies of young people change and develop in the course of this transition.

The initial sample population taking part in the semi-structured interview comprised 181 young people - 80 in the low income, inner city neighbourhood of Semilong and 101 in the more affluent suburban location of East Hunsbury. There were three considerations which dictated the make up of the sample. First, an attempt was made to achieve a balance in participants according to age, gender and ethnicity. However this was not always possible due to the demographic character of the area. For example, at the outset it was hoped that an ethnic dimension would emerge, however, many young Asians were apprehensive about participating and this was compounded by difficulties in gaining parental consent. The second consideration was to recruit young people from all parts of the study areas. In the course of the semi-structured interviews if one part of the study area became over-represented, other parts of the neighbourhood were targeted. The third consideration was to involve different types of young people. That is to say those that spend much of their time indoors or in structured free time activities as well as those who are most prominent on 'the street'. These considerations had implications for gaining access to young people.

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 provide a break down of the initial (semi-structured interview) sample according to gender and age. The places of residence of young people taking part in the semi-structured interviews are shown in Figures 6.7 and 6.8.

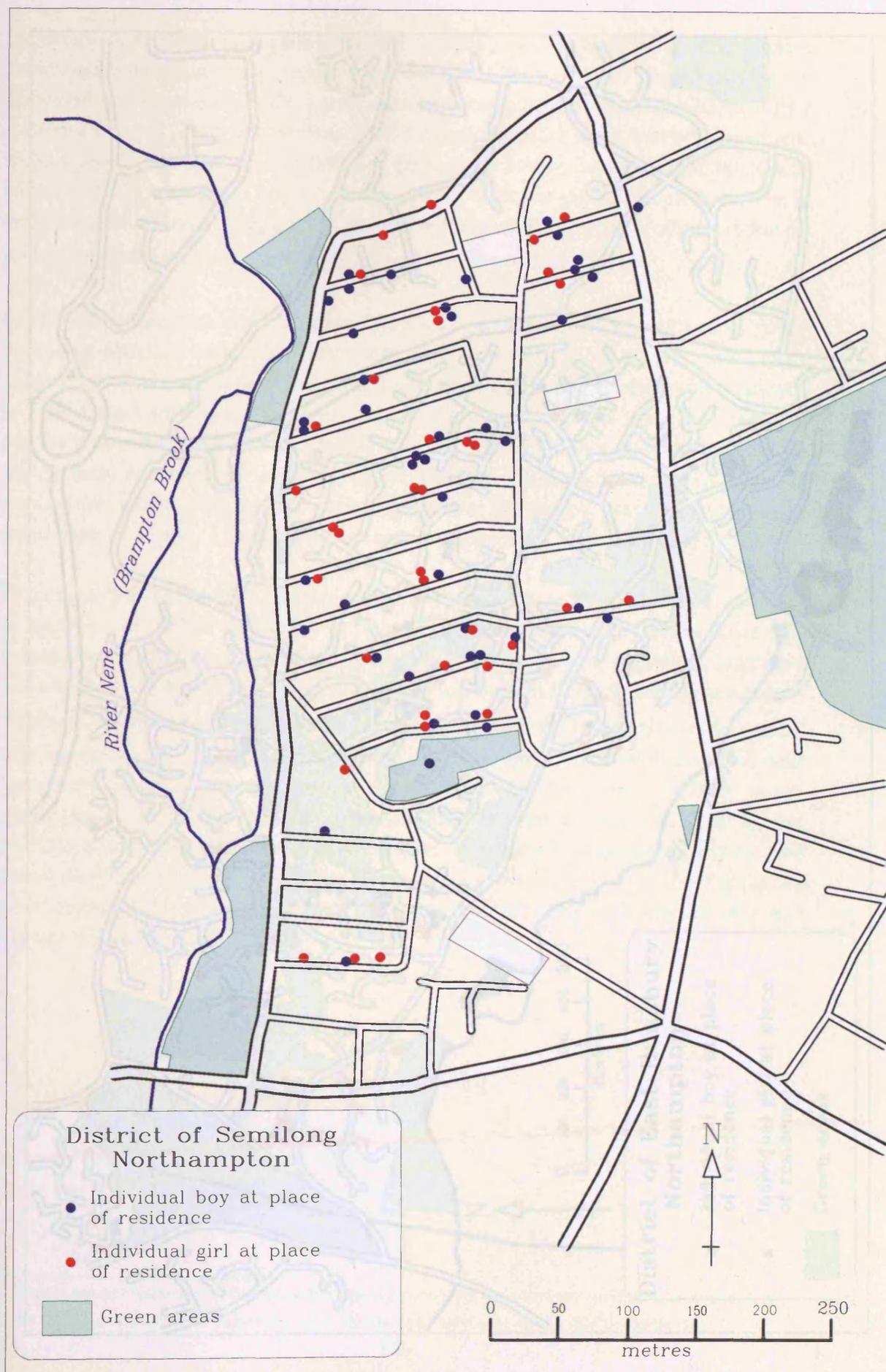
Table 6.3: Sample population according to gender

| | <u>Semilong</u> | <u>East Hunsbury</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|-------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Boys | 44 | 58 | 102 |
| Girls | 36 | 43 | 79 |
| Total | 80 | 101 | 181 |

Table: 6.4: Sample population according to age and gender

| <u>Age</u> | <u>Semilong</u> | | | <u>East Hunsbury</u> | | |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | <u>Boys</u> | <u>Girls</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Boys</u> | <u>Girls</u> | <u>Total</u> |
| 10 | 9 | 12 | 21 | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| 11 | 7 | 3 | 10 | 12 | 6 | 18 |
| 12 | 10 | 2 | 12 | 9 | 7 | 16 |
| 13 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 12 | 6 | 18 |
| 14 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 12 | 8 | 20 |
| 15 | 13 | 8 | 21 | 7 | 11 | 18 |

Figure 6.7: Places of residence of inner city young people represented in the semi-structured interviews.



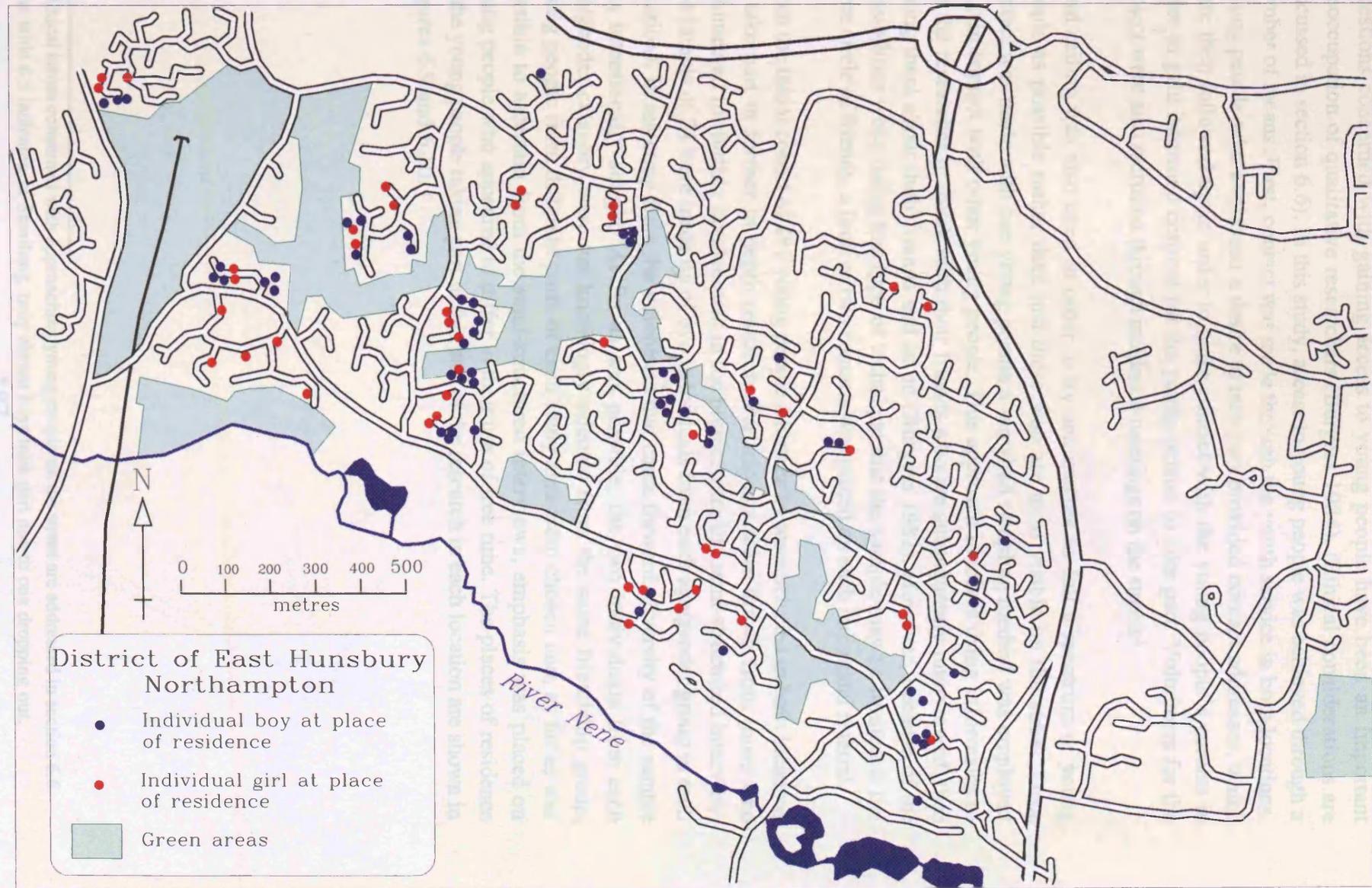


Figure 6.8: Places of residence of suburban young people represented in the semi-structured interview.

Questions concerned with gaining access to young people have been an important preoccupation of qualitative researchers (Burgess 1984). (Ethical considerations are discussed in section 6.6). In this study, access to young people was achieved through a number of means. First, contact was made through the youth service in both locations. Young people who expressed a desire to take part provided contact addresses, which were then followed up in order to make contact with the young people's parents in order to gain informed consent for the young person to take part. Volunteers for the project were also recruited through incidental meetings on the streets⁴.

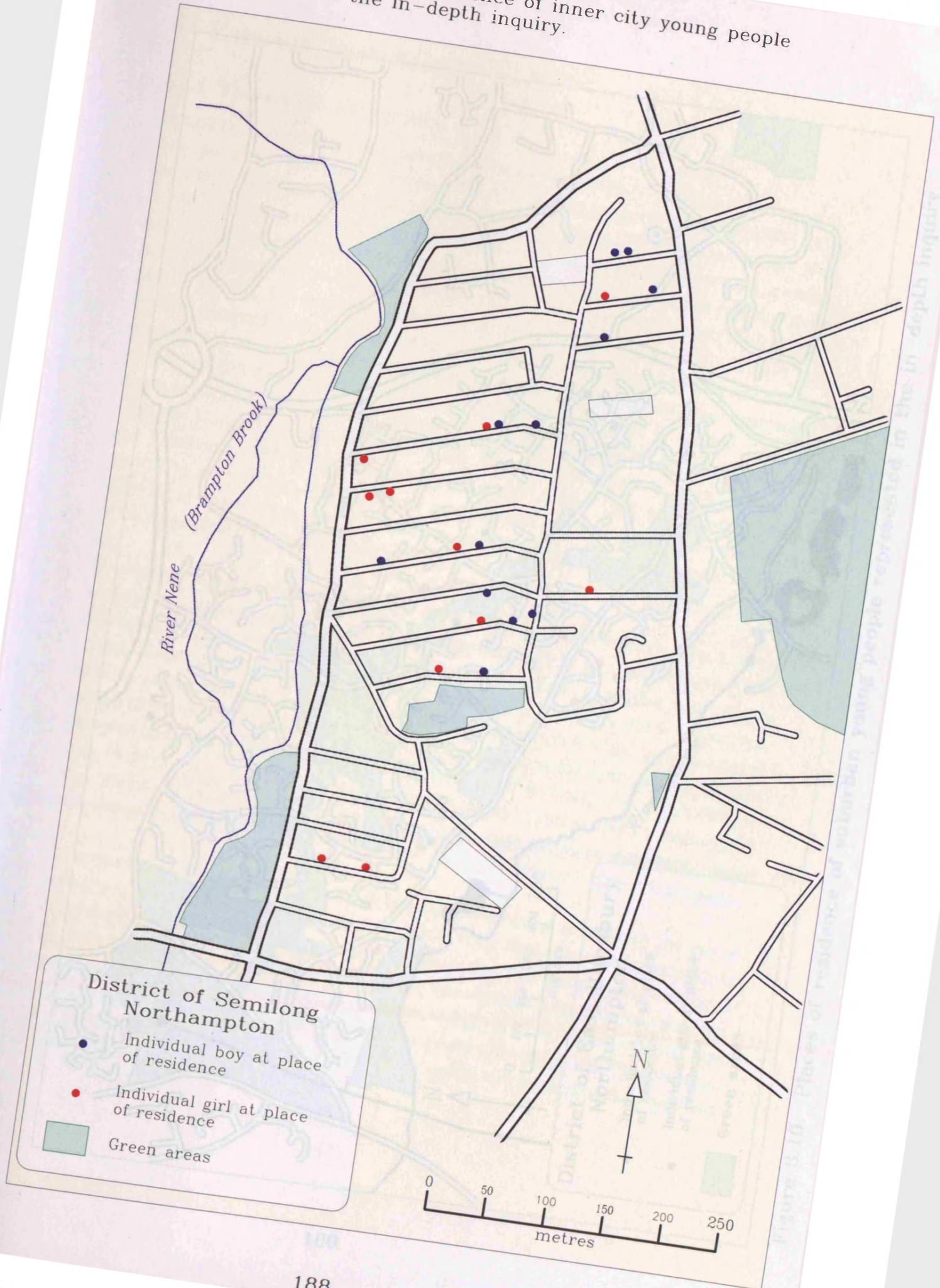
Cold calling was also used in order to try and capture as full a spectrum of young people as possible rather than just those who are most visible on the street. Once contact was made with one young person a snowball sampling method was employed to gain contact with other young people. This approach involves using informants to put the researcher in touch with their friends who are subsequently interviewed, then asking them about their friends and so on (Burgess 1982). However, because of the possibilities when using this type of technique that the sample may be limited to the same circle of friends, a limit of two contacts was placed on each individual referral.

From the initial cohort of 181 young people a further 24 were selected in both locations to take part in further in depth research. Participants were drawn from those who volunteered for further involvement in the project after the semi-structured interview. The sample of 24 were made up of two individuals from each age/gender group in each location⁵. In selecting from the volunteers that came forward, diversity of the sample was intentionally sought. As far as was possible, the two individuals from each age/gender category were not knowingly selected from the same friendship group, young people from different parts of each study area were chosen and, as far as was possible to ascertain from the semi-structured interviews, emphasis was placed on young people who appeared to differ in their use of free time. The places of residence of the young people taking part in this part of the research in each location are shown in Figures 6.9 and 6.10.

⁴ Ethical issues concerned with approaching young people on the street are addressed in section 6.6.

⁵ As table 6.5 indicates, in Semilong, only eleven boys took part due to one dropping out.

Figure 6.9: Places of residence of inner city young people represented in the in-depth inquiry.



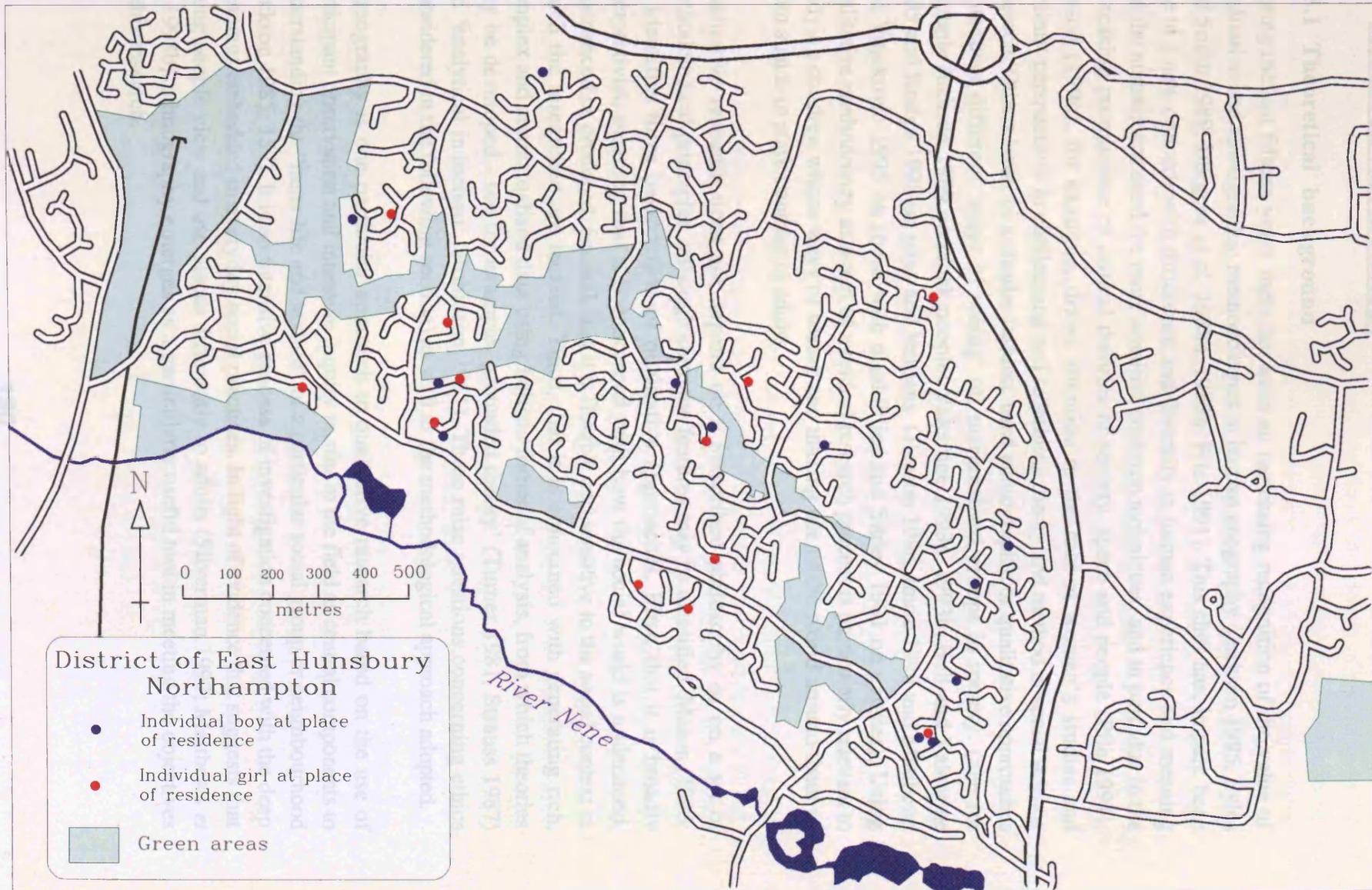


Figure 6.10: Places of residence of suburban young people represented in the in-depth inquiry.

6.5 Research methodology

6.5.1 Theoretical background

During the last fifteen years there has been an increasing recognition of the value of qualitative and ethnographic methodologies in human geography (Jackson 1985; Eyles and Smith 1988; Burgess *et al.* 1988a, 1988b; Pile 1991). This shift has, in part, been due to a new concern with difference and diversity in human experience and meaning and the consequent need for more sensitive research techniques, and in part, due to the increasing prominence of critical theories of society, space and people (Pile 1991). Mason (1996), for example, draws attention to the role of women's studies and feminist perspectives in challenging and redefining theory and method in social science research. Others have, in a similar fashion, used ethnographic or qualitative approaches to uncover different 'ways of seeing' of, marginalised groups in society. (See for example Jackson 1989 on black people; Valentine 1993a, 1993b, Bell and Valentine 1995 and Hodge 1998 on gays and lesbians; Gleeson 1996, Imrie 1996 and Matthews and Vujakovic 1995 on those with disabilities and Sibley 1981 on gypsies). Using qualitative methodology as a part of a critical research process is particularly relevant to studying children whose ways of seeing and making use of the world around them so often stands in stark contrast to adults.

Qualitative research does not depend on a prescribed philosophy or on a set of methodological principles, although common features may be identified. Mason (1996: 4) identifies three basic tenets of qualitative approaches. First, that it is broadly interpretivist, meaning that it is concerned with how the social world is understood, experienced or produced. Second, that it is flexible and sensitive to the social context in which the researched are located. Third, that it is concerned with generating rich, complex and contextualised data using holistic forms of analysis, from which theories may be developed - see for example 'grounded theory' (Turner 1981, Strauss 1987) and 'analytical induction' (Robinson 1951). These raise questions concerning ethics (considered in the following section) as well as the methodological approach adopted.

Ethnography is one particular approach to qualitative research based on the use of participant observation and intensive inquiry *in situ* in the field as central components to understanding the "inner life and texture" of a particular social group or neighbourhood (Jackson 1985: 157). It is an intensive process of investigation concerned with the deep meanings embedded in everyday social practices. In light of evidence that suggests that young people view and use places differently to adults (Silverman 1997; Matthews *et al.* 1998b), ethnography emerges as a particularly useful tool in meeting the objectives of this research.

The use of an interpretative or ethnographic approach in this study therefore focuses on the situated knowledges (Rose 1997) of young people in the context of young people's everyday lives in their home locality. By living in one of the communities being studied in this research, the researcher was able to observe the lives of young people from within the community rather than as an onlooker. Few studies of young people's geographies have adopted an ethnographic approach which investigates the lives of young people within their everyday social and environmental contexts using their own terms of reference. However, Jackson (1985) draws attention to the positionality of the researcher as ethnographer looking in from outside, raising ethical and moral issues about the relationship with the participants of the research. This note of caution is particularly relevant when using ethnographic techniques with children (see section 6.6). Davis (1998), for example, addresses issues concerned with the 'crisis of representation' (Aitken and Herman 1997) in studying children's worlds and poses the question of whether adult researchers can in fact ever really capture the 'authentic voices' of children. As a result Davis (1998) argues for the use of reflexive techniques which allows children's worlds to be understood as a process of co-learning in which the adult researcher's own academic/professional and personal preconceptions are continually challenged and reflexively reconstructed.

In attempt to assuage these tensions one of the reasons for the selection of Semilong as the inner city location was on the basis that the researcher was already part of the community. However, a discrepancy still remains in this justification in that, whilst being located within the community the researcher was not of that community. Also in being an adult, the researcher similarly remains an outsider in relation to young people. All the same the experiences of Hart (1979) in his study of young people in Inavale in Vermont, USA, suggested that these theoretical concerns could be mediated by the personal actions and practices of the researcher in making connections with the subjects which transcended potential boundaries. Davis (1998) too, suggests that it is possible for adult researchers to negotiate a non-adult/non-teacher role acceptable to the child to reduce the social distance between adult and child. Awareness of one's self, the sensitivities of others and issues concerning the way in which communication and social interaction with young people are undertaken (Burgess 1982) are therefore important issues in developing a participative approach (Harding 1987; Eyles 1988; Shakespeare *et al.* 1993; Warrington 1997). The rich data that emanated from Hart's research also bears testimony to the counter arguments to the theoretical reservations initially provided in this discussion. Awareness of the sensitivity of conducting in depth research into the lives of young people, both from the point of view of legitimacy in the eyes of the community and public concerns about the potential threat of adults for young people in public places, necessitated an initial period of high visibility rapport building with the community at large and young people in particular.

Considerations of positionality and reflexivity in relation to the research subjects are therefore important concerns in undertaking qualitative research not only in terms of ethics and morality, but also in terms of reliability and validity. McDowell (1992: 409) for example states that: "we must recognise and take account of our own position, as well as that of our research participants, and write this into our research practice." What this suggests is that the research outcomes are tempered by the subjectivity assigned to the data by the researcher and the power relations between the (adult) researcher and the young person. Issues concerning transparency (Pile 1991) on the part of the researcher and the objectives of the research is therefore paramount and need to be explicit in the recruitment stages of the research (see also ethical considerations in section 6.6.3). As Smith (1988: 22) states:

"Any attempt on the part of an analyst to enter the life world of others is above all, strategic ... it makes both moral and analytical sense to expose the power relations inherent in ethnography at an early stage of the research..."

However, rather than accentuate the analytical separation of insiders and outsiders (Jackson 1985; McDowell 1992), Pile (1991) argues that all interpretative fieldwork involves power relations such that the inter subjectivity of the relationship between the researcher and researched is characterised as a game metaphor (Smith 1988) in which a multiple layered network of transference and counter transference brings about a research alliance which positions the researcher reflexively in relation to the subject (Pile 1991; Rose 1997). Indeed Oakley (1981) and McDowell (1992) have challenged the assertion that participation in the lives of those being researched biases the results, suggesting instead that the relationship between the researcher and subjects are seen as a valid part of the research process. As McDowell (1992: 406) states: "Inter subjectivity rather than objectivity characterises the ideal relationship between a (...) researcher and her subjects". With these considerations in mind it was hence the intention of this project to adopt a participatory methodology within which children take part as co-researchers in a research process that is both flexible and reflexive.

In adopting a participatory approach to this study there are two philosophical questions which need addressing. These concern the purpose and procedure of the research and therefore the power relationship implicit in the chosen strategy. Reason (1994: 41) argues that:

"persons can only properly study persons when they are in active relationship with each other, where the behaviour being researched is self-generated by the researcher in a context of cooperation."

This means that young people need to be active in the focus, design and management of the research process within a 'community of collaborative enquiry' (Reason 1994).

Consideration of contemporary sociological theoretical assertions concerning the child as social actor, based on debates concerning the nature of the child as well as theories of social action, suggest that adoption of a research methodology in which young people are partners in the research process is imperative. Alderson (1995) for example argues that social research should be with, not for, children. However, the research conducted in this study falls short of true collaborative inquiry, as stipulated by Reason (1994), in that young people were provided with the freedom to identify issues and autonomously undertake parts of the research, but only within the parameters of the overall objectives of the research and the methodological approaches used.

A further consideration is the extent to which the research undertaken here constitutes participatory action research (PAR). Reason (1994: 48) states that participatory action research aims to:

“develop an alternative system of knowledge production based on the people’s role of setting the agendas, participating in data gathering and analysis, and controlling the use of outcomes.”

This study was conducted within the spirit of PAR but, was limited by situational constraints relating to what was feasible in terms of time, resources and contingency factors concerned with the inclination of the child participants to take a full and active role in the process.⁶ Nevertheless, the mutual concern, of young people and researcher alike, with giving a voice to young people’s perspectives on their neighbourhood environments and possibilities for change, locates this study at the interface of cooperative inquiry and participatory action research.

6.5.2 Research methods and procedure

The research approach adopted in this study is one in which the researcher has remained open and flexible to the sensitivities of the subjects and the broader social context of working with children. In directing the process of the methodological approach adopted, a number of theoretical considerations from contemporary theories of childhood have been borne in mind. Most notably these have included the child’s ‘right to say’ purported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the notion that children are social actors in their own right and active participants in the practice of everyday life. The specific methods are consequently participatory - in that young people are provided with an opportunity to share their views and experiences in a climate of cooperation - and ethnographic - in that they provide insights into children’s ‘worlds apart’ from adults (Matthews *et al.* 1998a).

⁶ For a useful discussion on participatory and action research with children see Connolly and Ennew 1998

Within the context of the methodological approach set out above a multi method approach was adopted which facilitated different aspects of young people's views and experiences of place to be articulated using different media and in different settings. This also permitted cross checking from different data sources to ensure data reliability. Hart (1979) for example, justified the use of different methods in terms of the reliability provided by some methods and the validity provided by others. Patton (1990: 193) states that: "triangulation is a powerful solution to relying too much on any single data source or method, therefore undermining the validity and credibility of findings because of the weaknesses of any single method." This is especially relevant with young people, for whom the research experience may simply provide another setting to "experiment with different social locations and identities" (Silverman 1997: 102). What follows is an overview of the specific types of methods used. Issues concerning procedure, access and ethics are considered in the following section.

The methods used in this study fall into three categories: interviews, child-led activities and observational surveys. A summary of the number of young people in each site taking part in the interviews and child-led activities is provided in Table 6.5.⁷ Three different types of interview were used: semi structured interviews, unstructured interviews and group interviews. The relative merits of these different styles of interviewing are reviewed elsewhere (see for example Burgess 1982; Burgess *et al.* 1988a, 1988b; May 1997; Silverman 1997). The intention here is to simply clarify the rationale for the selection of these techniques in this study.

Semi-structured interviews

Initial semi structured interviews (see Appendix 1) were used at the outset to generate a broad ranging data set on young people's views of their local areas and their free time activities. Questions were largely structured so as to permit open ended answers. The objective was not to achieve a representative survey, rather to gain insights into the views and experiences of a larger group of young people, which could then be used to provide a focus for the subsequent in depth stages of the research. At the same time, semi-structured interviews enabled the interviewer to probe beyond the answers to specified questions and enter into a dialogue with the interviewee (May 1997).

As a general rule, in Semilong, the initial semi-structured interviews were conducted sitting on the doorstep with the young person. This provided the young person with the freedom to speak freely and openly about their views and experiences, whilst at the same time providing the parent with the peace of mind of knowing where they were. Sitting on the doorstep located the interview in the public eye, adding a further element of safeguard and reassurance to the young person, the parent and the researcher.

⁷ Many of these techniques have been used in the course of the UNESCO supported 'Growing Up In Cities project' investigating the lives of young people in eight cities world wide. For details about methods used in this project see Driskell (1998).

Table 6.5: Summary of research activities and number of participants

| | <u>Semilong</u> | | <u>East Hunsbury</u> | | <u>Total</u> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | <u>Boys</u> | <u>Girls</u> | <u>Boys</u> | <u>Girls</u> | |
| Semi-structured interviews | 44 | 36 | 58 | 43 | 181 |
| Unstructured interviews | 12 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 47 |
| Group discussions | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| Drawing | 12 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 47 |
| Child-led tour | 11 | 11 | 11 | 12 | 47 |
| Child-taken photographs | 12 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 47 |
| Daily activity schedules | 11 | 11 | 11 | 12 | 46 |
| Observational surveys | | | | | 36 |

Whilst the interview with the young person was taking place the parent was invited to complete a questionnaire about their opinions of their son(s) and/or daughter(s) use of the local environment. In some cases this provided a suitable diversion for parents to enable the interview with the young person to progress without interruption. In other cases parents continued with activities within the house acknowledging the integrity of giving the young person the opportunity to have their say without parental incursion. In a small number of cases parents insisted that the interview be conducted inside the home where the parent was able to listen and interject.

In East Hunsbury, the semi structured interviews were conducted in the middle of winter which meant sitting on the doorstep was not a viable proposition. Instead contingency arrangements were employed necessitating that young people benefited from the same conditions in terms of having an uninterrupted and autonomous space to respond. In most cases this was not a problem given that the larger properties in this area provided a second or third reception room for the interview to be conducted free from family interruption.

The unstructured interview

The unstructured interview is open-ended in that it throws open the possibility for the interviewers preconceptions to be challenged and the foci of the interview to be reconstructed around the interviewee's own terms of reference (May 1997). In this way qualitative depth in the research data is provided through the meanings and interpretations interviewee's ascribe to the issues under consideration. In this study the unstructured interview followed the young person's drawing of their local area (see below). Each unstructured interview followed the same initial agenda, however, due to difference and diversity in what was relevant to different young people the researcher maintained maximum flexibility by letting the nature of the dialogue and issues the young person deemed pertinent to their lives, dictate the interview proceedings. This approach, rather than undermine comparability, uncovered new insights and allowed the interviewee's concerns to come to the fore. At the same time it maximises the interviewee's influence on the research proceedings. Nevertheless, as Warrington (1997) and Dwivedi (1993) suggest, it is also necessary to 'lead' interviews to some extent, by developing conversation in order to create a conducive environment in which the participants were able to 'come out' and express themselves freely. The unstructured interview was recorded, having first obtained consent from both parent and young person. Unstructured interviews were conducted in the young person's house, where possible, in a quiet place where the young person was able to talk freely.

In-depth group discussions

The third type of interviews are in-depth small group discussions. Burgess *et al.* (1988a: 324) state that:

“In depth discussion groups have enormous value for empirical research in which it is important to understand the complex, multi-faceted, contextual nature of individual and collective experience”

The intention of uncovering shared meanings and values of boys and girls of different ages in different locations pointed to the relevance of group discussions in this study. They also appeared an appropriate tool given the importance of the peer group for individuals of this age span. It was therefore hoped that the group interviews would provide a different set of perspectives on some of the issues considered in other parts of the research process, as well as provide insights into some of the social dynamics amongst young people.

Unfortunately there were unforeseen difficulties with some of the groups in terms of recruitment and continuity leading to an imperfect data set of group discussions. These were not always successful due to difficulties in coordinating dates and times for each meeting with available accommodation and an accompanying observer. Even when arrangements were finalised young people often failed to turn up despite previously expressing enthusiasm about them. Reasons given for non-attendance were normally that they forgot or that they went off and did something else (for example a friend called round and they went off and played football). This was particularly the case in the inner city area. In contrast the suburban young people were generally more ready to participate in group discussions. This suggests that focus groups as a medium for working with young people are not always the most effective or appropriate method for capturing young people's collective values.⁸ All the same some rich data emerged from the group discussions to supplement the core data set.

The second set of methods concerned activities in which the young person took the lead in generating the data. This ethnographic stage of data collection was conducted with the smaller sample of young people (n= 24 in each area)⁹ after the semi structured interviews were completed and involved four research activities: in depth (unstructured) interviews (see above), child-taken photographs, children's drawings of their local area and a child-led neighbourhood tour. Before this stage of the research was undertaken, signed agreement was obtained from one of the young person's parents and convenient dates arranged.

⁸ For alternative strategies to group work see examples of good practice provided in Matthews *et al.* (1998d) and Percy-Smith (1998).

⁹ See footnote 1.

Young people's drawings

The drawing of the local area was the first of the in-depth research activities undertaken. Drawings have been extensively used in research into children's geographies (Matthews 1980; 1984; 1986; 1987; Lynch 1977; Hart 1979; Moore 1986). In most cases children's drawings have been used for understanding children's spatial cognition (See the work of Matthews, 1992 for a review). Downs (1985) emphasised the value of children's maps, rather than drawings, as 'rendering the experience of space comprehensible'. There are however different types of drawings and different modes of analysis depending on the focus of the research. Moore (1986) for example used drawings to construct 'turf maps' of young people's favourite activity spaces.

Drawings in this study were used to illicit young people's perceptions of their local area in a visual form, to locate the places most often used by young people and to identify routes young people normally took through their neighbourhoods. Young people were asked: "*Could you please make a drawing of the area around where you live marking on it the places where you spend your free time and the routes you use*". The drawings were then discussed which then lead neatly into the unstructured interview.

Child-taken photographs

This technique is still seldom used in research with children. Glaister (1968) for example used them on the Notting Hill Project in which children (as well as adults) used cameras as a way of capturing their views of their neighbourhood which was being planned for redevelopment. Glaister noted that this technique was especially suitable for children by stating: "the children are totally uninhibited in a way which adults find difficult to emulate" (p. 1131) and that the positive images produced by the children demonstrate the relevance of this kind of experience in visual communication, being conducted in the everyday environmental contexts in which they live and spend their time. The second Growing Up In Cities project (Chawla 1997) has also used child-taken photographs to elicit young people's images of their neighbourhoods. In this study the children were issued with disposable cameras at the end of the unstructured interview and asked to "*take pictures of anything in their local area that was important or interesting to them*". A further appointment was then made to collect the camera in order to get the film developed so as to return on a further date to discuss the photos with the young person. This normally took place during or after the neighbourhood tour.

Child-led neighbourhood tours

These have also been little used in research with children. Lynch (1977) and Moore (1986) are perhaps the best known examples of researchers using this technique. Neighbourhood tours provide the researcher with the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of the child and experience at first hand, as far as is possible, the

neighbourhood from the perspective of the child. Moore (1986: 269) stated about his experiences that "the field trips were the most informative and fascinating part of the project". He goes on to note that the crucial thing about tours is to let the child take the lead. In this project the children were asked if they would show me '*where they go and what they do in their free time in different places including the routes you take and any places that are special or interesting*'. The tour was recorded using photographs and a pocket size notepad.¹⁰ Child-led tours are also used in the current Growing Up In Cities Project (Chawla 1997).

Observational surveys

The third set of data collection concerned observational surveys. Throughout the research observational surveys were undertaken and field notes kept of young peoples place behaviour. During the summer holidays an intensive programme of systematic behaviour mapping was undertaken providing snapshots of young people's place use at specific times of the day and in the places most frequented by young people. Behaviour mapping is a systematic way of recording young people's place behaviour. In this study six sites were chosen which young people most regularly frequented and were observed at least three times each at different times of the day¹¹. Although used in Cooper Marcus's (1974) study of children's play behaviour in a low rise inner city housing development and in Lynch's (1977) studies of young people in the original Growing Up In Cities project, apart from the replication of Lynch's work currently underway in the second Growing Up In Cities project (Chawla 1997), this technique has been seldom used. One of the limitations with the use of behaviour mapping in Lynch's studies was that it was deficient in recording movement. In this study attempts were made to try and bring the record of observation alive by including movements of young people in and out of the setting during the period of observation.¹²

Incidental meetings with young people in the public domain of the neighbourhood and in the youth centres throughout the research process also proved a valuable source of ethnographic data, as was also observed by Hart (1979). These meetings were important because of the rich insights into young people's lives gained particularly when young people are hanging out, but also as an important element of rapport building. At the same time it provided legitimacy in the eyes of young people and the wider community. This was more easily achieved in Semilong where I was resident

¹⁰ On one occasion a video was used, on a trial basis with two groups of young people. Despite the success achieved with using this medium for recording neighbourhood tours, time restrictions precluded further use of the video in the study.

¹¹ In some cases, owing to young people failing to appear at some of the locations at different times, in some cases six behaviour observation maps were not achieved.

¹² There are also important ethical considerations concerning this technique which are noted in section 6.6.3.

throughout the duration of the research and therefore part of the community,¹³ but more difficult in East Hunsbury. The smaller and more compact nature of Semilong also made it easier to keep in touch and integrate with the patterns of everyday life.

Research with parents and other adults

In addition to the research methods used with young people a questionnaire survey of parents views about their children's use of free time and local places was undertaken (see Appendix 2). Parents were asked to complete the questionnaire with respect to the child being interviewed and were normally undertaken during the semi-structured interview with the child. In other cases they were completed and collected at a later date.

Discussion groups were conducted with parents and older residents in both locations. One group of parents and one group of older residents met three times each in both locations. Both of the parents groups were difficult to recruit. Out of a total of 181 families involved in this research, only 15 parents participated in group discussions. Despite parents expressing initial concern about the quality of environmental provision for their young people, few seemed ready to commit themselves to taking steps to try and remedy the situation or even discuss the problems. Discussion groups with parents and older residents were undertaken in order to provide adult perspectives on young people's use of local places.

Interviews were conducted with key local officials including two local planners, the head of the parks and leisure services, chair of the police authority, members of the youth service and a local clergyman involved in developing local youth provision in Semilong.

Burgess (1982) identified the importance of following up particular situations and events which occur incidentally during the research. In the course of this project fortuitous events and ongoing developments in childhood and youth research, policy and practice have influenced the course and content of the research. These fall into three categories: complementary research projects, local developments and incidental encounters.

Childhood and youth research is a large and dynamic area of study. Throughout the study ongoing projects and examples of good research practice with young people provided opportunities for constant reflection and adjustment on the research approach adopted in this study. Invitation to contribute to a working group concerned with methodological development for an international project concerned with investigating young people's experiences growing up in cities, provided an opportunity to explore a

¹³ Being seen in the neighbourhood engaging in non-research activities with my own child and partner appeared to provide considerable reassurance, comfort and legitimacy for both young people and their parents.

range of participatory techniques for working with young people. Some of these have been used in this study.

A second set of fortuitous events which came about in the course of this research concerned local youth and community developments. In the course of the research, many individuals, organisations, local authority departments and community development initiatives were encountered which influenced, and have in turn been influenced by, the course of this research. The development of a play area in Semilong was one such example, providing an opportunity to collaborate with the Borough Council and County Council Youth Service as well as young people themselves in order to provide an opportunity for the views that young people expressed in this study to be acted upon. This is documented in Chapter Thirteen.

A further local event which occurred in the midst of the study concerned the development of a new youth facility in Semilong. As a result of collaboration with the Youth Service during this project, time spent involved with the planning and management of the new centre provided valuable insights into the politics of community development and some of the problems and pitfalls involved with enhancing opportunities for young people to participate in the running of the centre.

A third set of incidental experiences which occurred concerned the numerous encounters with local people, both in the course of the everyday activities of both communities as well as with local organisations (such as the parish council in East Hunsbury and as secretary to the Semilong Youth and Community Centre and Youth Project) which did not constitute part of the methodology but nonetheless gave rise to some rich insights into community perspectives and tensions concerning young people and local environmental issues.

6.6 Ethical considerations

Ethics in social research are gaining increasing attention in academic circles in particular research concerning children (Alderson 1995; Matthews *et al.* 1998d; Thomas and O'Kane 1998; O'Kane 1998; Johnson *et al.* 1998). However, Warnock (1998) argues there are problems in the definition of ethical questions for social research. Matthews *et al.* (1998d) draw attention to two dimensions to ethical considerations - defining appropriate methodology and the process of working with children. Hay and Foley (1998) stipulated that ethical matters are an implicit part of the research design process. This dimension to ethical considerations has been considered in section 6.5. The purpose here is to identify ethical considerations taken in this research in the context of current debates regarding good practice with children.

Matthews *et al.* (1998d) identify ten ethical considerations when working with children: involving children, consent, confidentiality, the nature of the project, practice and commitment, safety issues and complaints procedures, setting of the project, benefits of the project, feedback and context. Ethical issues emerging from this study will be considered using a remodification of the above set of concerns.

Matthews *et al.* (1998d) draw attention to the need for young people to be aware about the overall purpose of the research and what commitment is entailed when choosing to take part. With the discussion groups for example, despite every effort made to explain the purpose of the discussions to the young people, it became apparent that some young people thought that what they were participating in was some kind of new youth provision. With the interviews and the in-depth series of research activities, however, there appeared less ambiguity. Indeed parents became allies by frequently cross-checking with the young person about whether they really wanted to take part or not. A dilemma emerged on a few occasions when the young person expressed a desire not to take part but were then press-ganged into taking part by the parent. At every stage of the research process young people had the option to say no, opt out or seek further clarification. In a small number of cases initial commitment was replaced by withdrawal of commitment once the date for the in-depth research work came around. On one occasion one participant pulled out having only completed part of the in-depth research.

For the initial interview only verbal consent was required from the parent. However, because of the multi faceted nature of the in-depth part of the research signed consent was required after having clarified the nature of the research activities. Consent was also sought from the young person to be recorded during then unstructured interview and to use the data collected in the research for wider dissemination. On a number of occasions older teenagers in particular repeatedly sought reassurance about who was or was not going to see the results and whether they would remain anonymous. All participants were assured confidentiality even with respect to parents and all names

have been omitted to safeguard the respondents identity. Place names have similarly been omitted where they are likely to expose the identity of the participants. This was particularly important with regards issues concerning substance abuse or divulged misdemeanours.

An ethical dilemma arose for the researcher regarding what the young person got out of the research. Since taking part was purely on a voluntary basis it was assumed that the young person participated because they either shared an interest in what was being undertaken or because they simply thought it might be a gainful experience. The extra commitment required for the in-depth part of the research, however, raised the question of how much commitment was it reasonable to expect without having some definite tangible return. As a result, each participant in the in-depth stage of the research was offered a gift voucher to the value of £5 in recompense for their contribution. This again raised ethical considerations concerning the role of the young person as co-researcher. Should they be paid? Could they be undertaking the research just for the money, therefore undermining the quality of the research process? In order to ameliorate some of these concerns I decided that because the participants were only recruited if they showed a genuine willingness and commitment, that the payment of the voucher served more as a mark of respect and a bonus for young people than a coercive lever or, as Freire (1972) notes, a gesture of 'false generosity'.

The growing moral panic about the safety of children fuelled mainly by the media necessitated particular ethical considerations with regard dimensions of the research conducted outside of the home. Matthews *et al.* (1998d: 9) draw attention to the "need for sensitivity of issues concerning children's vulnerability and powerlessness." The first precaution necessitated the researcher being registered with appropriate public bodies such as the police and the youth service. In the case of the latter the researcher was registered as an outreach youth worker with appropriate police clearance and accompanying identification. Despite this a moral dilemma arose with regards the ethics of approaching and being approached by young people in the public domain. However, once contact was made it was made clear by the researcher that before any collaboration in the research could take place, permission from their parent was needed.

Further safeguards were built in to the research procedure with neighbourhood tours and observational surveys. Tours always started from the home when a parent was in, and finished at the home. The young person was asked to have a friend that they normally spend time with to accompany them and likewise the researcher always had an assistant (male or female depending on the gender of the young person concerned).

Getting the right balance is problematic in ethnographic research (Thornton 1997; Matthews *et al.* 1998d). This is particularly so with observational surveys and participant observation. Thornton (1997) noted the tension between the need of this type of research for inside perspectives and, on the other hand, not over identifying with the research subjects. In conducting observational surveys both from within the group and from afar raised questions about the difference between interacting with and observing young people as part of the research and doing likewise in the course of everyday life. This dilemma was not resolved in the research. However, openness and transparency in the course of these aspects of the research were maintained throughout by asking permission from young people to observe their behaviour and to take photographs. Hammersley (1995) argues that children should not be treated as objects of research but should be given respect during the research process. Sensitivity was also exercised with regards being accepted amongst young people when hanging out with them in the course of their own social interactions.

A final ethical consideration concerns the use of the research data. Questions concerning ownership and control of the data necessitated gaining prior permission to use the data for academic purposes and to inform policy, with the understanding that the identity of the participants would be protected. All names have thus been changed in the ensuing chapters. One issue that was not resolved, however, was regarding the use of incidental photographs in which the identity of young people is evident.

6.7 Analysis and presentation of results

This project has set out to provide insights into the experiences and attitudes of young people beyond the home and school. The emphasis on qualitative methods necessitates that prominence is given to the words and images of young people themselves. All names have been changed to protect the identities of those involved. Nonetheless the initial sample of semi-structured interviews provides a sufficiently robust data set with which to provide comparative data on aspects of young people's geographies. Issues concerning analysis consequently revolve around the need to promote the subjective realities of the participants in this study rather than the views of the researcher. The themes which the discussions in this study have been based upon have emerged from the data both during and after the field work. This is not to suggest that the researcher did not have any preconceived ideas at the outset, rather that care was taken in analysing the data, to ensure that the meanings and experiences of young people have not been distorted. This section will begin by considering general issues concerned with analysing qualitative data. Specific questions concerning analysis of the data generated in this study will then be considered according to three headings: grounded theory and the emergence of themes, statistical testing and linking qualitative and quantitative data.

Bryman and Burgess (1994) note that there are few accounts of the process of data analysis, however, they also state that analysis is not a distinct phase rather "research design, data collection and analysis are simultaneous and continuous processes" (1994: 217) involving the researcher moving back and forwards between different sequences in the research process. Data analysis is therefore not a distinct phase in a clear cut sequence of procedures, but a "messy interaction between the conceptual and empirical world, deduction and induction occurring at the same time" (Bechhofer 1974: 73). What emerges through qualitative research is a set of data which is seemingly bulky and unwieldy or as Miles (1979) states an 'attractive nuisance'.

Bryman and Burgess (1994) identify two general strategies for analysing qualitative data: analytic induction and grounded theory. Analytic induction involves examining a set of data in order to test a hypothesis constructed on the basis of a rough definition of a problem. However, they note that there are few instances of analytic induction being used. More common and widely regarded as a major framework for analysis of qualitative data is the use of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Grounded theory involves "the discovery of theory from data" (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 1). In contrast to analytic induction, with grounded theory, categories are generated which fit the data. Platt (1976) suggested that reading and rereading of transcripts, to identify and group themes which have emerged from the data, is an integral part of grounded theory. However, use of qualitative research techniques does not simply entail looking for categories, Hammersley and Atkinson

(1983) suggested that analysing qualitative data also involves immersing oneself in the data to search out patterns, identifying surprising phenomena and inconsistencies such as divergent views. Once themes have been identified and data grouped, for example using typologies and taxonomies (Hammersley and Atkin 1983, Woods 1986), interconnections and generalities can then be found (Bryman and Burgess 1994). This study also uses grounded theory, identifying major themes as they emerged from the data rather than as *a priori* foci. In particular the focus for the thematic Chapters Eight to Thirteen have been selected on the basis of issues, concerns and experiences which consistently emerged from the different data sources, but which at the same time relate to the research questions set at the beginning of this chapter.

Linking quantitative and qualitative data has been an issue which has preoccupied a number of writers on qualitative research methods (Bryman 1988, 1992; Bryman and Burgess 1994; Mason 1994). Mason (1994) noted how quantitative and qualitative methods are often used simultaneously as part of a multi method approach in which a number of different data sets are used to check different findings against each other. Mason (1994) refers to this approach as the 'triangulation method', which he suggests "refers to the use of a combination of methods to explore one set of research questions" (p. 148). Mason (1994: 149) points out that "different methods and data sources are likely to throw light onto different ... phenomena or research questions ... providing different ... 'levels' of answers". According to Mason (1994) there is a danger that a triangulation of methods is based on the assumption that there is one objective reality which, given an appropriate blend of methods, may be uncovered. However, by adopting this approach questions of validity arise concerning potentially contradictory findings (Mason 1994). Porter (1991), for example, suggests that if there is a clash of evidence, the qualitative findings tend to be treated as more valid. In response to this dilemma Mason (1994) states that at best, triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data "encourages the researcher to approach their research questions from different angles, and to explore their intellectual puzzles in a rounded and multi-faceted way" (p. 149). In this study, the thematic Chapters (Eight - Thirteen) were written primarily based on the different sources of qualitative data. Within the context of specific themes, however, different perspectives on pertinent issues were then provided by the quantitative data from the semi-structured interviews. This allowed findings to be developed and tested for different groups of young people.

Mason (1994) documents how qualitative and quantitative methods can be analysed in a variety of ways to reveal different insights into a certain topic or issue. She suggests that whereas quantitative analysis can be used to map out general patterns, qualitative analysis can be used to reveal underlying processes and perspectives of those involved. In this study the triangulation of data made possible by a multi-method approach was especially valuable in light of the variability of responses from young people on some issues according to the methodological context in which research questions were posed.

For example, environmental fears expressed during neighbourhood tours did not necessarily emerge in interviews. However, in broader terms the rationale for the different types of data analysis is to provide different types of evidence. To clarify, whereas the quantitative data derived from the semi-structured interviews has been used to provide insights into general patterns in young people's geographies, the adoption of a grounded theory approach to analysis of the qualitative data permitted a higher level of detail concerning the subjective meanings that differentiate between the diverse geographies of young people. In this study, the thematic Chapters (Eight - Thirteen) were written primarily based on the different sources of qualitative data. Within the context of specific themes, different perspectives on pertinent issues were then provided by the quantitative data from the semi-structured interviews.

The final aspect of data analysis pertinent to this project concerns the analysis and statistical testing of the data from the semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interview data was entered onto a computer data base using an SPSS package. Data variables were then cross-tabulated according to age, gender and location. Where appropriate the results were tested for statistical significance using chi-square, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Kruskal-Wallis H-tests. These tests are ideally suited for analysing non-parametric data with small sample sizes, as is the case with the data in this project, and are not undermined by small sample sizes. The particular test used was guided by the nature of different data sets. One final consideration, however, concerns the way in which disjunctures are managed when statistical tests suggest a matter is insignificant whilst qualitative data provides contrasting evidence of the importance of a particular issue. In these instances, a definitive conclusion is not prescribed, rather the complex and multi-faceted nature of the issue is acknowledged, possible explanations suggested and further questions posed.

Chapter Seven

Multiple childhood geographies

7.1 Introduction

In cultural geography emphasis is placed on the diversity of values and attitudes of groups in society, giving rise to geographies of difference which vary over space and time. However there has been a tendency in geography to talk of difference in terms of class, gender or ethnicity, but less in terms of age and lifestyle. A number of writers (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Reimer 1995) have discussed the declining importance of conventional sociological divisions and the mounting importance of post modern social practices in which heterogeneous maps of meaning are constructed as a result of 'a reorganising and blending' (Reimer 1995: 123) of patterns of consumption and lifestyle. Reimer (1995: 124) interprets lifestyle as "the specific pattern of everyday activities that characterises an individual" and in so doing argues that it is "particularly appropriate to illuminating the dynamism of young people's daily practices" (121). De Certeau (1984) too advocates understanding the social world in terms of the 'practice of everyday life'.

Contemporary sociological theories of childhood also recognise diversity stating that there is not just one, but many, childhoods varying historically and culturally according to the ways childhood is socially constructed. Others (de Winter 1996; Jenks 1996) extend this idea noting how childhood also varies within the life of one child, revealing an essential 'temporality' (Hareven 1982b; Prout and James 1990; Ennew 1994) in the social and spatial constructions of childhood. Despite this shared interest in diversity, children have until recently been conspicuously absent in geographical inquiry (James 1990; Sibley 1991; Philo 1992).

The results presented in this chapter will contribute to the reconciliation of these disparate fields of academic endeavour by presenting evidence which corroborates the notion of the existence of cultural diversity in the geographies of young people. In so doing this chapter sets the scene for the ensuing chapters by establishing the nature of, and extent to which, diversity in young people's use of place may be understood in terms of multiple childhoods and indeed, the way in which the study of childhood may be informed and enriched by a geographical perspective.

Investigations of young people's geographical worlds have until recently been conducted at the interface of environmental and developmental psychology emphasising

children's spatial cognition (Spencer *et al.* 1989; Matthews 1992) and children's experience of place (Hart 1979; Michelson and Roberts 1979; Aitken 1994; Moore 1986; Ward 1978, 1990). However with the cultural turn and the preoccupation with anti-essentialist and post-traditional theories of difference, geographies of children have become "more theoretically sophisticated" (Valentine 1996a: 205) and complex. According to Furlong and Cartmel (1997) traditional social allegiances are being mediated by an increasing range of contextually variable factors. What this means is that individuals are having to engage with rapidly changing, multi faceted, uncertain and hazardous social and environmental contexts. Thorne (1993) argues that what it is to be a boy or girl is influenced by age, ethnicity, race, sexuality and social class and that definitions shift with social contexts.

Of particular significance to the social circumstances of young people's lives is the changing macro-structural context of contemporary childhood and youth, characterised by increasing inequality, commercialisation and globalisation in which identity is being reconstructed around patterns of consumption and lifestyle. Although the boundaries between childhood and adulthood are in many ways dissolving, as young people are increasingly drawn into the free market as economic actors, they remain disadvantaged in terms of social, economic and political power. The lives of young people must therefore be understood within the context of unequal power relations which give rise to landscapes and social practices which reflect the dominance of adult values. The geography of childhood needs to take account of the broader context of social relations of which children are a part, as well as young people's phenomenological worlds of difference.

This chapter will aim to unravel the extent to which multiple childhoods may be distinguished in terms of lifestyles within and between age, gender and locational variables. The aim is not to reassert childhood as being determined by these stratifying social variables, rather to take full account of the changing structural contexts with which different young people reflexively respond as social agents in their own right in the course of making sense of, and constructing, their own diverse geographies. To this end the discussion will focus on a number of key dimensions to young people's geographies. In section 7.2 emphasis is placed on the importance of location as a variable affecting young people's geographies in terms of young people's images of their locality, their sense of community and belonging and their views of environmental opportunities. Section 7.3 focuses on gender differences, in particular variations in how girls and boys view their localities, the range and restrictions experienced by young people and the resulting spatial and social cultures which emerge. Using the same categories section 7.4 then considers variations in young people's geographies in terms of age. In section 7.5 the emphasis switches to the different ways in which parents influence the geographies of young people and the way young people respond to these influences.

7.2 Growing up in and out of town: locational differences in young people's geographies

7.2.1 Introduction: environments for young people

Local places are important for young people, providing an environment for social learning, play and experimentation (Bannerjee and Lynch 1977; Hart 1979; Moore 1986), for defining and redefining individual and group identity (Heath and McLaughlin 1993; Lieberg 1995) and for developing a sense of belonging (Chawla 1992). Lynch (1977) stated in the original "Growing Up in Cities" project that:

“ a good city is one in which children grow and develop to the extent of their powers, where they can build their confidence and become actively engaged in the world, yet be autonomous and capable of managing their own affairs.”

UNICEF (1996) more recently have talked in terms of 'Child Friendly Cities' which provide 'a secure, healthful and nourishing environment as a basic right' for all children. These principles have been replicated in the United Nations Habitat II Agenda for Human Settlements (1997) which focuses attention on the "... shaping of cities, towns and neighbourhoods ... in order to secure the living conditions of children and ... youth ... to ... ensure (they) develop their full capacities ... and to participate fully in the social, economic and political processes ..." (pp 13, 20).

However there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that the quality of urban environments are increasingly failing to provide adequate conditions for many young people. Lack of appropriate social and environmental provision, increasing levels of dangers and hazards and a growing sense of alienation characterise the place experiences of many young people. Environmental constraints and social opportunities are unequal in their distribution, such that different young people growing up in different places and in different social contexts experience a diversity of childhoods. A central assertion of this study is that geography makes differences in childhood meaningful within the course of children's everyday lives. The way in which young people experience their neighbourhood is therefore an important signifier of diversity in childhood.

This section will consider some of the major dimensions to the variations in childhoods which have emerged in the course of this study in terms of young people's experiences of growing up in different locations. The significance of location as a variable of childhood will be explored in terms of how young people perceive the quality of their neighbourhoods as places to grow up in.

7.2.2 Young people's perception of their localities

Young people in both locations express a range of views about their local areas. Initial insights suggest the suburban site to be a more desirable place for young people to live with 78 per cent of young people in East Hunsbury compared to only 39 per cent in inner city Semilong stating they liked living in their area. Suburban boys and girls commonly spoke positively about their area highlighting in particular its aesthetic quality and the availability of parks, green areas, local facilities and safety from traffic, as these multiple perspectives from young people illustrate:

“... I would say it was very pretty and ... I just sort of like growing up here because it's not like a really rough area or anything ... it's very quiet ... there's not much traffic either and you get to play out on the street. And there's a lot going on ... there's loads of like really good things around ... and my friends are here ... I think it's a nice place to live. I wouldn't choose anywhere else.”

“I like living here because it's fun ... there's quite a lot of things to do ... because you've got 3 or 4 parks in the area ... Macs (shop) ... Danescamp and 'the green' where we play football a lot ... and there's a lot of areas for biking round.”

“... I think it's a good place for children to grow up because there's plenty of areas to just muck about and not be told off ... and there are no cars and it's safe ... and nice kids around...”

(Multiple perspectives from suburban young people)

In contrast, the descriptions young people in inner city Semilong gave of their area tended to emphasise hazards and a dearth of environmental opportunities:

“... it's a bit of a roughish area ... people going round picking on other kids and smoking and all that ... and there's always weirdoes about ... in some places it's scary, like the park ... at night it turns into a horrible place because of all the ... drunken people ... there's been people bashed in the park and ... killed so, it's a bit of a weird area ...”

“... it's quite rough, not as rough as some areas ... , but it's getting rougher. ... a lot more drug dealers and stuff like that moving in. It's not very clean, there's not many places to go ... , you can get bored especially in the summer holidays”

“Well there's nothing really around here, just the park. That's all there is, so it's quite boring ... there should be more for us to do ... and there's too much pollution and there's loads of bottles that are broken ... it's just not a healthy environment to grow up in”

(Multiple perspectives from inner city young people)

The contrast between the two areas is aptly summed up by a 14 year old girl in the inner city who used to live in East Hunsbury.

“ No I don't think Semilong is a good place for young people to grow up ... I think ... a good place for children to grow up in ... like when I lived in East Hunsbury, that was an ideal place, I loved it there because I made so many friends because there are so many children around there ... and everyone is friends with everyone in the street and ... it was just nice”
 (14 year old girl, inner city)

These comments reveal clear contrasts in the experiences and conditions of young people in the inner and outer city locations. They illustrate that in making sense of young people's perception of their local places it is necessary to recognise the multi faceted nature of local places when viewed through young people's eyes. Hence whilst some emphasise the friendliness of the people or the general aesthetic and environmental quality of the local area, others are more concerned with the availability of things to do, places to go, or having friends around as being the most important criteria for evaluating their neighbourhood. Yet there are similarities in the range of place characteristics that young people in each location value (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: What young people think are the 'good things about their local area' (% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (total sample n= 80) | | <u>Suburb</u> (total sample n= 101) | |
|---|----|--|----|
| Parks | 60 | Parks | 51 |
| Having friends/young people around | 11 | Sports facilities | 45 |
| Community facilities | 10 | Community facilities | 19 |
| Youth club | 10 | Lots to do | 19 |
| Friendly people | 10 | Youth club | 14 |
| Nothing | 9 | Having friends/young people around | 13 |
| Safe | 6 | Can get to town | 11 |
| Sports facilities | 4 | Safe | 10 |
| | | Quiet | 7 |
| | | Friendly people | 7 |
| | | Nice area | 6 |

Despite similarities in the range of characteristics young people value about their environments, there are a number of locational features which emerge as being important in distinguishing the merits of each local area. Whereas young people in the suburb mention that there is lots to do, in the inner city this characteristic is not identified. Instead, 9 per cent of young people in the inner city state that there is nothing good about their area. As these data suggest, young people most readily evaluate how good their area is in terms of social and recreational opportunities. In both areas young people value parks most highly, however, despite the larger number of parks and open green spaces in the suburban location, a higher proportion of young people in the inner city note parks as a good thing about their area. In the inner city, parks may be especially valued for providing activity space in an otherwise high density built environment. The biggest difference between the two locations is indicated by the much greater proportion of young people in the suburban location (45% East Hunsbury, 4% Semilong) who identify sports facilities as a positive characteristic of their location. This is hardly surprising given the location of one of the town's main sports centres there and the absence of sports facilities in the inner city area. In all other respects suburban young people speak more positively about their area than those in the inner city. Youth and community facilities are valued more highly in the suburb, again probably because of their greater availability (East Hunsbury has four youth clubs nearby compared to only one in Semilong).

There are only small differences in the proportion of young people in both areas evaluating their area positively in terms of environmental quality. Only 6 per cent in the inner city mention safety as a good thing compared to 10 per cent in the suburb, together with a further 13 per cent in the suburban location who state the area is nice and quiet. Young people in the inner city, however, mention friendly people as a good thing about their area more than in the suburban location. Although these differences are only small, they provide an initial indication of what each area has to offer, through the eyes of young people. The merits of each location as a place to grow up in, are moderated by their perceived negative qualities (see Table 7.2).

Although suburban young people speak more highly about their local area than the inner city young people, twice as many young people in the suburb mention a lack of places and facilities as a bad feature of their local area (30% compared to 16%). A higher proportion of young people in the suburb than the inner city (22% compared to 1%) also find their local area boring with nothing to do. This suggests that despite the greater range of environmental opportunities in the suburb and the higher proportion of young people who say they like their area, the suburban young people are more likely to be dissatisfied with what their local area can offer them. One possible explanation for this is that whilst young people acknowledge the benefit of local facilities for young people generally, they may not necessarily use them themselves.

Table 7.2: What young people think are the 'bad things about their local area' (% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (total sample n= 80) | | <u>Suburb</u> (total sample n= 101) | |
|--|----|---|----|
| Traffic/too many cars | 20 | Lack of facilities ¹ for young people | 30 |
| Rubbish/dirty/pollution | 20 | Boring/too quiet/not much to do | 22 |
| Social dangers | 18 | Traffic/too many cars | 15 |
| Lack of facilities for young people | 16 | Bullies/gangs/other young people | 9 |
| Bullies/gangs/ other young people | 16 | Poor parks/play facilities | 6 |
| Poor parks/play facilities | 10 | Vandalism/graffiti | 4 |
| Crime | 6 | Adults complaining | 4 |
| Vulnerability/fear of attack/ poor lighting | 4 | Friends not about Vulnerability/fear of attack/ poor lighting | 4 |
| Pubs/availability of drink | 2 | Rubbish/dirty/pollution | 3 |
| Boring/too quiet/not much to do | 1 | Social dangers | 3 |
| | | Crime | 2 |

It could also be due to differences in outlook between the young people in each location with higher expectations amongst suburban young people, and a higher incidence of making do with what possibilities exist in the inner city. Higher expectations and different outlooks may themselves be viewed as products of different modes of socialisation or different social constructions of what constitutes an area's desirability.

The second major difference is the higher levels of dissatisfaction young people in the inner city express about all aspects of the quality of their environment than in the suburb. The data suggests that the inner city area is more dirty and more dangerous with higher levels of crime and social threats such as bullying and stranger danger than the suburb. These findings are corroborated by analysis of child-taken photographs in both areas. In the inner city 43 per cent of young people, compared to 13 per cent in the suburb, took photos of litter, rubbish or pollution, because it concerned them (Plates 7.1 - 7.4).

¹ Includes informal places to hang out

Plate 7.1: “ Over by the park ... I didn't like all the rubbish ... it looks unhealthy ...”
(12 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 7.2: “The alley way where there's all rubbish and needles and things and there's condoms down there ... it's horrible ... (12 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 7.3: A favourite place blighted by discarded refuse: “ ... near where we go down by the river, there’s rubbish dumped there ... it spoils it really”
(12 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 7.4: “ There is just rubbish everywhere and ... it’s just a mess ... I mean Semilong is known for its red light district ... and the tramps ... when you walk up to the chip shop they are everywhere and they just leave empty drink bottles everywhere ... it’s just a mess ... it’s horrible here ...”
(14 year old girl, inner city)



These photographs and comments focus on pollution and hazards in specific places such as parks, play areas and thoroughfares which are used by young people in the course of their daily round. Problems concerning environmental quality will be considered more fully in Chapter Twelve.

These initial observations of young people's images of their localities reveal suburban East Hunsbury to be a more favoured place to live than inner city Semilong. However, they also suggest that young people's images of their localities are made up of multiple realities which provide partial and often contradictory perspectives. Suburban East Hunsbury benefits from higher levels of environmental quality and a greater range of social and recreational opportunities than inner city Semilong. The remainder of this section will focus in more detail on just two aspects of young people's place perception: sense of community and belonging and views of social and environmental opportunities.

7.2.3 Sense of community and belonging

A sense of belonging is important for children and adults alike (Lynch 1976; Relph 1976; Chawla 1992; Hummon 1992; Henderson 1995). Maslow (1954) identifies sense of belonging within his hierarchy of human needs as an essential component for individual well being and personal development. Henderson (1995: 1) identifies the importance of community in terms of "a strong sense of place through shared meanings and identity", a relationship Relph (1976) referred to as 'placeness' and Lynch (1976) as 'rootedness.'

In their evaluations of their local places young people from both areas in this study readily talk of their sense of attachment with the place they live, but it is in the inner city that young people speak most about a sense of community. This is typified by a 15 year old girl who articulates a deep sense of rootedness:

"I think Semilong is a really close community, there is a lot of people you can talk to and a lot of people I know around this area ... and it's a really nice place..."
(15 year old girl, inner city)

But at the same time this girl also expresses her concerns about the way the breaking up of the community is undermining the quality of the area.

"I think it's okay but it could be better. People could come together a bit more to make it better. When people move out to quieter places it breaks up the community. ... My brother used to live in Norfolk Street but now he's in Spinney Hill. My aunty used to live in Semilong Road next to the post office and my sister used to live in Baker Street but now lives in Duston."

(15 year old girl, inner city)

During a neighbourhood tour with this girl she expanded upon her sense of belonging to Semilong by reflecting fondly on her earlier childhood experiences in particular former childhood haunts and places which are especially important to her.

“There used to be loads of shops when I was a kid where we used to go for penny sweets on the way home from school. There was one in Cambridge Street, one in ... the shop on the corner of Norfolk Terrace and Norfolk Street used to be run by an old nun and a lady ... where you could mix different sweets together on the scales”

(15 year old girl, inner city)

Despite the proclaimed, as well as evident, sense of community that exists in inner city Semilong, young people are less likely to feel accepted compared to the suburb. Of the 34 per cent of young people (compared to 20 per cent in East Hunsbury) who admit feeling unaccepted, 50 per cent name neighbourhood streets as places where they did not feel welcome, with a further 25 per cent naming local parks. However, whilst streets are not identified in this way by suburban young people, 50 per cent express a sense of not being accepted in local parks by local residents.

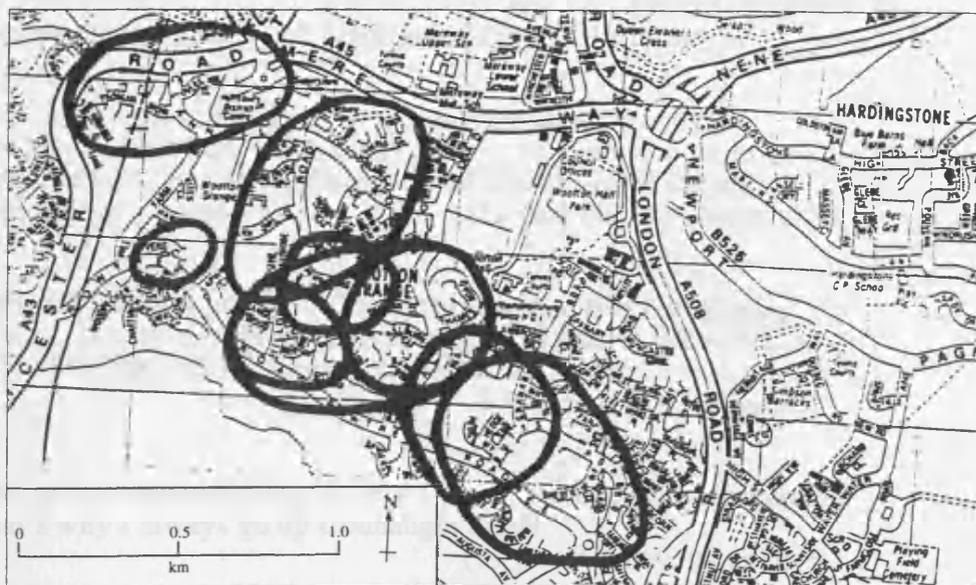
In the suburb, young people's sense of community and belonging took on a different dimension to the inner city as a result of the larger and more heterogeneous morphology of the area. Whereas young people in inner city Semilong identify with a clearly perceived bounded neighbourhood (Figure 7.1), in East Hunsbury young people tend to identify with different areas within the broader catchment of their suburb (Figure 7.2). When asked to make a drawing of their local area, 1 in 6 young people in the inner city represented the whole area, whereas in the suburban location there were none. In contrast in East Hunsbury two thirds of the drawings were of just a part of the area.

From the perspective of young people, East Hunsbury is made up of a mosaic of different inter-linking neighbourhoods each with a different identity. For young people growing up on the Grangewood estate to the west of the area, for example, there is a definite sense of community identity and solidarity cemented by the Grangewood (private residents) club. Through the voluntary commitment of local residents in providing a youth club, young people are, through their identification with the centre, able to nourish a sense of belonging through active participation in community life. For young people living in the newer estates of the eastern part of East Hunsbury, known collectively as Blackymore, there does not appear to be such a strong sense of identity. This may be explained by the more homogeneous and expansive nature of the built environment in Blackymore which may make it harder for people to define a neighbourhood to which they can relate. It may also be because the Blackymore estates are more recent developments in which neighbourhood distinctiveness has yet to develop.

Figure 7.1: Inner city young people's perception of the boundary to their local area.



Figure 7.2: Suburban young people's perception of the boundary to their local area.



The more compact nature of the neighbourhood and the higher level of community activity on the street in the inner city provides a greater sense of belonging for young people, through informal exchanges, use of local shops and a more intimate knowledge of local social networks.

What these results suggest is that young people's sense of community and belonging are meaningful ways in which to contrast the quality of different neighbourhoods as places for young people to grow up in. Young people show a keen sensitivity to what they perceive as a community and construct their mental maps of the community on the basis of their use of neighbourhood space. The extent to which young people feel accepted in different places affects how they use community spaces, but also contributes to the construction of the young person's view of their social value within the context of the community.

7.2.4 Social and environmental opportunities

For a large proportion of young people in both areas the quality of their local area is informed, to a large extent, by their experiences of social and environmental opportunities in their neighbourhoods. This involves having opportunities to 'do things', spending time with friends, meeting other young people and having places to go. This section will consider four dimensions of social and environmental opportunities which emerge as being important in influencing young people's perception of how good their local area is: having friends and other young people around, the availability of open public space, access to formal sports and recreational facilities and the proximity of local commercial areas.

In both areas an important way in which young people judge the quality of their area is in terms of whether they have friends or other young people around. Having friends and other young people around and being able to play out with friends appears to be valued equally across the two sites (23% Semilong, 31% East Hunsbury).

"... it's not a very good area really ... it's only good because of the people we know ... but better than many areas ... as there is more to do down here. The best thing about the area is it's close to town and all your mates are here ... that's all. (15 year old boys, inner city)

"All my friends live around here ... there's seven of us that always play out together ... but we're moving to Coton soon ... I don't want to really because I've lived here all my life and my friends are here" (10 year old boy, suburban)

"... it's like a nice house and that, it's just I haven't got any friends around here ... that's why I always go up Connaught Street" (14 year old boy, inner city)

“... it’s quite a pleasant place ... quite a lot to do ... but a bit boring because there aren’t really any kids my age ... I’m not allowed down to Far Cotton where some of my mates live, it’s too far really ... like my friend Keith, he’s my best friend ... but he lives over in Hardingstone ...”
(12 year old boy, suburban)

These quotes highlight the extent to which peers are important for young people irrespective of what the location has to offer. Indeed in some cases being with friends is of greater importance than the place itself. This suggests that in spite of locational differences in environmental opportunities, young people’s sense of place is to a large extent constructed around social interaction with peers.

A second way in which young people rate their local area is in terms of the availability of the informal environmental opportunities afforded by parks, play areas, open green and public spaces. For young people these aspects of their neighbourhood are valued as places they are allowed to go where they have the space to be free to engage in a range of place activities.

“ ... there’s quite a lot of play areas about ... there’s play equipment and like areas where there’s lots of grass where you can play football on and muck about and ... there’s a lot of parks you can play in ... there’s like a lot of things to do there like play loads of different games ... make dens ... play hide and seek and stuff ... it’s quite good because you’ve got like a choice...”
(12 year old boy, suburban)

“ ... it’s a deadend so ... it’s like safe down here because it’s like a cul-de-sac ... and there’s not much traffic ... and you get to play out on the street and that”
(10 year old girl, suburban)

These comments are indicative, of the general perception of young people in the suburb, of the environmental opportunities that exist in the area for young people. The abundance of open green space and the safety of residential streets arranged in cul-de-sacs are attractive to young people for engaging in informal play (Plate 7.5). In contrast, in the inner city, whilst there is a park, two play areas and isolated pockets of green space, they are blighted by environmental hazards such as traffic, rubbish, pollution and danger from strangers. Faced with a lack of alternatives, young people use these places anyway or appropriate street spaces for informal play (Plate 7.6). This assertion is corroborated by field observations and data from the semi-structured interviews which reveal a higher percentage of young people in the inner city (34%) than the suburb (12%) who spend time on the street.

Plate 7.5: Suburban cul-de-sacs: safe places for street play



Plate 7.6: Kids versus cars: street play in the inner city.



“ ... you can't do a lot down the parks because ... it's dirty and dangerous ... and you ... find tramps and syringes and things down there so ... you have to really restrict yourself down the park to where you go ... so you can't do a lot ... so I play in the street ... at the top of the street where we play football or kerby ... we put a coat down ... for a goal, but cars keep coming round ... can go to the play area ... but that's all covered in glass”

“ There isn't much ... there is just the play area ... but there's loads of bottles and glass ... and the St. Andrews park but I mean that's all the way up there and there is a load of weird people around and it's not ... safe ... when I go to the park ... there's druggies and drunks there so mum won't let me go unless I'm with dad”

(Multiple perspectives from inner city boys and girls)

These comments show that young people in the inner city are faced with a more limited set of environmental opportunities than in the suburb.

The third main way in which young people judge the quality of environmental opportunities in their area is with respect to the availability of formal leisure and recreation facilities. The suburban young people benefit from having a large sports centre in their area adding a dimension to local recreational provision which is absent for young people in the inner city. In contrast, within the inner city young people do not have sport and recreational facilities available. At best they have a municipal swimming pool one mile away in the centre of town. Having one of the town's main sports centres within the suburban area is clearly a boon for young people living there. Indeed Danescamp (as the centre is called) is referred to repeatedly in conversations with young people and is a significant feature on a third of young people's neighbourhood tours and appeared in 25 per cent of their drawings.

However, young people do not all perceive and benefit from the availability of local sports facilities in the same way. For example, for one ten year old girl who is not allowed out of her cul-de-sac unless accompanied by an adult, going to Danescamp is a special occasion.

“This is where I go to do ballet ... it's my favourite place really ... I'd go here more often if I had friends around” (11 year old girl, suburban)

In contrast, for others Danescamp offers only limited attractions. One 12 year old boy living within five minutes walk from the sports centre in the suburban location, only uses the centre when special summer activities such as a football club were on offer. He is also a swimmer with Northampton Swimming Club but, like many young people in East Hunsbury who wants to swim rather than just mess about in the swimming pool, considers the facilities to be inappropriate. Indeed for many young people, the cost and lack of variety in activities offered by the centre lowers its attraction.

“Danescamp ... where I go swimming ... there’s nothing to do there much ... just the flume ... so it’s a bit boring” (12 year old girl, suburban)

“Danescamp ... sometimes go there and book the hall for football ... but not much now ... used to go swimming there ... the fun pool’s not very exciting anymore ... the slide needs to be bigger it’s good for little kids though ...”
(13 year old boy, suburban)

The attraction of different facilities varies between young people and over time. In this sense visits to Danescamp represents only part of young people’s repertoire of free time activities. Apart from Danescamp there are few formal sport and recreation opportunities and few opportunities for young people to join sports clubs in either location. In this respect young people in both areas share much in common. Neither location has football, basketball or tennis facilities and in both cases there is a shortage of appropriate flat green space for their own informal sports activities.

“There’s not much sport to do around here ... like football training ... table tennis, basketball, ... cricket, rounders things like that ... you can go down the park and set up things but it’s not that good” (10 year old boy, inner city)

“... there’s nowhere to play football ... Basketball I like, but you can’t play basketball nowhere round here. We can play at the racecourse (park) ... but it’s quite far ... The play area you can but there’s no rings. ... if you could like ... the play area ... if it was a bit bigger so there was like a few tennis bits there ... a football pitch and a few rings for a game of basketball ... everybody would enjoy it round-here ... instead of going round causing trouble”
(12 year old boy, inner city)

“... there’s nothing sporty around here ... we all like football, like having a kick around ... but there’s nowhere to do it ... the nearest place is up at the school field and then if you go on there the caretaker comes and chases you off ‘cause you can’t play there’ ... even a football pitch would make it better round here”
(15 year old boy, suburban)

“... people sometimes play football in the park, but we don’t because it’s on a slope ... we play on the green but there’s dog poo everywhere and we get ushered away by residents because we’re playing near their houses ... ”
(13 year old boy, suburban)

These quotes reveal that in spite of the abundance of suburban open green space there is a shortage of playing field space for young people to engage in casual sport activities. In the inner city, as a result of the congested built environment, there is a similar lack of open space within the neighbourhood. The small patches of green space that do exist in both areas are dangerously sited next to roads or blighted by hazards such as broken glass or dog excrement. In the inner city there is a large open space adjacent to the neighbourhood, but few young people are allowed there unaccompanied.

These results indicate that young people in both areas are faced with inadequate levels of social and environmental opportunities. In spite of a greater range of facilities and open space in East Hunsbury suburban young people were more likely to complain of a lack of flat open space for outdoor sports and recreational activities and a lack of places to meet up and spend time with friends, than were young people in the inner city.

7.2.5 Conclusion

This section has highlighted some key perspectives of young people growing up in inner city and suburban locations. Young people from both locations share similar concerns about the quality of their areas and levels of social and environmental provision. However, the section has also shown that, in spite of common concerns, young people's experiences differ according to locational factors. The suburban location of East Hunsbury emerges as a more desirable place to live in the eyes of young people, rated as a safe and pleasant place, with an abundance of open spaces and formal sport and recreation facilities. In contrast, inner city Semilong is presented as a less desirable place to live, blighted with social and environmental hazards, limited open space and an absence of formal sport and recreation opportunities. All the same, young people are more likely to identify friendly people and a sense of community as positive characteristics of their area in the inner city than in the suburb. This section highlights young people's keen sensitivity and awareness of place. Young people's relationship with their localities are multi-faceted, with sense of belonging in the local neighbourhood being perceived as important as the availability of social and environmental opportunities. The diverse realities that young people experience may be further differentiated in terms of gender. The following section will explore the extent to which difference and diversity of childhood can be distinguished in terms of gender, together with insights into the contrasting geographical lifestyles that emerge between boys and girls.

7.3 Gendered childhood geographies

7.3.1 Introduction

In studies of children's experience of place the geographies of boys and girls have been shown to differ, with boys consistently experiencing more spatial freedom than girls (Hart 1979; Van Vliet 1983; Bjorklid 1985, Matthews 1987; Cunningham and Jones 1991; Katz 1993). However, feminist and post modern discourses draw attention to the multiple realities of childhood (James and Jenks 1996; Valentine 1996b) and suggest that gender divisions are becoming more complex, contextually variable and less clear. This section contributes to studies of contemporary childhood by investigating the extent to which conventional gender stereotypes are being reproduced spatially in terms of distinct geographies of boys and girls, or alternatively, are being reconstructed around new models of difference based around local cultures and shared lifestyles. It is beyond the scope of this work to investigate every aspect of young people's gendered geographies. Instead this section will concentrate solely on pertinent differences which have emerged from this study. First, the place perception and environmental values of girls and boys are compared. Second, similarities and differences in the environmental range and restrictions of boys and girls in both locations are investigated. Finally, gender dimensions to young people's local cultures and lifestyles are explored by considering young people's choices of free-time leisure pursuits.

7.3.2 Do girls and boys see their neighbourhoods differently?

Results show that the suburban location of East Hunsbury is better liked by girls (81 per cent girls, 74 per cent boys), with the inner city environment more highly rated by boys (48 per cent boys, 28 per cent girls). These patterns are again reproduced when asked if they would stay in the area if they could live anywhere. Inner city boys are more likely to say they would stay in the area (55%) than girls (36%), but suburban girls are more likely to want to stay in the area (88%) than boys (78%).

"I might move away when I'm an adult or when I move house ... I'm not staying here."
(11 year old girl, inner city)

"I'd like to stay living round here ... yeah ... it would be nice. It's a nice area".
(11 year old boy, suburban)

There is little difference between the specific place characteristics that boys and girls like. Boys value having lots to do marginally more than girls (10% compared to 6%) and girls value the quietness of their areas more than boys (13% compared to 9%). Apart from these characteristics boys and girls in both locations express a similar range of place likes (see Table 7.3). The availability of parks, having friends around, having shops near and the quietness of the area are consistently mentioned by all groups, although the degree of importance of each varies according to location. Parks, for

example, are valued more highly by suburban boys and inner city girls, and least by suburban girls. Having shops nearby and being close to town are also valued equally by inner city girls and suburban boys. Other place likes such as sports facilities and having lots to do are place specific, rendering gender comparisons between locations less important. There are only marginal differences between suburban boys and suburban girls with respect to these variables. This data shows that gender patterns in what young people like about their areas are not clear cut, but also vary in importance with and across location.

Table 7.3: Locational comparison of what boys and girls 'most like about living in their area' (% gender/site sample)

| <u>Inner city girls</u> (total sample n= 36) | | <u>Suburban girls</u> (total sample n= 43) | |
|---|----|---|----|
| Parks | 30 | Friends are here | 32 |
| Friends are here | 25 | Friendliness | 21 |
| Shops are near | 17 | Sports facilities | 16 |
| Quiet | 14 | Quiet | 12 |
| Close to town | 11 | Lots to do | 12 |
| Other young people here | 11 | Parks | 12 |
| | | Shops are near | 12 |
| <u>Inner city boys</u> (total sample n= 44) | | <u>Suburban boys</u> (total sample n= 58) | |
| Friends are here | 20 | Friends are here | 29 |
| Parks | 18 | Parks | 26 |
| Quiet | 11 | Shops are near | 17 |
| Friendliness | 9 | Lots to do | 17 |
| Can play out with friends | 9 | Sports facilities | 15 |
| Shops are near | 7 | Friendliness | 10 |
| | | Close to town | 9 |
| | | Quiet | 7 |

A number of conclusions can be made in connection with gendered patterns of place likes. First, that locational differences appear more important in understanding differences in young people's place likes than gender. Second, locational factors do not explain all differences in place likes rather, in some cases they intersect with gender giving rise to some boys and girls sharing common views of what they like about their neighbourhoods, which cut across the two locations. In this respect, notwithstanding the location specific variables such as sport facilities, the place likes of inner city girls are more similar to those of the suburban boys than either inner city boys or suburban girls.

Differences between girls and boys with respect to place dislikes in a similar fashion, also vary within and across locations (Table 7.4). These results are summarised schematically in Figure 7.3.

Table 7.4: Locational comparison of what girls and boys 'most dislike about living in their areas' (% site/gender sample)

| <u>Inner city girls</u> (total sample n=36) | | <u>Suburban Girls</u> (total sample n=43) | |
|--|----|--|----|
| Boring/not much to do | 17 | Boring/not much to do | 30 |
| Older kids | 17 | Don't know people | 14 |
| Litter / glass | 11 | Traffic/cars | 9 |
| Traffic/cars | 11 | Stranger danger | 7 |
| Stranger danger | 11 | Inadequate recreation facilities | 7 |
| Don't know people | 9 | | |
| Hostile people | 9 | | |
| <u>Inner city boys</u> (total sample n= 44) | | <u>Suburban boys</u> (total sample n= 58) | |
| Boring/not much to do | 20 | Boring/not much to do | 26 |
| Vandalism | 11 | Traffic/cars | 12 |
| Hostile people | 11 | Vandalism | 7 |
| Older kids | 11 | Too crowded | 7 |
| Litter/glass | 11 | Hostile people | 5 |
| Traffic/cars | 9 | Inadequate recreational facilities | 5 |

Figure 7.3: Schematic representation of young people's place dislikes with respect to gender and location

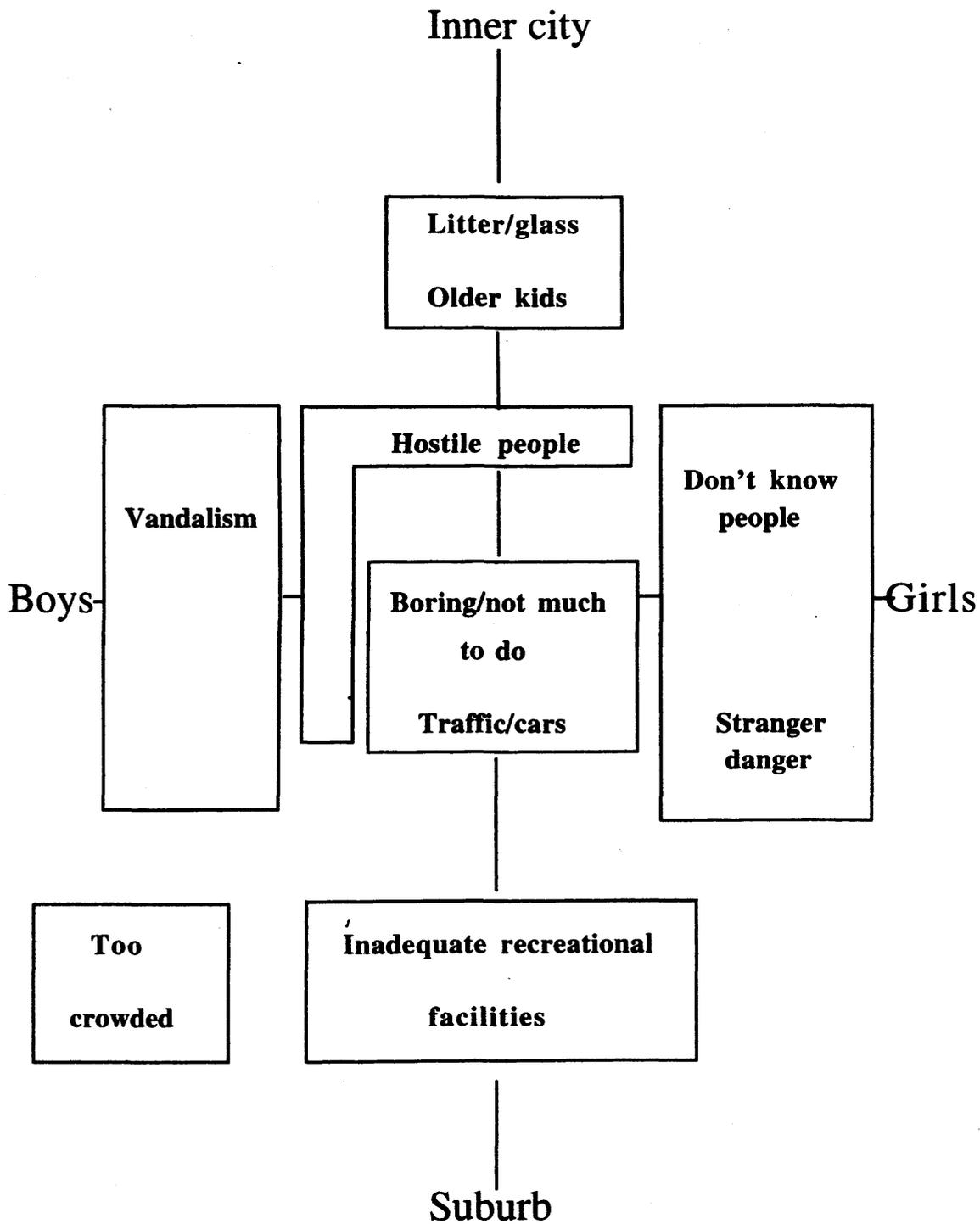


Figure 7.3 shows that out of the ten place dislikes shown in the data in Table 7.4, three are gender specific, four are location specific and three are relevant across gender and location boundaries. The only gender specific place dislike mentioned by just boys is vandalism (Semilong 11%, East Hunsbury 7%). This could be due to vandalism occurring more in those places which just boys frequent and having marginal impact on those places girls use.

“I don’t like all the vandalism and graffiti ... it’s a waste of time and spoils someone else’s fun ... it’s dangerous and it might ruin your clothes”
(12 year old boy, inner city)

“ I don’t like it when people just trash things ... fences have been smashed and kicked down ... it’s just pointless ... they’re just idiots”
(11 year old boy, suburban)

Place dislikes mentioned by girls but not boys are stranger danger (Semilong 11%, East Hunsbury 7%) and not knowing people (East Hunsbury 14%, Semilong 8%). This suggests that girls are more concerned with social issues, whereas boys are more concerned with environmental problems. With all these gender specific place dislikes there are differences between location, for example, stranger danger is more of a concern in the inner city, whereas not knowing people is more of a concern in the suburban location.

“... a few days ago there was a man down the bottom of the street by the shop and he was drunk ... falling all over the place ... doesn’t make you feel safe ... makes you feel uncomfortable” (13 year old girl, inner city)

“.. I come down here walking the dog on my own as most of my friends live in Wootton ... don’t know many people around here ...”
(13 year old girl, suburban)

The location specific responses, litter/glass and older kids in the inner city and inadequate recreation facilities in the suburb, have been considered in the previous section so will not be pursued here. The most common place dislikes for boys and girls in both locations are that their area is boring with not much to do.

“You’ve got to go outside of Semilong ... because there’s just nothing to do here”
(14 year old boy, inner city)

“ It gets a bit boring sometimes ... specially if there’s just a few of you ... there’s just nothing to do here”
(15 year old boy, suburban)

However, whilst this is more the case with boys than girls in the inner city, more suburban girls than suburban boys mention this place dislike. A dislike of traffic/cars and, with the exception of suburban girls, hostile people are also common to boys and girls in both location.

7.3.3 Gender differences in environmental range and restriction

Existing literature on children's spatial range has, until recently, shown that boys enjoy greater spatial freedom than girls (Coates and Bussard 1974; Hart 1979; Van Staden 1984; Matthews 1987, 1992; Van Vliet 1983; Cunningham and Jones 1991). However, recent evidence suggests that these gender divisions may be diminishing (Valentine and McKendrick 1997). This section will consider the extent to which such gender differences are evident in this study. Distance has not been used in this study as an indicator of environmental range given the small scale of the sample. Instead emphasis has been placed on qualitative aspects of young people's range behaviour.

Boys are consistently permitted a greater environmental range than girls (Table 7.5). Differences emerge between location such that inner city boys and girls both experience greater range than either suburban boys or girls. This suggests that although boys benefit from a greater range than girls, the extent to which this occurs varies between locations.

Table 7.5: Proportion of young people allowed out of their neighbourhood (% sample)

| (n=) | Alone + permission | Alone/no no permission | With friend + permission | With friend no permission |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Inner city boys (44) | 66 | 52 | 80 | 56 |
| Inner city girls (36) | 47 | 19 | 67 | 22 |
| Suburban boys (58) | 41 | 6 | 62 | 8 |
| Suburban girls (43) | 43 | 3 | 61 | 14 |
| Total boys (102) | 53.5 | 29 | 71 | 16 |
| Total girls (79) | 45 | 11 | 52 | 9 |

Notably, however, inner city boys stand apart from the other groups in enjoying fewer restrictions on their range.

“... if I say ‘can I go out?’ They wouldn’t normally say no ... so they don’t really mind if I want to go out, they’d say fine then go out, but let us know when you’re coming back”. (13 year old boy, inner city)

“mum and dad are very ... lenient where they’re letting me run riot round the streets and stuff till all hours of the morning ... most of the time they trust me” (15 year old boy, inner city)

In contrast, the range patterns of suburban boys share more in common with those of inner city and suburban girls than inner city boys. There are, however, no statistically significant differences between any of these gender groups (see Table 7.6).

Table 7.6: Gender differences in permitted environmental range
(Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test)

| (Critical χ^2 value = 5.99 at $df=2$, $p=0.05$) | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <u>Association</u> | <u>χ^2 value</u> | <u>Significant relationship</u> |
| Inner city boys vs. Inner city girls | 0.955 | none |
| Suburban boys vs. Suburban girls | 0.29 | none |
| Total boys vs. total girls | 1.30 | none |

Differences in environmental range are most significant when interpreted in light of young people’s experience of free range. Boys more readily express feelings of being able to go where ever they wanted than girls in both locations (Table 7.7), a finding which runs counter to the recent work of Valentine and McKendrick (1997) which suggests that gender differences in caretaking practices are narrowing. All the same the differences are small with chi-square analysis revealing a lack of significant difference ($\chi^2=5.17$, critical value of $\chi^2=5.99$ at $df=2$, $p=0.05$).

Table 7.7: Proportion of boys and girls who 'feel they are able to go where ever they want in their free time' (% gender sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | <u>Suburb</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|-------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Boys | 68 | 72 | 70 |
| Girls | 64 | 62 | 63 |

Boys and girls in both locations identify two major sets of factors which restrict their environmental range: parental restrictions and environmental fears or dangers. Table 7.8 shows that parents are considered as being the most significant restraining influence on young people's range.

Table 7.8: Factors identified by boys and girls as 'stopping them going where they want' (% gender/site sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| Parents | 71 | 58 | 71 | 69 |
| Environmental fears/ dangers | 14 | 25 | 14 | 19 |

In both locations boys are more restricted by parents than girls. The greater restriction felt by boys could be due to the greater centripetal pull of the outdoors for boys being more likely met with restraint than with girls. Girls on the other hand, are more likely to restrict their own environmental range, as a result of their own fears and anxieties about drunks and strangers or through a preference for domicentred activities. However, this trend is cross cut by location, with suburban girls more likely to be restricted by parents (69%) than inner city girls (58%), and less likely to be restricted by their own environmental fears (19% East Hunsbury, 25% Semilong).

“ I’m not allowed out with friends. Mum says there’s too many weirdoes about ...I’d like to go to Danescamp with my mates without mum like dropping us off. Just like be able to go ... over Tesco’s ... mum says I’m too young”
(11 year old girl, suburban)

This is likely to be due to more authoritative parenting in suburban East Hunsbury and higher levels of environmental hazards in the inner city.

There are four types of restrictions that parents place on young people. The first, as the data in Table 7.5 suggests, relates to whether young people are alone or not. The second relates to the times allowed out and in. The third concerns the places young people go to and the fourth concerns how they get there (mode of transport). These will be explored in detail in section 7.5. in the context of the influence of caretaking practices on the geography of boys and girls.

The second main set of restrictions on young people’s environmental range, mentioned in Table 7.8, are fears and dangers. Fear of attack and fear of strangers are the two most often mentioned environmental fears for boys and girls, but more readily expressed by girls.

“Everybody I know has been flashed at here ... it’s not safe especially in the dark ... it’s a place I fear so I don’t use these routes”
(13 year old girl, inner city)

“ I think it’s dangerous ... I mean the gangs that are around ... and ... there are a lot of weirdoes that live around here ... I mean the amount of dodgy people I have seen around here ... I just don’t think it’s safe to be honest”
(14 year old girl, inner city)

Table 7.9 below indicates that these environmental fears are higher for girls than boys in both locations, which supports the findings of previous work (Valentine’s 1989, 1992a; Goodey 1995). These differences are, however, less important than locational differences, with suburban boys and girls expressing much higher levels of fear than boys and girls in the inner city.

Table 7.9: Major environmental fears of boys and girls (% gender/site sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburban</u> | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| Fear of attack | 16 | 25 | 71 | 93 |
| Fear of strangers | 16 | 25 | 57 | 72 |

The perceived environmental dangers on which these fears are based are inconsistent with real environmental hazards which are far greater in the inner city. In light of this, the lower levels of fear expressed by inner city boys and girls is likely to be influenced by the greater sense of community, familiarity and higher numbers of local people on the streets than in the suburb. It could also be due to inner city boys and girls becoming used to the presence of environmental dangers and learning how to navigate them as this quote from an inner city parent suggests.

“... for a kid growing up ... Semilong is good as you ... get enough taste to become aware of what to do with an urban environment. ... If your parents keep you tucked away till you’re six and then they suddenly let you out and maybe they’re not too well aware ... but the children that live on these modern estates ... they can peddle around the sidewalks on their little tricycles ... by the time they’re twelve they’re still going on the pavement on their bicycles and they don’t really know how to handle the town”.

(Inner city father)

This section has illustrated that, despite only marginal differences between boys and girls in feeling restricted in where they went, boys continue to enjoy a wider environmental range than girls. Parents are the primary influence on the range of boys and girls, but this influence varies according to location. Young people’s environmental fears are also important in influencing the range of boys and (especially) girls, but these vary more dramatically with location than gender. Gender differences in environmental range and restrictions therefore vary according to powerful locational influences. Taken together with the way in which boys and girls perceive their neighbourhood, the range and restrictions which characterise the geographies of boys and girls directly influence their spatial patterns of social and recreational activity.

7.3.4 Local cultures, social activities and place: locating difference

The third major distinction between the geographies of girls and boys is in terms of social activities. Three important differences emerge. First, girls most like to spend their time socialising with friends (43% girls, 20% of boys), in town shopping (28% girls, 12% boys) or engaged in institutionalised activities outside of the home (34% girls, 14% boys). In contrast, boys are most likely to spend their time engaged in sports (56%) than girls (20%). Tables 7.10, 7.12, 7.13, 7.14, 7.15 and 7.16 illustrate gender differences in how young people most like to spend their time in each location. Table 7.10 indicates significant differences between inner city boys and girls and between suburban boys and inner city boys. However, little significant difference exists between the girls in both locations or between suburban girls and boys (see Table 7.11). The major differences in the geography of young people's leisure lifestyles will be explored in turn.

Table 7.10: How boys and girls 'most like to spend their free time'
(% gender/site sample)

| <u>Inner city girls</u> (total sample n= 36) | | <u>Suburban girls</u> (total sample n= 43) | |
|---|----|---|----|
| With friends | 50 | Indoor activities | 47 |
| Indoor activities | 33 | With friends | 37 |
| Play/hang about with friends | 31 | Town/shops with friends | 35 |
| Town/shops with friends | 19 | Non home indoor activity | 33 |
| Sports activities | 17 | Sports activities | 23 |
| Non home indoor activity | 17 | Play/hang about with friends | 16 |
| Non home outdoor activity | 14 | Non home outdoor activity | 16 |
| Clubbing with friends | 6 | Clubbing with friends | 7 |
| Special trips | 3 | Family occasions | 2 |
| | | | |
| <u>Inner city boys</u> (total sample n= 44) | | <u>Suburban boys</u> (total sample n= 58) | |
| Sports activities | 68 | Indoor activities | 72 |
| Indoor activities | 30 | Sports activities | 47 |
| With friends | 16 | Play/hang about with friends | 28 |
| Non home indoor activity | 11 | Non home outdoor activity | 19 |
| Play/hang about with friends | 9 | With friends | 19 |
| Town/shops with friends | 7 | Town/shops with friends | 16 |
| Non home outdoor activity | 5 | Non home indoor activities | 16 |
| Something new/special activities | 5 | Special activities | 3 |

Table 7.11: Gender differences in how young people spend their free time
(Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test)

(Critical χ^2 value = 5.99 at $df=2$, $p=0.05$)

| <u>Association</u> | <u>χ^2 value</u> | <u>Significant relationship</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Inner city boys vs. Inner city girls | 13.21 | yes |
| Suburban boys vs. Suburban girls | 5.32 | none |
| Inner city boys vs. Suburban boys | 10.58 | yes |
| Inner city girls vs. Suburban girls | 3.38 | none |

The first major difference is that suburban boys are more likely than any other group to spend time engaged in indoor activities (Table 7.12).

Table 7.12: Proportion of boys and girls who most like to spend their free time doing indoor activities (% gender/site sample)

| | % | n= |
|------------------|----|----|
| Suburban boys | 72 | 42 |
| Suburban girls | 47 | 20 |
| Inner city girls | 33 | 12 |
| Inner city boys | 30 | 13 |

This evidence challenges previous assertions (McRobbie and Garber 1976; Frith 1984; Ganetz 1995) which suggest that girls are more likely to construct lifestyles around home spaces such as the bedroom. On the contrary, in this study, indoor leisure cultures amongst young people are determined by the interplay of gender and locational factors. Although there are large gender differences in the suburban location in indoor activities in the inner city, gender differences are negligible. Location once again plays a strong mediating role in influencing the geographies of boys and girls. The tendency for indoor activities to be more prominent in the suburb is not surprising given the larger and better standard of housing. The difference between boys and girls, however,

may be due to the expansion in televisual and information media based activities such as computers and satellite television which appear more attractive to boys than girls. Computer games, in particular, are played more frequently by boys than girls (17.5% compared to 4%). This is particularly so in the suburb where 21 per cent of the boys and no girls say that their favourite activity is playing games on the computer. Boys are also more likely to watch TV than girls in the suburb (19% boys, 12% girls), though not in the inner city (2% boys, 8% girls).

“... just sit in my mate’s bedroom ... play computer games and stuff every night from about 7.00 till 9.30 ... it’s warm and comfortable and can have a laugh there”
(14 year old boy, suburban)

“... if we get fed up being outside we come back here and play on my sony play station ... or go to his (friend’s) house”
(10 year old boy, suburban)

This observation, however, appears to contradict the findings in the previous section that boys are more inclined towards outdoor activities than girls. What appears likely is that whereas some boys are more likely to pursue outdoor activities than girls, others are more likely to stay in, further illustrating the multiple realities of young people. It could also indicate that although boys have a wider environmental range, this does not necessarily assume they use it. These results substantiate findings elsewhere in this project that boys tend to hang out more in each others homes than girls (see Chapter Nine) and provide further evidence to corroborate the assertion that differences between the lifestyles of boys and girls are becoming increasingly more blurred (Ganetz 1995). This does not imply automatically that girls are spending more time on the streets (although this may well be the case as argued in Chapter Nine) rather, that girls are expanding their range of leisure lifestyles through alternative social venues (see Tables 7.15 and 7.16 below).

A second major trend which can be considered as notably gender specific is the greater likelihood for boys in both locations to play sport than girls (Table 7.13). This difference is greater in the inner city than the suburb. Boys are twice as likely to belong to clubs than girls (38% boys, 19% girls), in particular, boys membership of sports clubs is dramatically higher in both locations (55% boys, 3% girls in Semilong and 64% boys, 21% girls in East Hunsbury).

Table 7.13: Proportion of boys and girls who most like to do sport activities (% gender/site sample)

| | % | n= |
|------------------|----|----|
| Inner city boys | 68 | 30 |
| Suburb boys | 47 | 27 |
| Suburb girls | 23 | 10 |
| Inner city girls | 17 | 6 |

These results accord with previous studies which have found that boys show a greater enthusiasm for sport than girls (Davis and Cowie 1992; Ashford *et al.* 1993; Hendry *et al.* 1993) and are therefore attracted to places which provide appropriate opportunities.

“I’d prefer playing sport rather than doing anything else really ... tennis and football usually ... over at the racecourse or up at Kingsthorpe rec”
(13 year old boy, inner city)

“ There isn’t much to do apart from sport ... there’s usually three ... there’s about three to eight of us ... and we’ll ... get together down the park ... and have a big game of football” (10 year old boy, inner city)

Differences between the proportion of boys participating in sports in both locations reflects the greater likelihood for suburban boys to engage in a broader range of alternative activities than inner city boys.

A third finding also draws out a strong gender difference, with girls far more likely than boys to want to spend time with friends (Table 7.14). This difference is greatest in the inner city than the suburban location.

Table 7.14: Proportion of boys and girls who most like to spend time with friends (% gender/site sample)

| | % | n= |
|------------------|----|----|
| Inner city girls | 50 | 18 |
| Suburban girls | 37 | 16 |
| Suburban boys | 19 | 11 |
| Inner city boys | 16 | 7 |

The tendency for girls to want to spend more time with friends than boys reflects the findings of previous studies which highlight girls' preference for passive and sociable activities in contrast to the more active pursuits of boys (Hendry *et al.* 1993; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1995; Pearce 1996).

“ ... it's nice just being with your friends ... and having a good time with them ... just chat or whatever ...” (15 year old girl, suburban)

“ ... it's quite fun when you go out with your friends ... you just ... call for people and ... sit down and talk or something”. (14 year old girl, suburban)

Differences between the girls in both locations once again reflects the tendency for suburban young people to engage in a broader range of activities which decreases the emphasis on any one activity.

A fourth difference in lifestyles is the greater likelihood for girls to spend their time in town shopping with friends than boys. In particular suburban girls are most likely to want to spend time in town on shopping trips.

“... I go in town with my friends ... shops, shopping and just have a laugh with your friends ... just talking and laughing at really stupid clothes, people with weird hair ... just enjoy getting new things ... I mean I don't always get new clothes in town ... just nice to see what's in the shops” (14 year old girl, suburban)

“ ... I like shopping ... like buying clothes, jewellery, earrings and all of that ... I don't know really I just enjoy it” (13 year old girl, suburban)

What is also interesting about this data is, yet again, the similarity between inner city girls and suburban boys.

Table 7.15: Proportion of boys and girls who most like to spend their free time in town shopping (% gender/site sample)

| | % | n= |
|------------------|----|----|
| Suburban girls | 35 | 15 |
| Inner city girls | 19 | 8 |
| Suburban boys | 16 | 9 |
| Inner city boys | 7 | 3 |

The gender difference here can be explained by the greater attraction for shopping amongst girls as found in previous studies (McRobbie 1991; Nava 1992; Pearce 1996). The higher activity rates for suburban girls and boys compared to inner city girls and boys reflects higher levels of disposable income. Many young people in the inner city state that whilst they enjoy shopping and going to town, a lack of money often precludes them from doing so. In this sense activity patterns say more about material circumstances than young people's values.

“... go to town ... spend some money if I have some ... buy sweets and things, trainers ... that's when I get money” (11 year old boy, inner city)

“ ... we just walk around looking in shops or ... going, I like going in HMV and listening to music and if I've got the money I'll buy something ... new CD and that ... but don't always have enough money” (15 year old girl, inner city)

The greater tendency for girls to spend time in town is important because it suggests that girls are becoming more separated from their neighbourhoods than boys in the course of their free time activities and therefore are developing a culture of consumerism in which they are drawn increasingly into the economic system as consumer citizens. These differences have implications for social identity amongst young people as, those that have the means (in this case suburban young people) are better placed to acquire social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) than those without the means (inner city young people).

A fifth difference is the greater likelihood for girls from both locations to spend time in indoor activities outside of the home for example in cinemas or night clubs (Table 7.16).

Table 7.16: Proportion of boys and girls who most like to spend their time in indoor activities outside of the home (% gender/site sample)

| | % | n= |
|------------------|----|----|
| Suburban girls | 33 | 14 |
| Inner city girls | 17 | 6 |
| Suburban boys | 16 | 9 |
| Inner city boys | 11 | 4 |

One reason for the higher levels of girls engaging in indoor activities outside of the home could be that these places are considered safer than if they were hanging about outside, as one of the suburban girls stated:

“I thought they (parents) wouldn’t like me going Zone (night club) ... but mum says it’s better than me being outside ... cos it’s a lot safer, even though it’s more expensive ...”
(14 year old girl, suburban)

Gender patterns in this data are once again mediated by the effects of location with a far higher level of suburban girls most likely to spend time in indoor activities outside of the home than inner city girls.

“ ... go to Zone (nightclub) on a Wednesday ... I like the atmosphere ... being with friends and everyone in a good mood ... music, dancing ...”
(14 year old girl, suburban)

“ ... we go to GX superbowl which is in town and Virgin (cinemas) which is out in Duston ... you can have a good time and see a nice film, have a meal after ... MacDonalds or Pizza Hut or something ... and just have a nice evening really ... do something different”
(15 year old girl, suburban)

Reasons for suburban girls standing apart in this data reflects higher levels of affluence as well as a greater desire for this type of activity. Once again there is more similarity in the data between inner city girls and suburban boys than between the girls in both locations.

One final dimension of gender differences in how young people spend their time concerns young people’s own perception of their free time behaviour. Despite the trends above which indicate clear patterns in how girls and boys most like to spend their time, Table 7.17 provides consistent evidence that girls are less fulfilled than boys in their use of free time. The data adds an element of complexity to understanding the lifestyles of boys and girls, suggesting there are differences between how young people say they most like to spend their free time and their levels of satisfaction with what they actually do. Statistical analysis of the two sets of data, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, reveals no significant difference between boys and girls ($\chi^2 = 1.8$, critical $\chi^2 = 5.99$ at $df = 2$, $p = 0.05$).

Table 7.17: Indicators of levels of young people's fulfilment with use of spare time (% gender sample)

| | <u>Boys</u> | <u>Girls</u> |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| (Total sample n=) | (102) | (79) |
| Usually find plenty of enjoyable things to do | 79 | 72.5 |
| Prefer to go out if I can | 93 | 86.5 |
| Anything is better than staying in at home, even if there's nowhere particular to go | 46.5 | 41.5 |
| Often hang around with friends doing nothing special | 63.5 | 74 |
| Often get bored in spare time | 43 | 52.5 |
| Would like to do more of a variety of things in spare time | 79 | 85 |

The data in Table 7.17 indicates that girls are less satisfied with their free time, more likely to be bored, less likely than boys to be suitably stimulated in their free time, but nonetheless, are more inclined to stay indoors than go out. As already suggested (section 7.3.3) this could be due to a greater sense of vulnerability and fear of being outside or alternatively, due to more protective caretaking strategies for girls, despite their desire for social ventures outside of the home. Indeed there is an irony here in that a larger proportion of girls than boys state they are most happy when out with friends (53% girls, 46% boys).

7.3.5 Conclusion

The evidence provided in this section draws attention to more complex differences in the geographies of boys and girls than has hitherto been assumed. Differences in the way that boys and girls see their local areas is influenced by location, with the suburban location better liked by girls and the inner city location rated more highly by boys. Boys and girls like a similar range of specific places but the degree to which this is so varies according to location. Boys and girls in both areas share the common place dislikes of traffic problems and a perception that their area is boring with little to do. Boys in both locations enjoy a greater environmental range than girls, although boys are more likely to be restricted by parents than girls. Girls on the other hand are more likely to be restricted by their own environmental fears. Free time activity preferences reproduce conventional gender patterns with boys more likely to spend time playing sport and girls spending time with friends or in indoor activities outside of the home, although boys are more likely to stay indoors than girls.

The results also reveal that whilst there are evident differences between the geographies of boys and girls, at the same time, these differences appear to be becoming more opaque. Notably, there are many similar trends in the data between inner city girls and suburban boys. They both shared the common place likes of parks, having shops nearby and being close to town to the same degree and both express the same level of desire with respect to spending time in town shopping and in indoor activities outside of the home. What these results suggest is that gender differentiated patterns in young people's free time activities are giving way to more complex patterns of shared lifestyles which cut across gender and locational divides. This is not to suggest that gender and location are becoming less important in predicting young people's leisure and lifestyles rather, are being redefined in multifarious ways according to the personal preferences and social contexts of different young people. To this extent location emerges as a more powerful predictor of young people's geographies than gender.

7.4 Age differences

7.4.1 Introduction

Studies of children's geographies which have considered age as a variable have tended to concern the developing environmental competence of young people (Spencer *et al.* 1989; Matthews 1987, 1992; Hart 1979). These studies illustrate how young people's environmental transactions expand outward from the home with age. Few geographical studies of young people's patterns of leisure and place use have compared the geographies of young people growing up in different urban locations. Instead the most significant contributions have been made from outside of geography (Silbereisen *et al.* 1986; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Pearce 1996). Hendry *et al.* (1993), for example, note that after the preadolescent years clear patterns begin to emerge in young people's leisure, which reflect gender, age and social class. All the same, little is known about the diverse ways in which young people of different ages experience growing up in different locations. This section will explore the geographies of young people with respect to age in terms of place perception, range and restriction, spatial cultures and lifestyles.

7.4.2 Local place perception of older and younger children

This section investigates the ways in which young people of different ages see and evaluate their neighbourhoods as places to grow up in. Table 7.18 below indicates variations in the proportion of 10-15 year olds who like living in their local areas according to gender and location. These trends are not regular rather, fluctuations across the age range are revealed.

Table 7.18: Proportion of young people who 'like living in their local area' with respect to age (% age group)

| Age group: | 10/11 | 12/13 | 14/15 |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| All young people | 64 | 60 | 54 |
| Total suburban | 90 | 79 | 66 |
| Total inner city | 35 | 43 | 39 |
| Total male | 65 | 76 | 49 |
| Total female | 58 | 50 | 61 |

For all young people, the proportion who like living in their area decreases with age. This pattern is also reproduced for all suburban young people and suggests that at 10/11 years of age young people are enthusiastic about their area, but that as they get older the neighbourhood becomes progressively less attractive, as young people look for new experiences outside of their neighbourhood.

“ It’s a nice place to live in because it’s like ... there’s lots of places to play and it’s quite a big area like so we can walk around and explore new places ... and you can play on the street ...” (11 year old boy, suburban)

“ ... it gets a bit boring sometimes ... because there’s nothing to do round here really, so you have only got your friends to keep you amused ... sometimes go to Cue Club which amuses you for a while ... or go up Sixfields ... just go up there for a bit of excitement”
(15 year old boy, suburban)

“... I’m getting older now and ... it’s not like when I was younger I used to play around the streets with my friends ... I can’t do that anymore so go into town on Saturday nights ...”
(15 year old girl, inner city)

In the inner city however, the 12/13 year age group, rather than the 10/11 year age group, are the most enthusiastic about their area, with enthusiasm again waning with the 14/15 year age group. This suggests that for the 10/11 year old group, the inner city location does not provide the same degree of place attraction as the suburban location at this age. By 14/15 years of age the attraction of the local area for young people decreases. This is reflected in the narrative of one 15 year old who, during a tour of the neighbourhood talked continuously in terms of the things he used to do and the places he used to go to when younger in contrast to the current attraction of the pub and the pool table in town:

‘They keep talking about what they used to do which almost suggests they are in a way acknowledging a passing of a stage in their life and therefore a change in their geographical lifestyle’.
(Neighbourhood tour with two 15 year old boys, inner city, 11/4/97)

Gender samples of the different age groups in each location are too small to make any meaningful comments, however, taking boys and girls from both locations together, some observations are possible. The data (Table 7.18) shows a lack of consistency in age related trends with respect to gender differences. Boys show an increasing liking for their area up until 12/13 years of age, after which the attraction falls. In contrast, age trends for girls show a decrease in the proportion who like their area until 12/13 years of age after which the area becomes more attractive. These contrasting trends reveal a diversity of place experiences between boys and girls. Whereas for boys the

neighbourhood loses its attraction by the age of 14/15, for girls the neighbourhood becomes increasingly more attractive by this age. These contrasting trends reflect differences in environmental range and social activities between boys and girls as will be demonstrated in the following two sections. Statistical comparison of these age related trends reveals that there are no significant differences between either gender or location in the extent to which young people like living in their area (see Table 7.19).

Table 7.19: Gender/location differences in age related patterns of the proportion of young people who 'liked living in their area' (Kolmogorov Smirnov test)

| (Critical χ^2 value = 5.99 at $df=2$, $p= 0.05$) | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <u>Association</u> | <u>χ^2 value</u> | <u>Significant relationship</u> |
| Total suburban vs Total inner city | .319 | none |
| Total male vs Total female | 2.70 | none |

Despite the lack of significant difference in the data, Table 7.19 suggests there is a greater degree of diversity in children's experiences than single factors indicate. The data also suggests that location is more important than age or gender, in differentiating young people's place perceptions. Age, gender and location thus appear to combine to produce a multiplicity of ways in which children view their local areas, varying according to personal and social contexts.

Some of the diverse place likes that boys and girls of different ages have in both locations are shown in Table 7.20.

Tables 7.20: 'Good things about local area' identified by young people
(% age group)

| <u>Inner city</u> | <u>10/11</u> | <u>12/13</u> | <u>14/15</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| (total sample n=) | (31) | (21) | (28) |
| Parks/play areas | 52 | 86 | 50 |
| Sports facilities | 6 | 5 | — |
| Community facilities | 13 | 10 | 7 |
| Youth club | 13 | 10 | 7 |
| Lots to do/opportunities | | | |
| to play/hang about | — | 5 | 4 |
| Friends/young | | | |
| people about | 6 | 10 | 18 |
| Can get to town | — | — | 7 |
| | | | |
| <u>Suburb</u> | <u>10/11</u> | <u>12/13</u> | <u>14/15</u> |
| (total sample n=) | (29) | (34) | (38) |
| Parks/play areas | 72 | 59 | 32 |
| Sports facilities | 21 | 62 | 47 |
| Community facilities | 21 | 24 | 21 |
| Youth club | 3 | 18 | 18 |
| Lots to do/opportunities | | | |
| to play/hang about | 28 | 32 | 29 |
| Friends/young people | | | |
| about | 14 | 15 | 11 |
| Can get to town | 3 | 12 | 16 |

Parks and play areas are the most frequently quoted place like for all ages in the inner city. In the suburb this is also the case for 10/11 year olds, but from then on young people value sports facilities most. This suggests that, in the suburb, as young people get older they are able to benefit from a wider range of opportunities than are available for young people in the inner city. This is not to suggest that young people in the inner city do not play or value sport, rather that the corresponding sport opportunities for young people in the inner city are the parks and play areas, rather than formalised facilities.

“... most of the time just play football down the play area ... if we didn't have the play area there'd be nothing ... nothing”
(15 year old boy, inner city)

“... we've got Danescamp and that's quite good, it's got swimming activities and things like that there ... can do football training there ...”
(13 year old boy, suburban)

This is reflected in the consistently high value attached to the park and play area through the age range in the inner city but not in the suburb. Evidence from field observation in the inner city indicates that parks and play areas are frequently used by older teenagers in a similar way to younger children, reflecting an absence of alternative opportunities for 14/15 year olds. Age related trends in the places valued by young people therefore appear to be influenced strongly by locational characteristics.

The appeal of different places in both locations as young people get older is also reflected in the proportion of young people mentioning 'youth facilities' and 'having friends about' as good things about the area. In the suburb the proportion of young people who note a youth club as a good thing increased with age, whereas in the inner city the trend decreases.

“... I don't really like youth clubs ... there was one along Semilong road ...I went once ... but I didn't like it”
(14 year old girl, inner city)

“I think that the Youth and Community Centre is a good idea, but I don't think there's really anything they can offer me because it's not really for my age group”
(14 year old boy, inner city)

“... needs to be more places for teenagers like erm ... same as a youth club but with more to do in it ... doss about with people ... like a social place where you can meet up”
(15 year old girl, suburban)

In contrast the proportion of young people who note having friends around as a good thing increases with age in the inner city but decreases in the suburb. Taken together these results corroborate the assertion that age transitions for suburban young people are characterised by the availability of a greater range of opportunities, whereas in the inner city faced with fewer possibilities, young people rely on informal activities with friends. In this way location is a strong determinant of age related trends in young people's place experiences.

Another important trend concerns the increasing value placed on being able to get to town with age by suburban young people. Yet for inner city young people, except for 15 year olds, this variable hardly figures in young people's rating of their area. One

explanation for this difference could be that inner city young people are able to satisfy their place needs adequately within the neighbourhood as they get older. Alternatively it could be due to the blandness of the suburban environment and the higher spending power of suburban youth, which more readily expands their activities beyond their neighbourhood. There is, however, some inconsistency between semi-structured interview results and in-depth interviews. For example, despite the low proportion of young people in the inner city noting accessibility to town as a positive feature of their neighbourhood in Table 7.20, young people of all ages during other parts of the research acknowledged this place attribute.

“... from my point of view it’s alright because it’s close to town”
(14 year old girl, inner city)

“... we don’t have no places like ... to meet people ... but you can like go in to town and meet up”
(15 year old girl, inner city)

“ ... we go into town quite a lot it’s easy to just pop in and meet your mates ... not far really”
(15 year old girl, inner city)

Accessibility and in turn range and restriction are important factors influencing young people’s geographies and will be considered in more detail in the following section.

7.4.3 Range and restriction

Studies to date on children’s environmental range indicate an increase in range with age (Hart 1979; Moore 1986; Matthews 1987). Hart identified three categories of range for children: free range (places allowed to go without permission), range with permission, and range with permission with other children. In each case environmental range was found to increase with age. Evidence from this study corroborates these findings, whilst also providing clear evidence of age differences in range and restriction according to location. Young people of all ages in the inner city enjoy a freer range than those in the suburb. An exception is when young people go out with friends with parental permission, wherein suburban young people of all ages enjoy a freer range (Table 7.21). These differences are statistically significant as indicated in Table 7.22.

Table 7.21: Proportion of young people allowed out of their neighbourhood according to age and location (% age sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | | | <u>Suburb</u> | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | <u>10/11</u> (Total n=) | <u>12/13</u> (21) | <u>14/15</u> (28) | <u>10/11</u> (29) | <u>12/13</u> (34) | <u>14/15</u> (38) |
| Own/no permission | 17.5 | 33.5 | 57 | 0 | 0 | 18.5 |
| With friend/no permission | 22 | 27.5 | 57 | 0 | 6 | 23 |
| Own/with permission | 26.5 | 51 | 100 | 7.5 | 29.5 | 54.5 |
| With friend/with permission | 13 | 67.5 | 95 | 56.5 | 73 | 100 |

Table 7.22: Locational differences in age related patterns of permitted environmental range (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test)

(Critical x^2 value = 5.99 at $df=2$, $p= 0.05$)

| <u>Association</u> | <u>x^2 value</u> | <u>Significant relationship</u> |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Inner city vs. Suburban 10/11 year olds | 21.3 | yes |
| Inner city vs. Suburban 12/13 year olds | 6.66 | yes |
| Inner city vs. Suburban 14/15 year olds | 6.40 | yes |

These differences appear to be due to more liberal parenting strategies in the inner city and a greater incidence of protectionist caretaking practices amongst suburban parents. However, some young people also identify fear of strangers as stopping them going where they wanted.

“... there’s like people hanging around at the tops of the street with bottles of beer in their hands ... so ... it makes you feel uncomfortable, like me and my friend used to walk home from the Middle School which is in this area and sometimes we’d go further away around to avoid them”
 (13 year old girl, inner city)

Table 7.23 indicates that parental restrictions tend to be higher in the suburb than the inner city throughout the age range, whereas the proportion of young people for whom fear of strangers poses a restriction are comparable for both locations. This is in spite of the higher levels of real dangers which exist in the inner city.

Table 7.23: Restrictions identified by young people according to age (% age sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| | <u>Parents</u> | <u>Fear of Strangers</u> | <u>Parents</u> | <u>Fear of Strangers</u> |
| 10/11 years | 31 | 5 | 37.5 | 4.5 |
| 12/13 years | 16 | 8.5 | 17.5 | 9.5 |
| 14/15 years | 2.5 | 2.5 | 11.5 | 2.5 |

In both locations, as young people get older, parents provide less of a restriction. However, a higher proportion of 14/15 year olds in the suburb than the inner city still feel restricted by parents. In contrast, young people in both locations feel increasingly restricted by having strangers about, up until 12/13 years, after which fear of strangers poses less of a restriction. These differences are not statistically significant. Chi-square analysis reveals a lack of significant difference between the proportion of inner city and suburban young people being restricted by parents ($\chi^2=1.5$) and strangers ($\chi^2=1.25$) in where they go (critical $\chi^2=5.99$ at $df=2$, $p=0.05$). The influence of parents on young people’s geographies will be considered in more detail in the following section, however, it is important here to note the more restrictive and conditional range for

suburban young people than inner city young people. It is also important to consider young people's interpretation of restriction to their environmental range.

The results in Table 7.24, illustrate that young people are more likely to feel they can go where ever they want as they get older. This mirrors the decreasing affects of range restrictions imposed by parents with age. However, statistical analysis reveals a lack of difference between the data sets (see Table 7.25).

Table 7.24: Proportion of young people feeling they are able to 'go where ever they want' (% age sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | | | <u>Suburban</u> | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| | <u>Boys</u> | <u>Girls</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Boys</u> | <u>Girls</u> | <u>Total</u> |
| 10/11 year olds | 58 | 42 | 50 | 54 | 29 | 42 |
| 12/13 year olds | 70 | 43 | 57 | 62 | 76 | 69 |
| 14/15 year olds | 96 | 88 | 92 | 100 | 66 | 83 |

Despite the lack of statistical significance in the data in Table 7.24 there are, nonetheless, some trends in the data. Taking boys and girls together, trends show that 10/11 year olds in the inner city feel they can go where ever they want more than those in the suburb. By age 12/13 this trend is reversed with young people in the suburb more likely to feel unrestricted. Despite all 14/15 year olds in the inner city feeling they can go where they want more readily than in the suburb, there is little difference between boys in both locations. Wider differences appear between girls in this group, however, with a far higher proportion of inner city girls feeling they can go where they want than in the suburb.

Table 7.25: Gender/location differences in age related patterns of the proportion of young people who felt they are able to 'go where ever they want' (Chi-squared Test).

(Critical χ^2 value = 5.99 at $df=2$, $p= 0.05$) .

| <u>Association</u> | <u>χ^2 value</u> | <u>Significant relationship</u> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Inner city total vs. Suburban total | 2.385 | none |
| Inner city boys vs. Suburban boys | 0.366 | none |
| Inner city girls vs. Suburban girls | 3.25 | none |

These trends suggest that more restrictive parenting in the earlier years for suburban boys and girls gives way to a freer range later, except for 14/15 year old girls who still feel restricted. Although suburban young people are more likely to feel they can go wherever they want in some cases, this may involve being taken to places by parents as a result of higher levels of car ownership (95% of households in East Hunsbury compared to 52% in Semilong) and material wealth than for those in the inner city. In this way young people still get to go to where they want and parents also satisfy their concerns for protecting their young people.

“My dad’s the local taxi service ... he will take me anywhere ... but I think I rely on him too much because ... I’m a daddies girl ... ‘Dad, can you take me out?’ ‘Yes where do you want to go?’ ”
(15 year old girl, suburban)

“ ... like my dad’s always driving us around ... I want my mum to start driving because she says ... she’d take me anywhere, me and my friends”
(14 year old girl, suburban)

Despite the apparent inconsistency in data concerning range and restriction across the age bands, synthesis of the data presented in this section suggests a number of general conclusions can be made. Inner city young people enjoy a greater range than suburban young people, with boys enjoying a greater range than girls. This is shown to be largely due to more restrictive parental practices in suburban families which constrain younger teenagers more than in the inner city and girls more than boys. This challenges the claims of previous research which showed suburban young people enjoying a greater range than young people in the inner city (Van Vliet 1983). However with age,

suburban young people, in particular girls, increasingly benefit from a greater environmental range than young people in the inner city, if parental conditions (asking permission and going with a friend) are met. The data suggests that the changing environmental range of young people with age is influenced by locational factors such as class, parental influence and the allure of cultures of consumption. The resulting differences contribute to the diversity of young people's geographies within and between locations. The following section will consider the extent to which diversity exists in young people's geographies with respect to different lifestyles and the ways young people spend their time throughout the age range.

7.4.4 Local lifestyles of younger and older children

This chapter has already shown that considerable diversity exists in children's geographies in terms of the local place perception and environmental range of girls and boys of different ages in different locations. This final section will consider the extent to which differences exist between younger and older children in terms of geographical patterns of how they spend their time and the spatial cultures which emerge.

Both general and specific features of young people's local lifestyles can be identified which are relevant to different age groups to varying extents. Table 7.26 below illustrates trends in how young people in different age groups most like to spend their time. These trends are not statistically significant according to the Kruskal-Wallis H test² ($H = 0.1887$ against critical $H = 5.99$ with $df = 2$ and $p = 0.05$). Nonetheless five important trends in spatial cultures of young people emerge with age.

Table 7.26: How young people 'most like to spend their free time'
(% age sample)

| <u>Age group (both locations):</u> | <u>10/11</u> | <u>12/13</u> | <u>14/15</u> |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Sports activities | 34 | 56 | 31 |
| Indoor activities | 59 | 47 | 18 |
| With friends | 28 | 29 | 48 |
| Non home indoor activities | 12 | 15 | 32 |
| Play/hang about with friends outside | 38 | 33 | 35 |
| Town/shops with friends | 6 | 20 | 31 |
| Something new/special activities | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| With family | 2 | 4 | 2 |

² The Kruskal-Wallis H Test is more suitable in this case as it tests for significant difference between three or more samples.

First, the data indicates a decrease in indoor activities, particularly at age 14/15. This is probably due to the increasing demand young people have for autonomous social space to be with friends, to be themselves and to do what they want without adult interference.

“... sometimes I’ve just got to get out ... because I can’t stand just sitting in the house ... go out and get some fags and then just sit around ... meet your mates and go and sit on the little bridge down there or down the alley”.
(14 year old boy, suburban)

The second trend is the increasing desire for young people to spend more time with friends. Although many of the other activities listed involve being with friends, the explicit reference to most wanting to spend time with friends with age indicates the growing importance of social interaction for young people (Silbereisen *et al.* 1986; Coleman and Hendry 1990; Cotterell 1996).

“... it’s nice just being in the company of friends ... and having a good time ... go round each others houses ... chat or watch videos and have a laugh”
(15 year old girl, suburban)

“ ... we just sit around for hours ... laughing, joking, smoking fags ... and all your mates are there ... spend a lot of time round people’s houses ... spend most of the time socialising ... it’s really important”
(15 year old boy, suburban)

The third main aspect of age related trends in social activities is an increasing preference for indoor activities outside of the home (such as cinema, pub, youth or night club), with outdoor activities remaining constant throughout the age groups. This is likely to be due to the growing demand of older teenagers for a wider range of social activities and environmental experiences being matched by an increasing environmental range.

“I like going to Zone and ... trying new things like ... going to Milton Keynes like to the ice rink ... and go to the cinema, to Sixfields”
(14 year old girl, inner city)

“... went out the Saturday just gone to the Hen and Chickens pub ... I can get in there ... and they like have a DJ on a Saturday night and lots of young people go ...”
(14 year old girl, inner city)

The fourth major feature is the increasing tendency with age for young people to spend time in town shopping with friends. As young people move into their teens issues concerning image and identity become more important. A number of writers have noted how identity for young people is increasingly being constructed around patterns of

consumption (Giddens 1991; Stewart 1992; Jones and Wallace 1992) with the result that an increasing proportion of leisure time for many young people is influenced by the magic of the mall.

“... there’s like loads of people I know in town and there’s places to go ... we just walk around ... looking in shops or going, I like going in HMV and listening to music and if I’ve got money to spend I’ll probably, I’ll either buy food or music ... new CDs and that ...”

(15 year old girl, inner city)

“... go into town and ... look around the shops and things ... have a nice time trying on clothes and, when I’ve got some money ... buy something”

(14 year old girl, inner city)

With the benefits of an expanding environmental range, 14/15 year olds are especially open to this influence. The glitzy attractions of shopping centres hence become a significant social force in young people’s identification with places in the course of their free time lifestyles as they get older.

The fifth dimension to age related trends in the spatial cultures of young people concerns the importance of sport in the activity choices of young people. Sport becomes more popular up until 12/13 years of age, after which it declines in importance. This may also reflect a broadening of social activities in the free time worlds of young people. Fox (1994), for example, noted that after 12/13 years of age large numbers of young people tend to drop out of formal participation in sport and active play. These initial observations provide five important trends in young people’s social activity with respect to age.

More detailed insights are provided by consideration of the way location and gender cut across these trends. Table 7.27 indicates age related variations in young people’s lifestyles by location. There are no statistically significant differences between these sets of data (see Table 7.28), although five observations relating to locational differences are worthy of mention. The first difference is that suburban young people of all ages spend more time engaged in indoor pursuits in the home than young people in the inner city. Differences between location are small for the 10/11 age group. By 12/13 years of age interest in indoor activities hardly changes, whereas in the inner city there is a massive drop in interest. This is probably due to better quality home spaces in the suburban location which provide more conducive indoor environments to spend time. In contrast the smaller homes in the inner city area and the lack of private space (many more young people in Semilong than East Hunsbury share a bedroom with brothers or sisters) forces young people outside of the home.

Table 7.27: Locational variations in young people's age related lifestyles
(% age sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | <u>Age group:</u> | <u>10/11</u> | <u>12/13</u> | <u>14/15</u> |
| (Total age sample n=) | | (31) | (21) | (28) |
| Sports activities | | 37 | 70 | 45 |
| Indoor activities | | 54 | 9 | 16 |
| With friends | | 28 | 18 | 53 |
| Non home indoor activities | | 17 | 15 | 22 |
| Play/hang about with | | | | |
| friends outside | | 29 | 33 | 32 |
| Town/shops with friends | | --- | 14 | 9 |
| Something new/special | | | | |
| activities | | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| With family | | 3 | --- | 7 |
| | | | | |
| <u>Suburb</u> | | | | |
| | <u>Age group:</u> | <u>10/11</u> | <u>12/13</u> | <u>14/15</u> |
| (Total age sample n=) | | (29) | (34) | (38) |
| Sports activities | | 42 | 45 | 27 |
| Indoor activities | | 67 | 64 | 27 |
| With friends | | 26 | 35 | 42 |
| Non home indoor activity | | 10 | 14 | 40 |
| Play/hang about with | | | | |
| friends outside | | 48 | 33 | 33 |
| Town/shops with friends | | 8 | 24 | 34 |
| Something new/special | | | | |
| activities | | 6 | --- | --- |
| Family | | --- | 6 | --- |

Table 7.28: Locational differences in age related patterns of young people's lifestyles (Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test)

| (Critical χ^2 value = 5.99 at $df=2$, $p= 0.05$) | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <u>Association</u> | <u>χ^2 value</u> | <u>Significant relationship</u> |
| Inner city vs. Suburban 10/11 year olds | 0.911 | none |
| Inner city vs. Suburban 12/13 year olds | 5.05 | none |
| Inner city vs. Suburban 14/15 year olds | 2.825 | none |

There are also differences in home and family cultures, for example suburban young people are more likely to engage themselves in home based hobbies than in the inner city.

A second difference relates to indoor activities outside of the home. At 10/11 years of age a higher proportion of inner city young people engage in such activities than in the suburb. By 14/15 years, however, suburban young people are far more likely to engage in indoor activities outside of the home than those in the inner city. This has already been identified as characteristic of changes in lifestyle with age. Locational differences may well relate to social class, in particular levels of wealth, which provide young people in suburban areas a greater opportunity to enjoy a wider range of activities. For example 14/15 year olds in the suburb are four times more likely to spend their time going to the cinema than all 10-13 year olds and twice as likely as 14/15 year olds in the inner city.

The third major locational difference reveals higher levels and higher rates of increase in town- and shopping-related activities across the age ranges for suburban than inner city young people. At age 14/15 suburban young people are nearly four times as likely to spend time in town shopping with friends than inner city young people. It appears then that, despite the widespread allure of all young people into cultures of consumption, suburban young people are more likely to engage in consumptive lifestyle activities than inner city young people. This is symptomatic of the broadening of environmental experiences beyond the home but also higher levels of material wealth in the suburban location. If, as has been suggested, consumption provides the means through which identity and in turn citizenship status is afforded (Lister 1991; Jones and Wallace 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 1997), then it appears that suburban young people are better able to respond to, and benefit from, these social forces than inner city young people. If this

is indeed the case then locational (and/or class) differentials carry with them serious implications for inequalities of social opportunities, for young people's use of leisure time as well as for their developing sense of identity.

A fourth age-related difference in social activities between locations concerns participation in sport activities. From the age of 12/13 onwards a higher proportion of young people in the inner city are likely to engage in sports activities than in the suburb. Reasons for this difference are unclear, however, it is likely that with age suburban young people are able to benefit from a wider range of alternative social activities which may be denied young people in the inner city, for example as a result of higher levels of wealth, which lessen the emphasis on sport activities.

The fifth difference relates to the proportion of young people who like to spend their time playing or hanging out with friends. From age 12/13 years onwards there are no differences between the two locations. For the 10/11 year old age group, however, young people in the suburb are far more likely to spend their time playing and hanging about with friends than in the inner city. This difference is likely to be due to the safer environments for the younger age group to play near to the home provided by the suburban cul-de-sacs than the busy inner city streets of Semilong.

These results suggest that the overall range of activities that young people value are similar in both locations, but to different degrees. Whereas young people in the suburb appear to diversify their free time activities with age in alternative social venues beyond the home and neighbourhood, in the inner city less diversity is evident. These differences appear to be due to contrasting social cultures and levels of material wealth. It could be within the scope of these cultural and material discrepancies between the two locations that general differences in lifestyles emerge.

Trends in the activities that young people of different ages engage in also vary according to gender in the two locations (Tables 7.29 and 7.30). The results indicate that changes in the free time activities of boys and girls across the age range are not predictable rather, vary according to gender and location. For example, whereas changes in the proportion of young people who most like spending time with friends increases across the age range for inner city boys and suburban girls, it decreases for suburban boys and decreases at 12/13 years of age for inner city girls before rising again at 14/15 years of age. Fluctuating trends across the age range also characterise the other ways in which young people most like to spend their free time in a similar fashion. Some trends may be identified, however, when changes are interpreted between 10/11 and 14/15 years of age.

Table 7.29: Age trends in how inner city boys and girls most like to spend their free time (% of responses)

| <u>Inner city boys</u> | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | <u>Age group:</u> | <u>10/11</u> | <u>12/13</u> | <u>14/15</u> |
| (Total no. of responses) | | (25) | (20) | (28) |
| Sports activities | | 36 | 50 | 39 |
| Indoor activities | | 32 | 10 | 18 |
| With friends | | 8 | 10 | 18 |
| Non home indoor activity | | 8 | 5 | 7 |
| Play/hang about with friends outside | | 8 | 15 | 7 |
| Town/shops with friends | | --- | 5 | 7 |
| Something new/special activity | | 4 | 5 | --- |
| With family | | 4 | --- | 4 |
| | | | | |
| <u>Inner city girls</u> | | | | |
| | <u>Age group:</u> | <u>10/11</u> | <u>12/13</u> | <u>14/15</u> |
| (Total no. of responses) | | (29) | (16) | (23) |
| Sports activities | | 3 | 31 | --- |
| Indoor activities | | 34 | 6 | --- |
| With friends | | 24 | 12 | 39 |
| Non home indoor activity | | 3 | 12 | 17 |
| Play/hang about with friends outside | | 31 | 24 | 13 |
| Town/shops with friends | | --- | 12 | 22 |
| Something new/special activity | | --- | --- | 3 |

Table 7.30: Age trends in how suburban boys and girls most like to spend their free time (% of responses)

| <u>Suburban boys</u> | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | <u>Age group:</u> | <u>10/11</u> | <u>12/13</u> | <u>14/15</u> |
| (Total no. of responses) | | (39) | (49) | (37) |
| Sports activities | | 21 | 27 | 16 |
| Indoor activities | | 33 | 43 | 19 |
| With friends | | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| Non home indoor activity | | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| Play/hang about with friends outside | | 23 | 10 | 29 |
| Town/shops with friends | | 3 | 2 | 19 |
| Something new/special activity | | 5 | --- | --- |
| With family | | --- | 2 | --- |
| | | | | |
| <u>Suburban girls</u> | | | | |
| | <u>Age group:</u> | <u>10/11</u> | <u>12/13</u> | <u>14/15</u> |
| (Total no. of responses) | | (21) | (28) | (44) |
| Sports activities | | 14 | 11 | 9 |
| Indoor activities | | 38 | 18 | 16 |
| With friends | | 14 | 18 | 18 |
| Non home indoor activity | | 5 | 14 | 27 |
| Play/hang about with friends outside | | 19 | 11 | 16 |
| Town/shops with friends | | 9 | 25 | 14 |
| With family | | --- | 4 | --- |

The proportion of boys and girls in each location who most like to spend their time indoors decreases between 10/11 and 14/15 years of age, whereas the proportion who most liked to go to town increases overall between 10/11 and 14/15 years of age. In some cases there were stronger gender patterns. The proportion playing or hanging about decreases across the age range more for girls than boys. In other cases the influence of location is stronger with the number most liking sports increasing for young people in the inner city but falling for suburban young people. Being with friends increases for all subsets except for suburban boys and non home indoor activities increases for all except inner city boys.

This analysis of age, gender and locational trends in most favoured freetime activities does not provide a definitive account of social differences and similarities in young people's chosen lifestyles rather, reveals the complexity and diversity of young people's freetime orientations. What these results do suggest, however, is that whilst some aspects of these age related changes in childhood lifestyle characteristics appear pervasive across different social groups (for example the tendency for young people to spend less time indoors and more time outside of the home in a wider variety of activities), the extent to which this is so varies socially, between gender and location.

7.4.5 Conclusion

This section has revealed differences and similarities in young people's geographies according to age. As young people get older their horizons are more likely to expand beyond the home and neighbourhood. This is more likely in the suburban location than in the inner city. The data also indicates age-related differences in localised play and sport activities giving way to a wider range of social and environmental opportunities as young people get older. In the inner city however, the gradations in age-related trends in what young people value at different ages are less regular, with a greater likelihood of consistency rather than change through the age range. This evidence suggests that transitions for suburban young people follow a more predictable course than those in the inner city where transitions fluctuate through the ages. This could be due to lower levels of social capital amongst inner city young people which hamper their social transitions.

The discussion has highlighted similarities in age-related transitions through locationally variable lifestyles. The trends that have been outlined reflect the increasing competence and widening horizons of young people as they grow up. This does not suggest that childhood experiences are universal rather that the process of distancing from the home is consistently evident with age for all young people in this study. However, the way in which this transition is experienced differs between young people according to location and gender. Differences emerge with respect to the way in which the geographical lifestyles of different young people are differentiated according to social variables.

7.5 Parental influence and childhood geographies

7.5.1 Introduction

Studies of the influence of parents on the geographies of young people have tended to concern the effects of parental fears and anxieties (Cahill 1990; Wyness 1994; Valentine 1995, 1996b, 1997b) and the differential practices of parents with respect to boys and girls (Goodey 1995; Valentine 1997b; Valentine and McKendrick 1997). Valentine and McKendrick (1997) found that whilst the majority of parents thought it was important for young people to have places to play outdoors, at the same time they expressed concern about the vulnerability of young people in public places and the influence of older teenagers on their sons and daughters. These views reflect increasing moral panics about young people in public spaces revolving around the danger posed by strangers and concern about the behaviour of disorderly young people. Parental influence upon children's geographies has contributed to the changing nature of childhood, marked by a retreat indoors to home-based and institutionalised activities and restrictions to young people's free range. Despite the important work already undertaken by Valentine, she argues that "the whole issue of parental regulation of children's use of space requires closer attention" (Valentine and McKendrick 1997: 232).

In this study 65 per cent of young people in the inner city area and 70 per cent in the suburban area said that they felt restricted in going where they wanted to go because of parental sanctions. In this section attention is given to parental perspectives on young people's use of local places and how parental influences shape the geographies of young people through different intervention strategies. Finally the section considers the way in which young people respond to and negotiate these influences and constraints.

7.5.2 Parental perspectives on young people's free time and use of local environments

In both inner city and suburban locations parents express some satisfaction with how their young people spend their free time. On average 40 per cent of parents (39% Semilong; 42% East Hunsbury) are always satisfied with how their children spend their time, whilst on average 57 per cent of parents (59% Semilong; 56% East Hunsbury) are only satisfied sometimes with the way their children spend their free time. In both locations parents keenly identify places which they most approve of young people going (Table 7.31).

Table 7.31: Places parents most approve of young people going
(% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n= 46) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=64) | |
|---|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| Friend's house | 39 | Swimming | 42 |
| Swimming | 20 | Friend's house | 38 |
| Park | 17 | Playing sports | 17 |
| Outside house in street | 9 | Town | 8 |
| Cinema | 9 | Cinema | 8 |
| Playing sports | 9 | Youth club | 6 |
| Town | 7 | Park | 6 |
| Roller skating | 4 | Library | 3 |
| Nightclub for under 18s | 4 | Brownies | 3 |
| Youth club | 4 | | |
| Cadets | 4 | | |

The data shows that parents are most in favour of young people going to defined places where a degree of safety is assumed, such as friend's houses, or where they can be occupied with purposeful structured, sport or recreational activities, such as swimming, playing sports, or going to the cinema.

"I like them playing football, which they've been doing a lot lately ... I would like it if they could get in a team ..."
(Inner city mother)

"If he's doing sports I know he is not getting into trouble and his time is occupied in something worthwhile"
(Inner city father)

The lack of statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=2.69$ against critical $\chi^2=5.99$ with $df=2$, $p=0.05$) between the place values of inner city and suburban parents, suggests a degree of commonality in parental views across the two locations.

Places that parents most approve of young people going to are intertwined with parent's views about what are satisfactory ways of young people spending their time. Three categories of activity emerge as being most preferable in parent's eyes: sports, creative activities such as hobbies and social activities with friends (Table 7.32).

**Table 7.32: Parental views of satisfactory ways young people use their time
(% site sample)**

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n=46) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=64) | |
|--|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| Playing sport | 15 | Playing sport | 36 |
| At friend's house | 15 | Swimming | 17 |
| Chosen hobby | 11 | At friend's house | 14 |
| Exercising mind and body | 9 | Chosen hobby | 9 |
| Always satisfied | 9 | At the youth club | 9 |
| Swimming | 4 | Out with friend | 6 |

Despite the similarities in the generic types of activities that parents prefer their young people to be engaged in, analysis of the data in Table 7.32, (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), reveals a significant difference ($\chi^2=6.54$ against critical $\chi^2=5.99$ with $df=2$, $p=0.05$) in what parents in both locations consider to be satisfactory uses of free time. The main difference is that suburban parents express a higher level of satisfaction with young people playing sport and swimming than in the inner city. This trend is likely to be due to suburban parents more actively seeking to encourage their young people into a structured programme of free time activities than in the inner city.

“There’s very little that we actually indulge him in where he actually goes off on his own. ... I just don’t feel it’s safe enough to be wandering off down the park or wherever on their own. ... any of the activities that my son goes to, they all tend to be organised or supervised ...”

(Suburban mother)

In contrast to these positive views parents have about young people’s use of free time and local places, Table 7.33 indicates those places parents least approve of young people going.

**Table 7.33: Places parents least approve of young people going to
(% site sample)**

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n= 46) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=64) | |
|---|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| Parks | 24 | None | 25 |
| In the street | 17 | Town | 17 |
| Round local area at night | 15 | Parks | 8 |
| Play area | 15 | In the street | 6 |
| Town | 13 | Night club | 6 |
| Outside the local area | 7 | Macs (local shop) at night | 3 |
| Coop (local shop) | 4 | Local area at night | 3 |
| | | Outside the local area | 3 |

Parents least approve of young people visiting open public places such as parks, play areas, street spaces and places outside of the neighbourhood. These are places where parents consider young people to be at risk from strangers and where, given a lack of guidance, may result in young people getting into trouble because they are bored or engaged in unproductive or aimless activities.

“... my own experience I’ve seen so far is that you see a load of kids hanging around the shops as you do in any other town ... and ... I’m not really sure that’s what I want my children to do ... Compared to what I’ve done it’s basically the same. And I think that’s what they want to do. And that’s the thing that worries me”
(Suburban father)

These findings contrast with young people’s expressed desire to be outdoors and the importance, for many, of hanging out (see Chapter Nine). In particular it illustrates the contrasting perspectives of parents and young people, for example, concerning what are meaningful activities or not.

“ I worry about him just wasting his time hanging about with the risk of him doing something silly and getting into trouble” (Inner city mother)

Despite the higher levels of concerns and fears of suburban parents, they are less likely than inner city parents to express disapproval about specific places. It is likely that these differences in levels of concern are contingent upon the character of the two areas. For

example, in the inner city, hanging out on the street is seen as more of a problem than in the suburb. Also, parks in the inner city are potentially more hazardous for young people due to higher likelihoods of environmental and social danger. It could also be due to young people simply not being allowed to go to these places. What this suggests is that parental fears and perceptions are, to some extent, mediated by locational factors.

The extent to which parents are happy to let their children roam beyond the confines of the supervised home space is dependent on three sets of factors: parental fears, the age and gender characteristics of the child and local contingency factors surrounding the young person's place transaction. These factors combine to give rise to different cultures of parenting, demonstrated by the following quote.

"... the gentleman (referring to another parent in the group) said he lets his sons go out to Wellingborough Road (opposite side of town) ... not in a million years would I let my girl wander that far on her own, whether she was walking or on her bike ... and not near the racecourse (park) day time or night time ... I wouldn't be happy for her to be near the racecourse".

(Inner city mother)

Cultures of parenting differ both within and between the two locations. A higher proportion of parents in the suburb than the inner city seek to exert tighter controls and supervision over their children. The extent to which parents seek to influence their children's geographies depends on parental fears (compounded by popular myths), socio-cultural norms and values (for example not wanting their children to mix with 'the wrong sort') and belief in the child's environmental competence. Parental fears may be borne out of uncertainty and ignorance of where their young people are or what they are actually doing.

"My main worry is knowing where they are and what they are up to"

(Inner city mother)

"During the daytime while I am at work she will visit friends or ring me at work if other things are going to be done ... but I don't like it when she goes to friends and doesn't tell me what she is going to do".

(Inner city mother)

The way in which different parents influence their children's geographies is dependent on contextual and situational contingency factors. Contextual contingency factors relate to differences between the two locations in terms of the nature of the environment and social cultures of parents and young people. Situational contingency factors refer to particular individual place transactions young people become involved in at any one time. Parents in the suburban location are more fearful and more protective than those in the inner city location. Parental concern is in turn influenced by the quality of

particular parts of the local environment that young people use. The influence of parents on young people's geographies may also vary according to neighbourhood heterogeneity such that different parts of individual neighbourhoods may be considered safer or more dangerous than others. In the suburb, for example, parents express concern about speeding traffic along one of the major roads to the south of the area. In the inner city, the concern of parents, living at the south end of the neighbourhood, about prostitution, drug taking and associated discarded waste, strongly influences the resultant caretaking practices, and therefore the geographies, of their children. Inner city parents identify a more extensive range of dangers and hazards for young people that concerned them than in the suburb (Table 7.34).

Table 7.34: Dangers and hazards identified by parents (% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n= 46) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=64) | |
|---|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| Traffic | 35 | Traffic | 48 |
| Used syringes/condoms | 15 | Strangers | 9 |
| Prostitutes | 13 | Gangs hanging around | 6 |
| Alcoholics | 11 | Drug addicts/dealers | 3 |
| Older kids | 9 | | |
| Broken glass | 9 | | |
| Bullying | 7 | | |
| Drug addicts/dealers | 7 | | |
| Gangs hanging around | 4 | | |

Most notable in both areas is a concern about traffic dangers. Beyond this, major concerns centre around social problems such as substance abuse, dangers from adults such as those associated with prostitution, and problems from other young people.

“The red light district which has moved in recent years to (street name) at the top of (respondents road) where all sorts of things ... used condoms, syringes are found by young people whilst they are playing in the area ... the only good thing in this area for young people is a very small park and play area”.
(Inner city mother)

The more extensive range of dangers identified in the inner city than the suburb reflects the poorer quality environment, however in spite of this, parents in East Hunsbury remain more fearful and protective over their children than in Semilong. Nonetheless, parents also acknowledge the irrationality of many of their fears.

“... sometimes I feel we have irrational fears because ... most children ... aren’t attacked or anything like that. I think it’s all to do with media hype ... and you don’t want to be thought of as being irresponsible as parents. I think the biggest fear is letting them have the freedom we had ...”
 (Suburban mother)

In both locations parents share similar concerns and worries when their children are out (Table 7.35). Statistical analysis (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test) reveals no significant difference ($\chi^2 = 0.97$ against a critical χ^2 value = 5.99 at $df=2$, $p=0.05$) between these two sets of data.

Table 7.35: What parents most worry about when their children are out (% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n= 46) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=64) | |
|---|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| Mugging/assault | 26 | Mugging/assault | 23 |
| Traffic | 22 | Safety | 22 |
| Safety | 17 | The company they are in | 16 |
| The company they are in | 13 | Traffic | 16 |
| Bullying | 4 | Drugs | 9 |
| Gangs from other areas | 4 | What they may be up to | 5 |
| What they may be up to | 4 | | |

Parents in both locations express three sets of worries about their young people when they are out: fear of assault, personal safety (especially in relation to traffic) and negative social influences from other young people.

“I’m more afraid of the traffic than I am the looneys ... It’s the dozy people you get ... shooting down the road ... 60 or 70 miles an hour ... and that worries me much more I think ... the odds of the child being hit by a car are much greater than any other problems really”
 (Suburban father)

"I worry that drug pushers might approach him ... or that he will be attacked and mugged by a gang".
(Suburban mother)

"Traffic is one of the worst things ... I did not allow any of my three children to have a bicycle because of traffic danger..."
(Inner city mother)

"... my biggest fear is drugs. ... I mean ... if the children get involved with kids that ... get involved with that ... I find it difficult to understand. ... and social gatherings of teenagers ... you're lead to believe that whenever they meet as a group ... all they're going to do is sort of walk around and sniff or ... take whatever they do these days"
(Suburban father)

Worries about who young people may be with and what they may be up to are marginally higher in the suburb (16% and 5%) than the inner city (13% and 4%). Whereas concerns about traffic and assault are higher in the inner city.

What these results reveal is that parents in both inner and outer locations share common concerns about their young people when they go out. What is perhaps more useful is to identify the exceptions and differences, which may give rise to deviations in parental perspectives and influences on young people's place use in both locations, rather than areas of consensus. Expressions of different 'philosophies of parenting' were evident, which cut across location. These include parents who extend trust and respect for their child's judgment, respect their capability to look after themselves and to not misbehave, recognise their need to learn to deal with the world and as a result feel they could support their child in going where they wanted to.

" He is well behaved and can always be trusted so I let him go anywhere and do what makes him feel good"
(Inner city father)

" We always know where he is and as he is trustworthy it causes no worries"
(Suburban mother)

" I don't stop him doing anything really ... I mean sooner or later he has to make his own decisions about his life"
(Suburban mother)

This type of parenting is not necessarily age or gender specific. One inner city father of a 14 year old girl, for example, stated that he expects her to seek parental permission before going out, but at the same time is allowed considerable freedom on the basis that:

“ ... it is good for her to have relationships and get out and stay elsewhere
... she needs to relate to all kinds of experiences and places”
(Inner city father)

Another inner city father of four boys talks of how, at a young age, his boys learnt to negotiate urban hazards and were encouraged to develop environmental competence and become self dependent.

“ Semilong is good in as much as you just get enough taste to become aware of what to do with an urban environment. If your parents keep you tucked away till you're 6 and then let you out then maybe they're not too well aware ... children peddle around the sidewalks on these estates, the bicycles get bigger, by the time they're twelve they're still cycling around the pavement and don't really know how to handle the town. My kids all go across town on their bikes...”
(Inner city father)

Parents respond to concerns about their young people in public places by employing one of a range of different caretaking strategies depending on where the young person is going, with whom and how. These are situational factors surrounding young people's place transactions and will be considered in the following section concerned with parental influences on young people's use of local places.

7.5.3 Parental influences on young people's use of local places

Parental influence on young people's use of local places may be characterised by three types of intervention strategies: total place bans, conditional place access and positive place influences (in which young people are encouraged into certain types of place activities rather than others). Total place bans are a common form of parental intervention. Parents in both locations share similar views about the types of places young people should not be allowed to go to (Table 7.36).

Places that young people are banned from going to tend to be places where young people are perceived to be at risk from social dangers (such as parks alone or at night or in town) or vulnerable to negative influences from other people (such as pubs).

“... the Grosvenor centre unless it's to a specific shop for a specific reason ... there is nothing to do there ... people with nothing positive to do hang around ... it encourages dissatisfaction ...” (Inner city mother)

The data in Table 7.36 shows that despite agreement in the generic types of places which young people are not allowed to go to, the higher levels of social and environmental dangers in the inner city provide a set of contingency factors which influence parents strategies with regard young people and place. Parents in the inner city provide a larger number of place bans than those in the suburb.

Table 7.36: Places parents do not allow young people to go (% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n= 46) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=64) | |
|---|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| Park alone/at night | 26 | Pubs | 14 |
| Town centre | 17 | Town centre | 14 |
| Pubs | 9 | Park alone/at night | 13 |
| Hanging about in street | 9 | Out of the area | 6 |
| River | 9 | Macs (shop) at night | 5 |
| Anywhere after dark | 7 | Derelict sites | 3 |
| Play area | 7 | Anywhere after dark | 3 |
| Out of the area | 7 | | |
| Railway line | 4 | | |

The second type of parental intervention concerns granting conditional access to certain places. Parents may reluctantly allow young people to go to a specific place, whilst at the same time urging caution, or allow their young people to go to a specific place only if certain conditions are met, for example, if accompanied by a friend, if back at a certain time or if they are with an older brother or sister.

“ She is only allowed out until dark unless there is a specified location such as a friend when we will either collect her or their parent will bring her home”
(Suburban mother)

These may be considered as ‘situational’ considerations and include concerns about who the young person is going with, how many young people are going and how they get there.

“If she has a friend with her I’d let her go, but I wouldn’t want her going along Semilong Road on her own ... you don’t know who is hanging around ... and there’s a group wandering around ... looking for trouble”
(Inner city mother)

In Table 7.36, for example, a number of responses suggest that bans are imposed if it is after dark or if the young person is alone. For many parents the security in numbers philosophy tends to ring true. In other cases parents may only permit young people access to a particular facility if they are taken and brought back by an adult or an older brother or sister, for example, going to nightclubs or to town. Table 7.37 shows the types of places young people are allowed access only if accompanied by an adult.

Table 7.37: Places young people are allowed if accompanied by an adult
(% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n= 46) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=64) | |
|---|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| Racecourse (park) | 20 | Town | 14 |
| Pubs and clubs | 20 | Pubs and clubs | 8 |
| Town | 17 | Danescamp (sports centre) | 5 |
| Out of town | 13 | Nearby village | 5 |
| St Andrews park | 9 | Penvale park | 3 |
| Sixfields (retail park) | 7 | Golf course | 3 |
| | | Out of town | 3 |
| | | Tescos | 2 |
| | | Sixfields (retail park) | 2 |

Table 7.37 suggests three types of places that young people can visit only if accompanied by an adult. First, are those considered dangerous such as parks. Second are those which are too far away for the young person to be allowed to go on their own, such as places out of the immediate area. Third, are those places which young people are considered too young to go to on their own, such as pubs and clubs. In 85 per cent of the cases in the inner city and 73 per cent of the cases in the suburb the accompanying adult is a parent. In the remaining cases the acting adult is either an older brother or sister, a friend's parent, uncle, aunt or older friend. The reasons why adult accompaniment is required to certain places are shown in Table 7.38.

Table 7.38: Reasons for adult accompaniment (% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n= 46) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=64) | |
|---|----|--------------------------------------|---|
| To look after/supervise | 13 | To look after/supervise | 7 |
| Too far | 3 | Like to go together | 4 |
| Strangers about | 3 | Too far | 3 |
| Might get lost | 2 | Too young | 3 |
| Traffic dangers | 2 | Strangers about | 2 |
| Too young | 1 | Traffic dangers | 2 |
| Because it's rough | 1 | Troublemakers | 1 |
| So no mischief | 1 | Need transport | 1 |
| To buy things | 1 | To buy things | 1 |

Table 7.38 reveals a preoccupation with a protective role as underpinning stipulations for adult accompaniment of young people to specific places. Other reasons such as 'might get lost' or 'too young' suggest that in some cases parents feel that young people are not yet competent to negotiate certain places. For others, concerns are more about vulnerability to, for example, stranger danger or traffic.

The second way in which conditional access is granted is for young people to inform parents where they are going, what they are going to do and with whom. In this way parents retain some degree of control over young people's place transactions. In the suburban location 90 per cent of parents said they always knew where their children were when they were out compared to 76 per cent in the inner city.

"... I want to know they're doing something, if they say they want to go out, I'll ask them what they're doing. If they want to play football over the road, then that's constructive as far as I'm concerned. But if they're going around so and so's, now depending on who they've said they're going with it'll be no"
(Inner city father)

"We must always know where she is and what time she will be back and she never goes out unless she has had permission off either me or her father"
(Suburban mother)

"We need to know where he is, who he is with, when he will be back and how he is getting home"
(Suburban mother)

"I don't like them to be gone from sight for too long and regularly ask friends in the area if they've seen them ... I'm afraid of gangs from other areas"
(Inner city mother)

In contrast, the proportion of young people who stated that their parents always know where they are when they were out is far lower (see Table 7.39).

Table 7.39: Proportion of young people who stated their parents always know where they are when they are out (% gender/site sample)

| | <u>Boys</u> | <u>Girls</u> |
|------------|-------------|--------------|
| Inner city | 43 | 67 |
| Suburb | 62 | 79 |

More young people in the suburban area than the inner city area and more girls than boys in both locations stated that their parents always know where they are when they're out. There are two possible reasons for these differences. First, that parents think they are being vigilant with regard to their children's movements, but in fact are being outwitted by their children. As one inner city mother said: "... it worries me whether he's telling the truth about where he is or not". An alternative interpretation is that children may be under an illusion that they are beyond the parental gaze, whilst in reality their parents are aware of their environmental movements.

A similar discrepancy arises with regards to parental knowledge of what young people do when they are out. On average 52 per cent of parents (58% in East Hunsbury, 46% in Semilong) state they always know what their children are doing when they are out. In contrast on average only 33 per cent of young people in both locations state their parents know what they are doing when they are out. Such a disjunction of views suggests that in many cases, despite what parents might perceive, young people's free time activities are often 'world's apart' (Matthews *et al.* 1998a) from adults.

The third type of intervention strategy is positive diversion in which young people are encouraged into certain types of place specific activities. Tables 7.31 and 7.33 have already indicated that parents would most like their young people to spend their time in structured and purposeful activities in defined places. However, parent's aspirations are tainted by a recognition of a lack of opportunities for young people in both locations.

"... it would be nice if there was a young people's youth centre in the area where they can spend some more time with other children with supervision"
(Inner city mother)

"There is not enough for the teenagers to do, nor a regular enough bus service for them to travel to Sixfields (retail park) for the cinema"
(Suburban mother)

"There are no good things in this area for young people ... There's too much traffic, too much dog excrement, too many students, ... nowhere for the under 18s to go at night but walk the street"
(Inner city mother)

"The only play area is very run down, full of glass broken on the floor and groups of teenagers have started to hang out there. It needs a youth club or something to occupy the 10-15 year olds. There is nowhere for them to meet on a low key, safe, social basis like the old type coffee bars"
(Inner city mother)

"There are strict rules at the Butts Road community centre which make it unusable for teenagers and there is no provision for them within it ... and no flat football field for youngsters"
(Suburban mother)

In many cases parents are sympathetic with young people and critical of the lack of consideration given to young people's views, interests and different circumstances to adults.

"There is a need for more frequent and better routed public transport and less emphasis on the needs of consumers, drivers and adults ... young people have little money, no transport and don't want to do what adults do"
(Suburban father)

"People just don't listen and don't care what the kids want. There needs to be someone to coordinate the engagement of young people on a council to find out what they want"
(Inner city mother)

In response parents may actively seek activities for their young people which may involve transporting them outside of the immediate area. However, there is less evidence of such strategies being adopted in the inner city, probably because of lower levels of car ownership and wealth. These proactive strategies of 'positive guidance' reflect a desire to support young people's recreational activities, but also appear as 'holding' strategies to avoid young people getting involved in activities parents consider unsuitable.

"We've got a policy of keep the children busy and they keep out of trouble ... but everything our children do tends to be fairly structured ... there's the youth club Monday, Tuesday they go to Tai Kwondo, Wednesday ... they're in Wednesday, Thursday is Brownies and Beavers, Friday is swimming and Sunday is rugby training. So we try and make sure they're always doing something"
(Suburban mother)

In some cases, however, the power of parents to intervene in how young people spend their free time gives rise to young people undertaking activities which they are no longer motivated to do.

"Mum and dad don't want me to give up cubs, but I'd prefer to go to Running Club"
(10 year old boy, suburban)

Such cases demonstrate that parents' concern about how their child spends their time may be too prescriptive, to the point that the views and interests of the young person concerned may be compromised.

7.5.4 Parental restrictions on when young people can go out.

A second way in which parents control their children's geographies is in terms of when young people are allowed out and when they are expected in. A higher number of suburban (64%) than inner city (14%) young people have restrictions placed on them when going out.

“ He has to phone when he has arrived at his destination, he has to be back at a specified time and he has to report home every so often”
(Suburban mother)

“If he is alone he must report home every ten minutes, if he's with friends he must always let a parent know where they are going. He is not allowed out after 6 pm and he must stay in the cul-de-sac” (Suburban mother)

Table 7.40 reveals that suburban boys and girls are much more likely to experience restrictions on when they can go out than young people in the inner city. This provides clear evidence that suburban parents are more likely to intervene in young people's freetime than inner city parents. In this respect location is a more powerful determinant than gender. However, with regard to gender differences in each location, whereas girls are more likely to have a member of the household place a restriction on them in the inner city, in the suburb it is boys who feel they are most restricted.

Table 7.40: Proportion of boys and girls with parents restricting when they can go out (% gender/site sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | <u>Suburb</u> |
|-------|-------------------|---------------|
| Boys | 11 | 69 |
| Girls | 17 | 58 |

These gender differences between the two locations appear to be due to more protective parenting styles in the suburb. In the inner city, the greater proportion of girls than boys experiencing restrictions fits the traditional model of girls being more protected than boys. In the suburb, the lower proportion of girls than boys feeling restricted may be because girls are happier to stay indoors and therefore are in less need of restrictions placed upon them. Contrasting patterns in parental restrictions on when young people are allowed out in both locations are also evident across the age range (Table 7.41).

Table 7.41: Proportion of young people with member of household placing restrictions on when they can go out according to age (% age sample)

| | Age: <u>10/11</u> | <u>12/13</u> | <u>14/15</u> | <u>Total</u> (n=) |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Inner city boys | 12 | 41 | 12 | 9 |
| Inner city girls | 27 | --- | 17 | 6 |
| Suburban boys | 72 | 62 | 74 | 40 |
| Suburban girls | 64 | 69 | 58 | 27 |

Differentiation of age groups according to gender in each location reveals fluctuating trends and provides clear evidence that suburban boys and girls of all ages are restricted by parents to a greater extent than those in the inner city. Table 7.41 also shows that inner city 10/11 and 14/15 year old girls are more restricted by parents than boys. In contrast in the suburb, it is boys who are more restricted in these age groups. Another important trend in this data set is for 14/15 year olds to still have restrictions placed on them, in spite of the ability at this age for environmental self-dependence and their desire for spatial autonomy.

The different types of restrictions placed on when young people are allowed out shown in Table 7.42 highlight the greater extent to which suburban parents impose conditions. The most striking observation in Table 7.42 is the range of conditions imposed on young people by suburban parents compared with inner city parents. This suggests that suburban parents exert greater influence on young people's free time than inner city parents. Even when young people are allowed out, suburban young people are more likely to be expected in earlier than inner city young people (see Tables 7.43, 7.44).

Table 7.42: Restrictions parents impose on young people going out
(% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n= 46) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=64) | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|----|
| Time allowed out until | 9 | Time allowed out until | 23 |
| Must do homework first | 4 | Must do homework first | 19 |
| When grounded | 2 | If it's dark | 16 |
| When ill | 2 | When grounded | 8 |
| If there's bad weather | 2 | If relatives are over | 6 |
| | | Must tidy my room first | 6 |
| | | If going out with parents | 3 |
| | | School nights in earlier | 3 |
| | | If it's bad weather | 3 |
| | | Sunday is a family day | 1 |
| | | Have to look after brother | 1 |

Table 7.43: Times when young people are expected in according to gender (% gender/site sample)

| <u>Time expected in on a school day</u> | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| | <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
| | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| (Total sample n=) | (44) | (36) | (58) | (44) |
| by 7pm | 12 | 23 | 29 | 33 |
| by 9pm | 54 | 69 | 59 | 69 |
| by 11pm | 89 | 94 | 86 | 95 |
| + by dark | 7 | 3 | 12 | --- |
| <u>Time expected in on a weekend day</u> | | | | |
| | <u>Semilong</u> | | <u>East Hunsbury</u> | |
| | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| (Total sample n=) | (44) | (36) | (58) | (44) |
| by 7pm | 9 | 14 | 17 | 14 |
| by 9pm | 36 | 43 | 48 | 55 |
| by 11pm | 77 | 80 | 78 | 83 |
| + by dark | 4 | 3 | 10 | 2 |
| <u>Time expected in during school holidays</u> | | | | |
| | <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
| | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| (Total sample n=) | (44) | (36) | (58) | (44) |
| by 7pm | 7 | 17 | 9 | 12 |
| by 9pm | 34 | 40 | 41 | 43 |
| by 11pm | 68 | 74 | 76 | 81 |
| + by dark | 4 | 3 | 10 | --- |

Table 7.44: Times when young people are expected in according to age
(% age sample)

| <u>Time expected in on a school day</u> | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | <u>Inner city</u> | | | <u>Suburb</u> | | |
| | 10/11 (31) | 12/13 (21) | 14/15 (28) | 10/11 (29) | 12/13 (34) | 14/15 (38) |
| (Total sample n=) | | | | | | |
| by 7pm | 35 | 5 | 4 | 59 | 32 | 8 |
| by 9pm | 74 | 81 | 25 | 100 | 71 | 29 |
| by 11pm | 90 | 90 | 86 | 100 | 82 | 89 |
| + by dark | 10 | 5 | --- | --- | 18 | 3 |
| <u>Time expected in on a weekend day</u> | | | | | | |
| | <u>Inner city</u> | | | <u>Suburb</u> | | |
| | 10/11 (31) | 12/13 (21) | 14/15 (28) | 10/1 (29) | 12/13 (34) | 14/15 (38) |
| (Total sample n=) | | | | | | |
| by 7pm | 26 | 5 | --- | 34 | 18 | --- |
| by 9pm | 65 | 48 | 4 | 79 | 62 | 18 |
| by 11pm | 87 | 90 | 54 | 93 | 82 | 74 |
| + by dark | 6 | 5 | --- | 3 | 18 | --- |
| <u>Time expected in on a school holiday</u> | | | | | | |
| | <u>Inner city</u> | | | <u>Suburb</u> | | |
| | 10/11 (31) | 12/13 (21) | 14/15 (28) | 10/11 (29) | 12/13 (34) | 14/15 (38) |
| (Total sample n=) | | | | | | |
| by 7pm | 26 | 5 | --- | 24 | 9 | --- |
| by 9pm | 68 | 38 | --- | 76 | 50 | 8 |
| by 11pm | 87 | 90 | 36 | 93 | 85 | 58 |
| + by dark | 6 | 5 | --- | 3 | 15 | --- |

Table 7.43 illustrates a number of trends concerning differences in times parents expect young people to be home by on school days, weekend days and in school holidays. On school days on average 57 per cent of boys and 69 per cent of girls in both locations are expected in by 9pm. By 11pm 87 per cent of boys and 94 per cent of girls are expected in. On a weekend day the situation changes with only 40 per cent of inner city young people and 50 per cent of suburban young people expected in by 9pm. By 11pm at least 75 per cent of all young people are expected in. During school holidays the trend is similar to weekend days with 37 per cent of inner city young people and 42 per cent of suburban young people expected back in by 9pm and 71 per cent of inner city young people and 78 per cent of suburban young people expected back home by 11pm. Table 7.43 also shows that as a general trend a higher proportion of suburban young people are expected home at each subsequent time interval (7pm, 9pm and 11pm) than in the inner city. In both areas girls are consistently expected in earlier than boys. Differences between inner city and suburban young people and girls and boys, however, narrow the later it gets. Differences in 'time expected in' also emerge with age (Table 7.44).

Table 7.44 indicates clear progressions with age in the time parents expect young people to be back home by. With the exception of 12/13 year olds, a higher proportion of suburban young people have to be back home at each time interval than in the inner city. The deviation from the age trends could be an anomaly with the data, however, it could also be that suburban parents, despite being generally more protective over their children, are more willing to give responsibility to 12 and 13 year olds in terms of staying out later than in the inner city. In this respect the 12/13 year old group appear as an ambiguous age in which the transition from childhood to youth may be marked by a loosening of parental controls, although in a more pronounced way in the suburban location.

Table 7.44 shows that on school days, in particular, at least 90 per cent of all ages except inner city 14/15 year olds are back home by 11pm. For many 14/15 year olds in the inner city (especially boys) this age marks a period of coming to the end of compulsory schooling (or school exclusion) and therefore the advent of social freedom. For these young people time restrictions quickly become meaningless and ineffective as they undertake a transition out of childhood and into the post school world. For the same age group in the suburban area however, a higher level of continued parental control may reflect efforts by parents to provide ongoing support and guidance for the higher numbers of young people who continue in education and therefore still fit the role of young people in need of guidance.

For weekend days and school holidays a consistently high proportion of 12/13 year olds are still expected in by 11pm. 14/15 year olds however, have fewer time limits on these days with as few as 36 per cent of 14/15 year olds in the inner city and 58 per cent in the suburb expected in by 11pm on a school holiday. In both areas 12/13 year

olds have fewer time restrictions in school holidays and weekend days with only 38 per cent of this age group in the inner city and 50 per cent in the suburb expected in by 9pm.

What this data suggests is that most parents set clear time limits on young people's outdoor pursuits according to age. In the majority of cases young people acknowledge the time limits as being fair, with 91 per cent in the inner city and 85 per cent in the suburb agreeing with parental time limits. In the instances where young people did not agree with the time limits, their own chosen time to return home was invariably only half an hour later than the time set by parents. This reflects a general respect for parents in setting time and place limits and conditions on place transactions even if they do not like the conditions imposed by parents.

In many cases young people are home by the expected time. 50 per cent of suburban young people (47% boys, 56% girls) and 43 per cent of inner city young people (47% boys, 40% girls) say they never stay out after the agreed time for being home. Apart from one person in each location who said that they often stayed out after the agreed time, the remainder of the young people only sometimes stayed out later than the agreed time. On those occasions when young people are late this is most often only by a few minutes and normally for good reasons rather than as acts of defiance as Table 7.45 indicates.

Table 7.45: Reasons for young people arriving back home later than agreed time (mention rates)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n=80) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=101) | |
|--|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| Forgot the time | 11 | Forgot the time | 20 |
| Renegotiated time in | 9 | Friends stayed out | 9 |
| Having a good time | 4 | Renegotiated time in | 7 |
| Friends stayed out | 3 | Having a good time | 4 |
| Bus was late | 3 | Bus was late | 1 |
| To finish game | 2 | Cinema late finishing | 1 |
| Cinema late finishing | 2 | At a friend's house | 1 |
| Walked friend home | 1 | Went somewhere different | 1 |
| At friend's house | 1 | | |
| Met a girl | 1 | | |

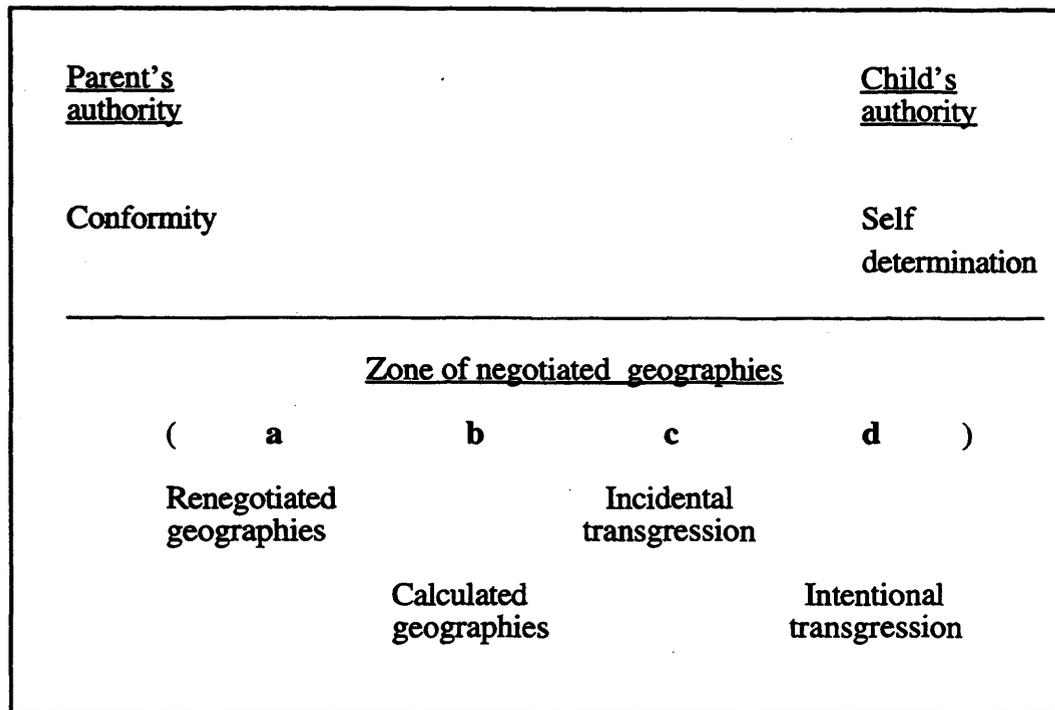
Table 7.45 shows that, in spite of the justification parents may have for being concerned about young people arriving home late, in most cases young people return home late for what they consider to be good reasons. In the instances when young people are more than half an hour late the penalty ranges from getting 'a talking to' to being grounded. What these results do show, however, is that there is often a tension for young people between pursuing their own agenda and operating within the limits laid down by parents. The way in which young people respond to and negotiate these tensions is worthy of consideration, demonstrating further the competence of young people as social actors in their own right as well as the frequent discontinuities between parental authority and young people's lives. This will provide the focus for the following final section.

7.5.5 Negotiated geographies

Young people's geographies are shaped by both parents and young people. The influence of parents and the amount of freedom given to young people depends on different cultures of parenting as well as contingency factors such as location and situation factors (mentioned in sections 7.5.2 and 7.5.3) as well as age and gender. The culmination of parental influence at any one point in time provides a situational context for action in which the young person is presented with a framework within which (s)he is expected to limit his/her environmental transactions and emergent geographies. However, young people will respond to the structures laid down by parents in different ways. In the context of parental influences on young people's geographies this section will consider ways in which young people negotiate structures laid down by parents to give rise to their resultant geographies.

The way in which young people respond to parental structures can be conceptualised using a continuum (Figure 7.4). At one extreme are young people who go along with parents wishes. In most cases young people respect and abide by parents' decisions whether they are in keeping with their views and interests or not. At the other end of the continuum are young people who will do whatever they want irrespective of their parents' wishes. However, there is a middle ground between these two polar positions within which young people negotiate their situational contexts unilaterally or bilaterally with parents to give rise to their resultant geographies. It is within this zone of negotiated space that the majority of young people construct their geographies.

Figure 7.4: Continuum of young people's responses to parental authority



In Figure 7.4 'conformity' refers to total obedience to parents as determining agents in the construction of the young person's geographies. 'Self determination' refers to the young person as agent in constructing their own geographies. In the inner city, 50 per cent of parents compared to 70 per cent of suburban parents said that decisions about what time young people are to be back home by are negotiated. However, in answer to the same question, only 30 per cent of inner city young people and 21 per cent of suburban young people said that these decisions were reached through negotiation. This difference could be explained by parents viewing themselves as permissive and accommodating in terms of allowing young people a say in matters that affect them. It could also be due to young people remaining dissatisfied about the amount of self determination they have over their lives. Despite these discrepancies there remains a substantial number of young people who are evidently active in bilaterally negotiating times at which to be back home.

Once out, young people have a range of choices of how they respond to parental authority. One of the strategies used by young people is to renegotiate with parents a time extension, either by phoning or popping back home to notify parents. This would constitute an example at point a on the continuum. Position a represents a point towards the conformity end of the zone of negotiated geographies in which young people accept the imposition of time and place limitations, but renegotiate the limits set by parents. The remaining options (b,c,d) involve the young person taking unilateral

action in various forms. Position **b** equates to what can be referred to as 'calculated geographies' when young people transgress parental boundaries unbeknown to parents but within time limits laid down by parents. Courses of action conceptualised by point **b** are exemplified by spatial rather than temporal variance on parental limits. The calculated geographies implied here suggest that as long as they are back by the time limit set, they are free to go where they want and do what they want. In this respect, the time limit sets the parental boundary within which young people are free to respond to spatial constraints without parents having to know. Of course it is possible that parents may find out if they cross parentally set limits, for example if they get into trouble.

In section 7.5.4 examples were provided of when young people stay out later than the agreed time to be back home. Another course of action frequently undertaken by young people is to adopt a risk strategy in which they empower themselves with the decision to stay out later with a view to mediating parental discontent on their return, for example by constructing a plausible story such as missing the bus or forgetting the time. This course of action would be located at either points **c** or **d** according to whether the course of action is intended or not. However, they may also simply face the consequences and accept the punishment from the parent as the cost of their unilateral action. Position **c** relates to incidental transgressions of parental authority, for example when young people do not set out to cross parental boundaries, but do so anyway. Position **d** marks a position whereby young people intentionally transgress parental boundaries in order to satisfy their own place needs. In most cases, whatever the stage along the continuum, young people will seek to employ a damage limitation strategy whereby if they can get away with crossing parental boundaries without them knowing they will.

Crossing spatial limits set by parents is a fairly common practice amongst young people. Table 7.49 below shows the extent to which young people go somewhere different to where they tell their parents. Table 7.49 reveals that both suburban boys and girls are more likely to violate parental constraints by going somewhere different to where they told their parents, than inner city young people. Chi square testing however reveals no significant difference between boys and girls in each location ($\chi^2=0.049$) or between the different age groups in each location ($\chi^2=2.19$) against critical $\chi^2=5.99$ with $df=2$, $p=0.05$). Nonetheless the data suggests that despite suburban parents exerting tighter controls on place transactions, suburban young people are not necessarily constrained by parental guidelines. Instead they will negotiate structures laid down by parents by going to the places they want anyway. This is most noticeable with the lower two age groups. However, with the 14/15 year old age group it is inner city young people who are more likely to transgress parental limits. The types of places and changes to place transactions which arise out of young people transgressing parental place limitations are shown in Table 7.50.

Table 7.46: Proportion of young people who have been somewhere different to where they told their parents they were going (% site sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | <u>Suburb</u> |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Male | 47 | 59 |
| Female | 37 | 44 |
| 10-11 year olds | 23 | 32 |
| 12-13 year olds | 35 | 57 |
| 14-15 year olds | 58 | 53 |

Table 7.47: Examples of places young people go to which are different to where they told their parents they were going (mention rates)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n=80) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n=101) | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| Said one place and went to another | 8 | Said one place and went to another | 10 |
| Friend's house | 8 | Change of plan | 7 |
| Pub/club/party | 6 | Town | 5 |
| Town | 5 | Friend's house | 4 |
| Change of plan | 4 | Went to the shops | 4 |
| Boy/girlfriends | 4 | Pub/club/party | 3 |
| Neighbouring area | 2 | Went to place not allowed | 2 |
| Went to a different park | 2 | Neighbouring area | 1 |
| Went to friends then out | 2 | Went to friends then out | 1 |
| Went fishing | 1 | Went camping | 1 |
| | | Walked about | 1 |

Table 7.47 can be divided up into those cases where young people have sought to extend range (including visiting forbidden places) and simple changes of plan, for example, going back to a friend's house instead of staying at the park. In the case of the former these actions are expressions of young people's desire to transcend the limitations of parental control in order to facilitate satisfaction of their environmental needs and aspirations. In the case of the latter, the contingency actions of young people do not lie outside of the permissible limits laid down by parents but may well be reproven if parents found out. In either case these examples are expressions of young people unilaterally renegotiating their own geographical boundaries to facilitate their social and environmental actions.

This section has exposed some of the tensions between parents and young people in their use of local places. The discussion has revealed a general consensus in what parents in both locations view as satisfactory and unsatisfactory ways young people use local places in their free time. These give rise to cultures of parenting which cut across locations, characterised by temporal and spatial restrictions on young people's place transactions. These are shown to vary according to age and gender and the contingency factors of location, situational contexts and parental fears.

The resultant patterns of parental influence are that suburban parents tend to exert tighter controls over young people's place transactions with differences narrowing towards the upper age range. This section has, however, also shown that young people are not wholly determined by parental prescriptions, rather they respond to parental structures in different ways involving varying degrees of self determination.

7.6 Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated the extent to which difference and diversity in the way young people value and use local places gives rise to multiple geographies of childhood within and between the two locations. Investigation of young people's geographies in terms of age, gender, location and parental influence, has revealed a more complex picture than single causal factors might suggest. Many similarities and differences have emerged, some of which cut across conventional social divides giving rise to a blurring of age, gender and locational differences in young people's geographies. These 'clear cut' social categories obfuscate the realities of children's worlds. Children's realities are characterised by multiple perspectives wherein they view their environments in multifaceted ways, for example, by identifying distinct aspects of their environment such as sense of community, social and environmental opportunities and environmental quality. The importance of these aspects of local places for young people varies according to age and gender and between locations. For example, whilst suburban young people perceive the quality of their environment more favourably than young people in the inner city, they are also more likely to complain about the lack of social and environmental opportunities. In contrast, in the inner city, in spite of higher levels of environmental hazards and a lack of facilities, young people appear to derive richer experiences of place. These locational tendencies in turn vary with respect to age and gender.

The exploration into the geographies of young people undertaken in this chapter has demonstrated the importance of grounding geographical studies of children in the context of their everyday lifeworlds. It has also shown the importance of place in the social construction of difference in young people's geographical lifestyles. The spatial worlds of young people are constructed reflexively through a process of negotiation with each individual's social and environmental context and in relation to contingency factors such as parental influence. Dominant themes which have emerged in the course of this study will be elaborated on in the subsequent chapters. There is insufficient space to provide a comprehensive study of all aspects of young people's geographies, instead discussions of some of the pertinent issues identified will be discussed.

Chapter Eight

Young people's use and experience of local places

8.1 Introduction

There is a significant body of literature concerning young people's experiences of local places demonstrating their spatial competence and environmental behaviour (Hart 1979, Lynch 1977; Ward 1978; Moore 1986; Downs and Liben 1987; Matthews 1987, 1992; Spencer *et al.* 1989). Studies such as these reveal the extent to which young people experience their environments in qualitatively different ways to adults. The way in which boys and girls value and use local places is therefore not only meaningful, but also variable within and between groups of young people. Yet despite widespread acceptance of the cultural difference and diversity of childhood, understanding of the the multiple ways in which young people value and use different places within their local environment in the course of their freetime place transactions remains limited. This chapter investigates the diverse ways in which young people respond to the opportunities local places afford and the variety of place uses and experiences that result. The chapter employs a seven fold typology to investigate the multiple ways young people use and experience different places. It then goes on to explore in more detail the different ways in which young people engage with their environments and provides examples to illustrate the process of place adaptation.

8.2 Young people's use and experience of neighbourhood places

8.2.1 Introduction

Use of neighbourhood places constitutes an important element of many young people's free time activities. On average 90 per cent of young people (93% boys, 92% girls in the inner city and 93% boys, 81% girls in the suburb) say they prefer to go out if they can. Young people derive benefits from being outside which are otherwise unattainable indoors. Being outside provides a greater range of environmental opportunities and the freedom to mess around, to play, to have fun or to spend time with friends. Cooper-Marcus (1978: 36) notes: "... children seek the outdoors from an early age ... because it allows them a definite freedom, if not in territorial range, then at least in the intensity with which they interact with, manipulate, and explore the environment". Local places are used by young people in diverse ways according to the reasons underlying their choice of place transaction and the contingent experiences which arise. One of the

determining variables in young people's use of place and space is the perceived opportunities a particular place, or place feature, offers the young person. In any residential setting young people will sort among the environmental attributes of their locations in order to derive meaningful place experiences. The places most valued and used by young people vary according to the multiple realities of childhood. Whereas having fun for some young people may involve using places in a predefined way, for others it may involve adapting the environment in some way. Hence a park may serve as a meeting place, a place to play or a place to be alone.

Investigating young people's experiences of nature, Wals (1994) drew up an eight fold classification of young adolescent's experiences of nature - as entertainment, as a challenging place, as a reflection of the past, as a threatening place, as a background to activities, as a place of learning, as a place to reflect and as a threatened place. This typology will be reconfigured, in light of the evidence in this study, to provide an alternative framework for exploring young people's diverse relationships with local places. It will focus on young people's use and experiences of local places rather than the places themselves. In this way, a better understanding of the importance of different environments for young people may be attained. Seven categories of place use and experience have been identified in this study: places to meet and be with friends, places to play and mess about, places for stimulation and excitement, places for adventure and exploration, places for solitude and reflection, young people's connections with nature, special and sacred places. These categories are not definitive or mutually exclusive rather, place uses may be interpreted in different ways and therefore located within more than one category. Each category of place use will be considered in turn.

8.2.2 Places to meet friends

A priority for many young people in their freetime is to be with friends (see Table 7.11). One of the most important considerations for young people in their choice of environmental settings is the availability of space to meet up and freely associate with friends without adult interference. Although young people do many things when they meet with friends, this section is concerned solely with places young people use to meet up or hang out. Table 8.1 shows the places young people value most for meeting friends (see also Chapter Nine).

In the inner city area young people favour parks, the street and other neighbourhoods as places to meet to a greater extent than in the suburban area. In contrast, young people in the suburban location are more likely to value friend's houses, public and commercial facilities such as leisure centres and local shops, to meet friends.

Table 8.1: Places where young people go to meet friends (% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (total n = 80) | | <u>Suburb</u> (total n = 101) | |
|-------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|----|
| Parks/play areas | 55 | Friend's houses | 56 |
| Friend's houses | 40 | Parks/play areas | 28 |
| Street | 34 | Town centre | 24 |
| Town centre | 25 | Public facilities ¹ | 21 |
| Other neighbourhood | 17 | Local shops | 20 |
| Public facilities ¹ | 12 | Street | 12 |
| Local shops | 4 | Other neighbourhood | 9 |
| Own house | 2 | Youth club | 4 |
| Clubs | 2 | Own house | 3 |
| Grassed area | 2 | Alley | 2 |

These trends can be partly explained by the greater availability of public and commercial facilities and the larger homes in the suburban area. In contrast the smaller homes in the inner city area are less attractive to young people as a place to meet up. Coupled with fewer commercial opportunities, inner city young people are more likely to meet up on the street, in parks or escape to other neighbourhoods. There is, however, a consistent trend between the two locations in meeting with friends in the nearby town centre.

In spite of the differences that appear in Table 8.1, the qualitative results from the study suggest that the extent to which places are valued by young people are not necessarily dependent on location. Whilst different locations clearly provide contrasting environmental opportunities, similarities in the types of places where young people meet are more likely explained by a combination of factors. These may include the limitation of options as a result of their age (for example not being allowed in pubs and youth clubs only open once a week), individual preferences (for example between indoor and outdoor places), the availability of facilities (such as shelter and refreshments) as well as varying caretaking practices (such as whether they have the freedom to meet in each other's homes).

"Burger king is our second home. We just sit in there and buy a hot chocolate and chat or go to Macs ... it's got a shelter at the front where we meet up and a chip shop if we're hungry ... they serve big fat chips and fried bits ... then sometimes we sit around the back of the community centre because it's a good wind block and also meet people who bring friends over".
(15 year old boy, suburban)

¹ These include leisure centres and community organisations (not including youth clubs).

“... we normally meet up at the school and go to ‘Knights’ (fictitious name of a street) and just sit on the wall by where they have the cars for sale and talk ... no one really bothers us there ... it’s just a place to go really”.
(14 year old girl, inner city)

“... the Memorial Hall at Wootten, where I go to meet friends every night. We’ve just always met there. There’s nice sneaky places down the side to not be seen to have a spliff ... and you can get on the roof. There is a phone box just over the road and everyone knows the number so they call to see who’s there. And everything you need is around ... the field, shops ...”
(14 year old boy, suburban)

These quotes illustrate that, apart from home spaces, young people in both locations tend to choose places to meet away from their homes, where they have the space to engage in their own choice of social activities, but which also provide environmental opportunities such as a place to sit or buy food.

Gender differences in places to meet reveal similarities as well as differences, although in most cases these are mediated by locational variations. In contrast to previous studies (McRobbie and Garber 1976; Frith 1978) which identified a ‘bedroom’ culture of young girls, evidence suggests that boys are just as likely to meet up at each other’s houses. This is more likely in the suburb (61% of boys compared with 56% of girls) than the inner city (44% of girls compared to 40% boys).

“we often just stay in my mates bedroom and play computer games and mess around with that”.
(14 year old boy, suburban)

“sometimes we just go back to one of our houses and mess around playing computer or listening to CDs”
(11 year old boy, suburban)

Differences between girls and boys also reveal that whereas boys are more likely to meet in other neighbourhoods or in parks, girls are more likely to meet in the street, in town or in public recreational facilities. The greater likelihood of girls to meet up in town than boys has been identified by previous studies as being consequent upon a greater desire amongst girls for shopping orientated activities (Hendry *et al.* 1993; Owens 1994; Pearce 1996).

“I like shops, shopping ... enjoy getting new things ... clothes and stuff and CDs ... spend a lot of time in the Grosvenor centre. I don’t always buy clothes in town it’s just when I see something I really like ...”
(13 year old girl, suburban)

"I go up town every Saturday and spend my money. We just meet up and wander around ... we hang around HMV if we're not shopping"
(14 year old girl, suburban)

"... we meet up in town ... go round town ... it's just somewhere to go on a Saturday, like go and look round the shops and things ... always something new to look at ... new clothes to try on ..."
(14 year old girl, inner city)

However, inner city boys are almost as likely to meet up in town as girls from both locations. Reasons for the lower proportion of suburban boys than inner city boys that meet up in town are likely to be due to the greater distance from town for the suburban boys and therefore the greater costs involved in getting there.

"I can't be bothered going to town on Saturday morning ... I haven't been for months now. I just can't be bothered with it. It costs too much money ... cos you get ... I get £5 a week pocket money ... have to get in to town and back, something to eat and then normally end up going down the Cue Club ... that's it for the rest of the week, you've got no money. So it's just easier staying at home, or just going out around Hunsbury"
(14 year old boy, suburban)

In contrast the inner city young people can get to town relatively easily. These results suggest that despite similar preferences amongst young people with regard to places where to meet, their choices are mediated by age, gender and locational characteristics. Patterns do not necessarily vary according to conventional class and gender influences rather, are shaped more by individual preferences and the way different young people respond to their social and environmental context. Insights into the way in which young people value meeting places for hanging out are provided in Chapter Nine.

8.2.3 Places to play and mess about

An important motivating factor for young people's use of local places is the extent to which they afford opportunities to play and mess about. Play has been defined as the primary occupation of childhood (Ward 1978; Childs 1985; Van Gils 1995). This section concerns the way in which children's activities intersect with the environment to give rise to distinctive patterns of children's environmental play. Children demonstrate considerable inventiveness in how they use the environment. Games such as 'kerby', 'stoney', tig, poggs, and 'mean queen' involve using street furniture - such as kerbs, lamp posts and electricity junction boxes, as bases or reference points (see also section 8.3.2). A large part of children's outdoor activities, however, does not involve structured games, rather random and spontaneous activities in, and relationships with, their environment. Spontaneous activities entail using whatever they find in the course of their daily round for their amusement. For example supermarket trolleys serve as a

free and instant opportunity for giving each other rides (Plate 8.1). In another case two young girls were found using the mud from the bottom of a brook to make clay figures (Plate 8.2).

The spontaneous activities that young people engage in may be motivated by a number of reasons: to have fun, to be creative (as in the cases above) or the result of a desire to test physical capabilities such as climbing lamp posts (Plate 8.3), seeing how far they can jump off the bridge (Plate 8.4), climbing trees or crossing a river without falling in (Plate 8.5). These situations are often fuelled by 'dares' and challenges presented to them by their friends (Plate 8.6). Other spontaneous activities may simply occur for the 'hell of it', because the opportunity was there, because it seemed like a fun thing to do, or to experience doing something in a slightly different way. Jumping in, or riding through puddles, streams or rivers become an irresistible environmental opportunity (Plate 8.7) and walls and trees are walked along or climbed simply because they are there (Plate 8.8). It may be this intuitive and spontaneous environmental behaviour that adults find so difficult to rationalise.

Parks and green spaces are most often valued as places to play .

"There's plenty of space to play in and there's a path round it so if you want to go on your bike or something you can go on a ride
(11 year old boy, inner city)

"You can do more things outside ... like at the park ... there's just more to do"
(11 year old girl, inner city)

"I like it outside because its nature and because you can do what you want and there's no one to watch you."
(11 year old boy, suburban)

Observational surveys reveal that open green spaces provide a wide variety of features and possibilities, such as trees, bushes, open space, rivers, paths, benches and play equipment, with which children can engage in different activities, giving rise to a mosaic of place uses (Figure 8.1). These include playing on a rope swing (Plate 8.9), messing about (Plate 8.10), playing in the river (Plate 8.11), playing sports (Plate 8.12), having competitions, and making and constructing things. In this way natural places are meaningful in a composite way, affording many opportunities during a visit to the park.

Plate 8.1: Using a discarded supermarket trolley to give each other rides.



Plate 8.2: Modelling clay from the river bed.



Plate 8.3: Who needs a ladder? Using the street light to climb on the wall.



Plate 8.4: “ We jump off the bridge and see how far we can get ”
(10 year old boy, suburban)

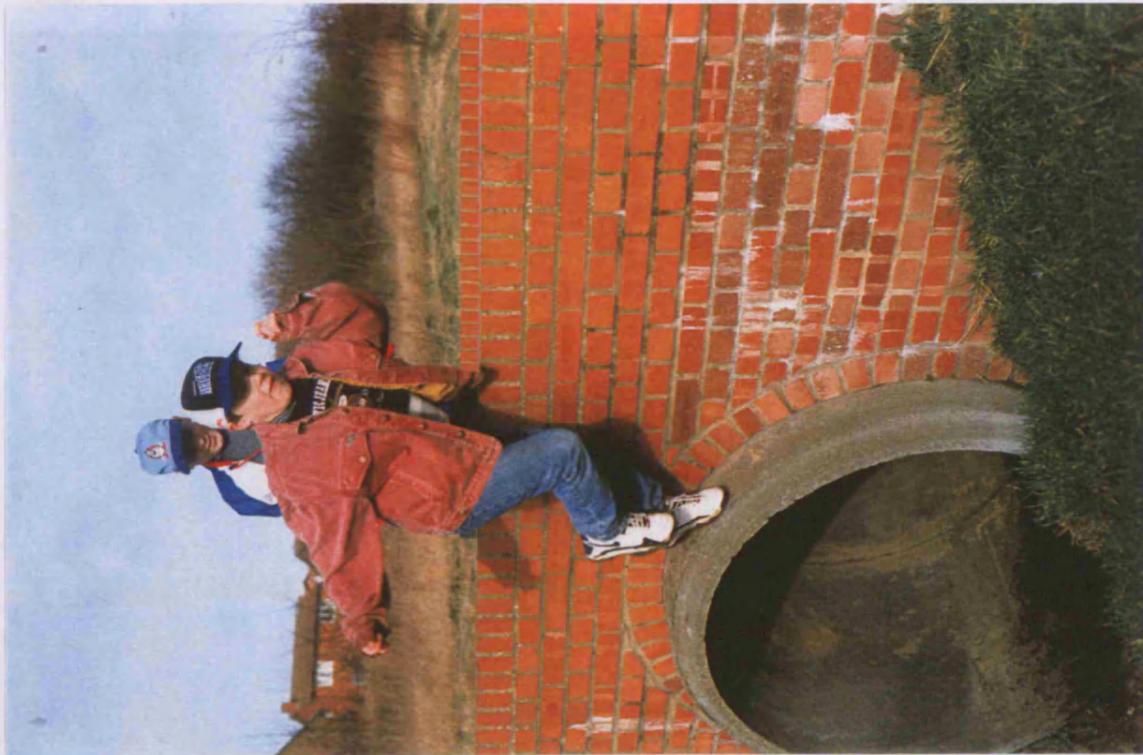


Plate 8.5: Crossing the river: “ we come paddling here. Sometimes see if we can try and get to the other side ”
(12 year old boy, inner city)



Plate 8.6: “ Under the bridge at the golf course there was a rope hanging down ... and a plank across the river and we try to get across ... It’s a bit of a challenge really ”
(13 year old boy, suburban)



Plate 8.7: Riding through the brook because it's "just fun"

(12 year old boy, suburban)



Plate 8.8: Walking on walls.



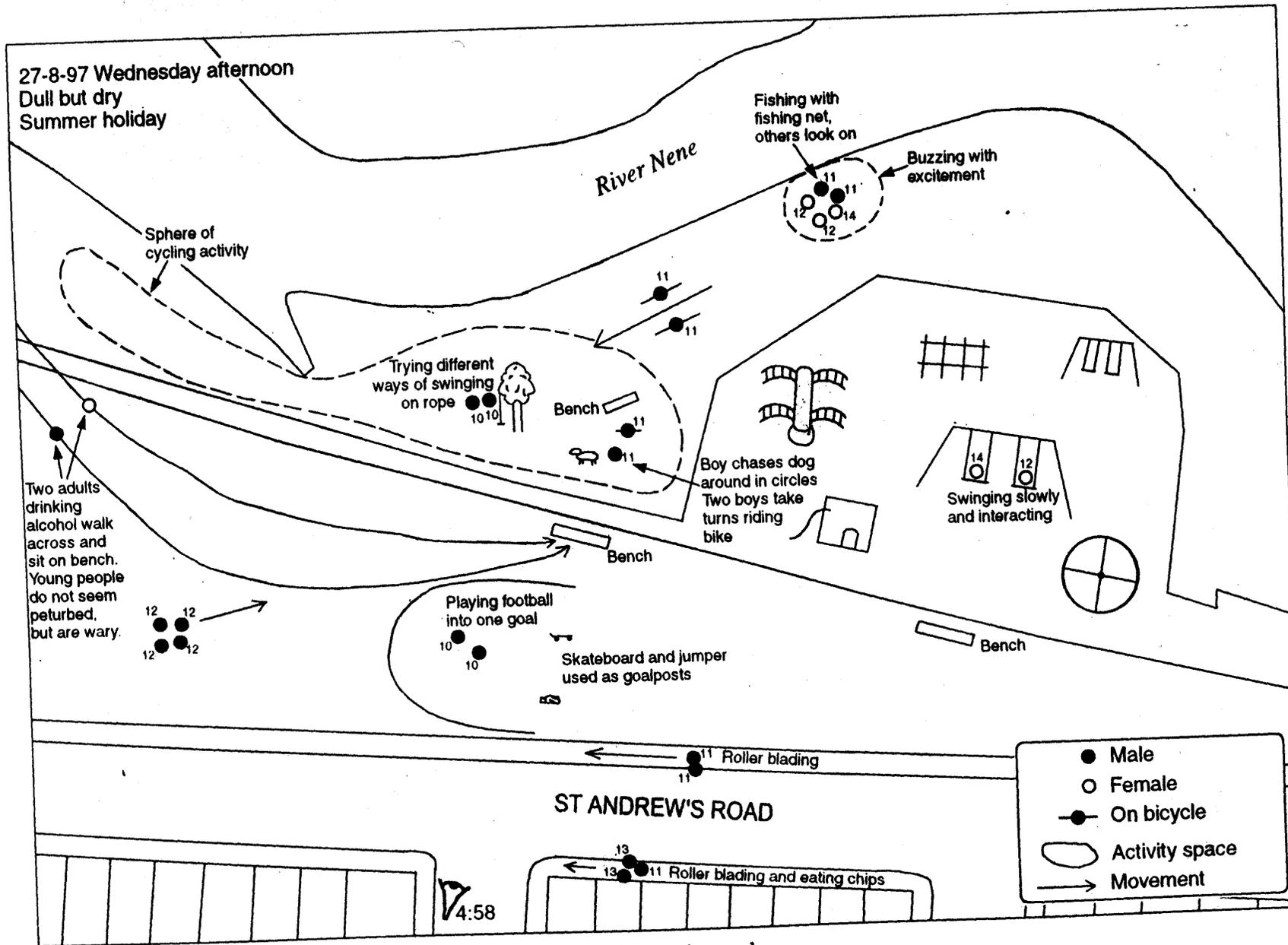


Figure 8.1: Multiple place uses: environmental play in an inner city park.

Plate 8.9: Taking in turns on the ropeswing



Plate 8.10: Teasing, running, chasing and having fun.



Plate 8.11: Catching tiddlers in the river.



Plate 8.12: Playing football in the park. "It's good because sometimes there's lots of people down there to have a big game" (10 year old boy, inner city)



8.2.4 Places for stimulation and excitement

Young people are continually in search of stimulation, new experiences and challenges (Kelmer Pringle 1986). When asked what they most have in mind to do when they go out, young people state that they want to have fun or to have a laugh as this boy states in response to being asked 'what he most had in mind to do when he went out':

" ... having a good time ... just having a laugh. ... Doing things you haven't done before ..."
(14 year old boy, suburban)

In their search for stimulation and excitement young people are often confronted with a perceived lack of attractive opportunities. Just under a half of young people in both locations say they are often bored, with young people in the inner city more likely to be bored (55% boys, 58% girls) than those in the suburb (31% boys, 47% girls). Young people will often create their own amusement such as sliding down the school roof or jumping on the rooves of the nearby post office vans (Plate 8.13).

Interviewer: "What do you most like to do when you're out?"

D: "Jump on them vans"

Interviewer: "Why do you jump on the vans?"

D: "It's entertainment."

Interviewer: "Do you think it's alright to do that?"

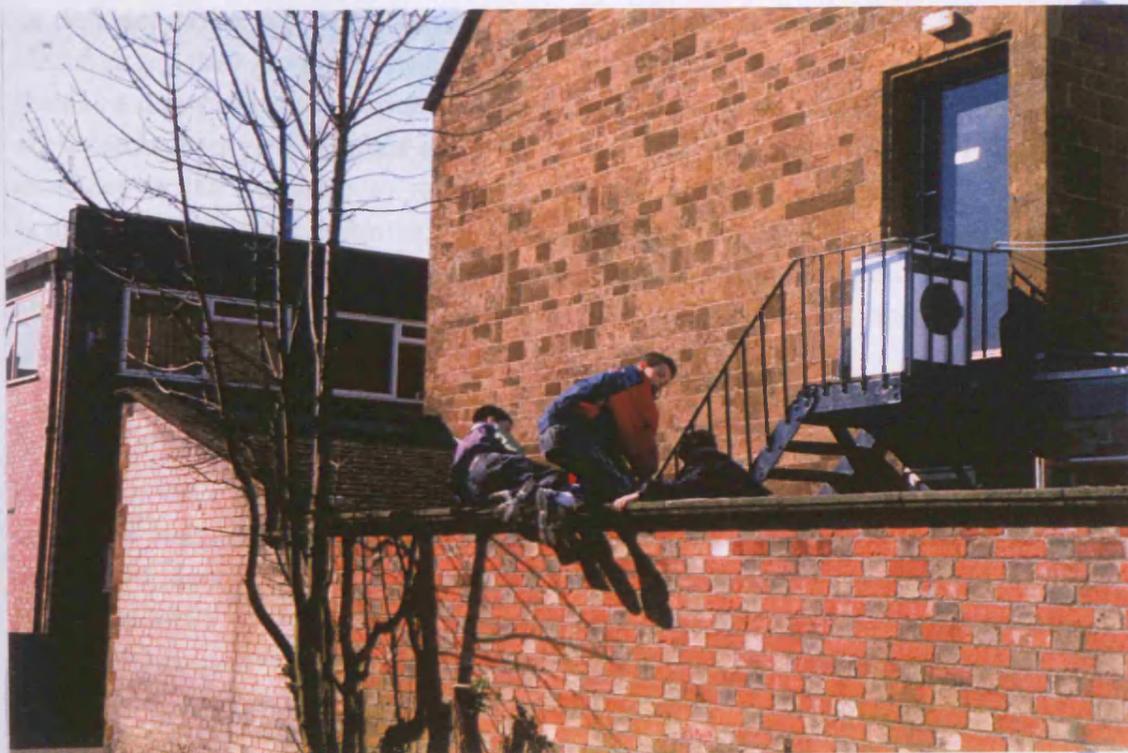
D: "No, but it's more fun than walking round getting into trouble."
(Interview with 11 year old boy, inner city)

On another occasion during a neighbourhood tour, a fifteen year old boy indicated where he and his friends used to jump up and down on the lorries parked in a local car park in order to set the alarms off. In their search for fun and excitement young people may come into conflict with adults. This involves place uses such as climbing on people's walls (Plate 8.14), cherry door knocking, garden hopping, pulling 'moonies' or throwing eggs at passing cars. These types of activities frequently entail young people crossing social or geographical boundaries or breaking the law providing what Sibley (1995) referred to as the thrill of transgression.

Plate 8.13: Getting ready to jump onto the post office vans!



Plate 8.14: Climbing on the back wall of a pub. [Just after this photo was taken a lady came out of the back door and told them to clear off. The young people 'legged it' shouting back at her as they went and then moved on to look for the next source of amusement].



Whilst in some cases, the preoccupation with young people having a laugh may attract an unintended response from adults - for example if they are making a lot of noise - in other cases conflict is actively sought as part of the excitement. In these cases, the buzz they crave comes when they get chased, which is often referred to as 'getting a leg'.

"There's nothing else to do around here, just wind up ... leg somebody then you get legged"
(13 year old boy, inner city)

"... we used to call it 'going for a doss' ... used to do anything we could think of for a laugh ... get some eggs and egg a car or a house or something like that."
(15 year old boy, inner city)

"... we do moonies outside people's houses sometimes ... one person rings the bell and the others line themselves up along the garden wall doing moonies. But you have to watch out for dogs!"
(15 year old boy, suburban)

In this way, place restrictions and boundaries melt away for some young people to yield attractive environmental possibilities. Many young people appear to have little affinity for ownership, not necessarily out of disrespect but because the values on which these social rules and restrictions are based are of little importance to them, instead they provide surmountable obstacles to them achieving fulfilment.

From the point of view of the young person, these are not necessarily acts of deviance or defiance rather, simply a way of keeping themselves entertained. Young people therefore use their environments according to their place needs and motivations, rather than as a direct reaction to adult authority. This is not to deny that young people may seek confrontation with adult authority out of defiance. Indeed there is sufficient evidence in the literature to argue that part of growing up involves challenging boundaries (Schneider Fuhrman 1986; Coleman and Hendry 1990). Instead, evidence from this study suggests that transgression of social and geographical space can not always be explained as a blatant disrespect for, or resistance to, authority but primarily as a desire for fun.

8.2.5 Places for adventure and exploration

Adventure and exploration involves young people exploring hidden or undiscovered corners of their neighbourhood such as abandoned buildings (Plate 8.15), derelict land, alley ways, dark and inconspicuous corners of the urban environment (Plate 8.16). Young people's outdoor activities are often intuitive and spontaneous according to whim entailing serendipity in discovering new places (Plates 8.17, 8.18). This approach leaves them open to whatever possibilities may come their way.

Plate 8.15: Exploring derelict buildings. “ It’s a bit spooky ... we dare each other to go in first ”
(12 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 8.16: Exploring hidden corners of the environment: “ once we crawled all the way through to see where it went to and came out by the super sausage cafe ”
(13 year old boy, inner city)



Plate 8.17: Adventuring out: “... with some of my friends we go out exploring new places ... we go past places that we know but we take all these short cuts and see where we end up ...”
(12 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 8.18: Exploring new places: “... we walk around and explore new places that we haven't been before ... finding things you haven't found before ... things we could like never buy ... like interesting things ... animals and things like that ... we found a rabbit once, a hedgehog, a cat and we found a little puppy which was just left in this bush”
(10 year old boy, suburban)



Adventure and exploration may take young people into places that are 'out of bounds' by virtue of ownership, (for example the church gardens, Plate 8.19), because they are potentially dangerous, (for example by the railway line, Plate 8.20) or because parental authority dictates as the following quote indicates.

"I'm allowed to play down this end of Main Street, but like ... if I want ... my friends go up to the play area, but my mum says I can't go up there because she says there's rough people up there"

(12 year old girl, inner city)

Fences and boundaries become symbolic gateways to a world of discovery, rather than perimeters of exclusion, with access points through and to these places constituting 'frontiers of adventure' (Plate 8.21).

In the course of young people's exploration newly discovered places, artefacts and features may be turned into environmental resources which young people may use. Redundant spaces such as disused lock-up garages or the backyards of disused properties (Plate 8.22) get turned into dens, bases or secret places where young people can get away from the adult gaze, where they can create their own landscapes and have the space to temporarily create their own social worlds. Abandoned places thus become invaded spaces (Matthews *et al.* 1998a), hidden places invested with meaning and purpose, otherwise 'invisible' to the adult eye (Grabow and Silkind 1976). For many kids these places are at the same time scary and exciting (Plates 8.23) as the following extract from field notes from a neighbourhood tour illustrate (see also Plate 8.24).

'Lindy's younger sister Sophie looks under the railway bridge and says it looks interesting, but isn't sure whether to go under or not. She clearly wants to go but is a bit apprehensive. Eventually she goes under and has a look but quickly loses her nerve and comes back. She says it's scary under there. Eventually they pluck up the courage and we all scramble through. Sophie says that her older sister Lindy is a 'chicken' and that it is her and her friend that are the daredevils'.

(Notes from neighbourhood tour with 12 year old inner city girl Lindy, her sister Sophie and their friend, 8/4/97)

Adventures may also involve challenges and dares which involve risk-taking or contesting the boundaries of personal environmental competence, as well as for immediate gratification through a sense of achievement (Plate 8.25). These actions in turn become important as markers of acceptance by peers and for identity formation (James 1986). New experiences are both educational and gratifying in terms of the fun and amusement they afford and the sense of achievement or revelation which may be derived. Exploration and adventure thus constitutes an important element of young people's geography.

Plate 8.19: Forbidden place: “ we climb over the wall into the Cathedral garden and mess about in there ”
(10 year old boy, inner city)



Plate 8.20: Exploring the margins: “ we go up the side of the track and annoy the train drivers ”
(12 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 8.21: Crossing boundaries: frontiers of adventure.



Plate 8.22: Abandoned places, invaded spaces: “ I climb onto the green box, through the barbed wire and into the backyard ... there’s like this pile of newspapers behind this ... shed thing ... and sit there and just like... if I want to get away from my sister and everything” (10 year old boy, inner city)



Plate 8.23: This hideout is both scary and exciting



Plate 8.24: Sophie deciding whether her curiosity can overcome her fear.



Plate 8.25: “ My favourite place - ‘rocky’ - where I go climbing ... you can tie a rope across to the top of the cliff the other side and climb across ”
(10 year old boy, suburban)



Evidence from this study reveals little difference between boys and girls in their inclination for adventure, however, differences emerge according to age. By the age of 14 years young people appear less interested in exploring their environment and more interested in themselves. In contrast, for 10-13 year olds, adventure and exploration is characteristic of many young people's developing personal competence, environmental learning and entertainment.

8.2.6 Places for solitude and reflection

Studies have shown that friends and peer groups play a valuable role in helping young people to negotiate life's changing circumstances, for example, through sharing experiences and providing mutual support (Coleman and Hendry 1990; Cotterell 1996). Evidence from this study suggests that, despite the importance of peers, young people also need time alone. In this study, 81 per cent of young people in the inner city and 79 per cent in the suburb mentioned a place they go to be alone. Having a place outside of the home to retreat to appears important for young people. Stokols (1993), notes that environmental settings are valued for their symbolic, affective and socio-cultural meanings. For Chawla (1992), affective attachments to places relate to a fondness young people may have for a place and with which happiness and security are associated. In this way environmental settings may be used as regulators of psychological conditions and ways of coping with social circumstances (Korpela 1992). Local places may thus be seen as affording 'restorative environments' (Kaplan 1983) in which they become instrumental in creating or recreating a sense of well being, or reassuring the young person by providing a secure refuge to identify with. These are places where young people can go to alone or with a friend and escape from the family, gain respite from the morass of everyday life, reflect on life's events and to 'feel better'.

In this study, parks are the most favoured retreat for nearly half of all respondents with the exception of suburban girls (25%). For these girls walking around the local area provides the space to get out of the home and to be alone. Other important places to be alone include alley ways, peripheral areas to the home, such as the garden shed (Plate 8.26), sitting on the doorstep, or places in nature such as lakes, rivers and dens (Plates 8.27, 8.28, 8.29).

The quote accompanying Plate 8.29 suggests that, for some young people, visiting their special place becomes a spiritual or therapeutic experience in which they are able to enhance their sense of well being and inner harmony. For example a favourite place for one 12 year old girl - a willow tree down by the river (Plate 8.30 and Figure 8.2) - is valued because "it's just nice being there." Some other young people in the inner city area similarly talked of a sense of well being gained whilst being down by the river.

Plate 8.26: “ My garden where I play in the shed. I go there to get away from everyone”
(10 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 8.27: “ I like being by the river just walking on my own ”
(10 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 8.28: "I love being in nature. You can block everything out and it's quiet and better than town"
(13 year old boy, suburban)



Plate 8.29: "I like it down here with the swans, it's nice ... I don't know why, just makes it better somehow"
(13 year old boy, inner city)



Plate 8.30: "My favourite place down by the river ... it's nice just sitting down there ... it's the best time to be there because you can shake all the blossom down."
(12 year old girl, inner city)



Figure 8.2: The willow tree by the river: a favourite place for a 12 year old girl.



One 10 year old girl talks of a sort of magic being by the river at dusk.

“ I like to stop out when it’s just getting dark ... I have to be in at dark but I like to stay out down here (by the river) just as it’s getting dark as it’s exciting ... and then run home.” (10 year old girl, inner city)

In this case the excitement arises out of an interaction of different contextual variables - being by the river, different perspectives provided by the half light at dusk and the thrill of staying out beyond the allowed time - which come together at one point in time to produce the resultant place experience. Chawla (1992) refers to this type of experience as ‘transcendence’ with nature involving ‘a profound sense of connection with nature which transcends social convention by expressing one-to-one communion with the environment.’

8.2.7 Young people’s connections with nature

A number of studies have concerned young people’s relationships with the natural environment (Hart 1979; Lynch 1977; Moore 1986; Owens 1988; Cunningham and Jones 1991; Chawla 1988, 1992; Nabham and Trimble 1994; Simmons 1994; Wals 1994). In particular they highlight the intimate and diverse relationships children have with nature. Evidence from this study reveals a widespread affinity for natural settings amongst young people. Despite the importance of heterogeneity in young people’s environments and the encroachment of urban land uses on green areas young people are still able to find natural havens where they can enjoy being in natural surroundings, make dens, play games or just sit and enjoy being there without hassle. Plates 8.31, 8.32 and 8.33 and the accompanying quotes highlight the different ways in which nature is important to young people in both areas.

These young people demonstrate a special commitment to nature in the form of environmental guardianship, wherein nature is a valuable asset which needs respecting and caring for, as well as providing an enjoyable place to spend time. In both areas young people express concern about environmental loss (Plates 8.34). The quote accompanying this child-taken photograph highlights the importance of aesthetic qualities of the environment for young people as well as the orientation of some young people towards environmental care.

Plate 8.31: "I like sitting here and watching the swans and ducks. Wildlife and nature are important to me"
(12 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 8.32: "The bridge over the stream where I spend most of my time. It's nice and it's kept nice and it's away from everywhere. It's important to be in nature for me"
(13 year old girl, suburban)



Plate 8.33: “It’s all overgrown here and looks pretty nice. (...) The river runs through it ... there are trees to climb ... it’s untouched and no rubbish so animals can breed and I think it’s beautiful. Nature is the best thing ... you can’t breath without it ... and surrounded by nature and creatures ... I like that” (11 year old boy, suburban)



Plate 8.34: “ The trees have all been cut down. I didn’t see any point of cutting them all down because there are bird’s nests in there. It doesn’t look very nice now.” (12 year old girl, inner city)



Another element of young people's inclination towards environmental care is reflected in the concern many young people have about the litter, rubbish and pollution in the inner city area, especially in the river (see also Chapter Twelve). Approximately half of the photographs taken by young people of things that are important for them in their local area are of pollution and rubbish (Plates 8.35), which again highlight young people's concerns for the quality of their environments. These findings are not new, but link to the results of previous studies (Hart 1979; Moore 1986; Chawla 1988) as well as exposing the extent to which young people's affinity and care for the environment cuts across different social groups.

For other young people, affinity for nature is constructed around visual appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of local landscapes (Plates 8.36, 8.37). In other cases natural places provide a suitable set of environmental attributes which act as a backdrop for their activities, as Wals (1994) also suggested.

"This is the brook where we go in summer because it's cool and it's somewhere we can lay about and not many people go there.

(15 year old girl, suburban)

Young people appear to value the natural environment for its potential usage as well as in its own right for its aesthetic qualities. This differentiation equates with Stokols (1993) distinction between instrumental views ('environment as a means for achieving behavioural goals') and spiritual views ('environment as affective and symbolic contexts in which human values can be cultivated'), in people-environment relationships. Young people's experience of nature therefore come about as a result of an interaction of both values and behavioural intentions.

Despite the diverse ways in which young people value nature, there is evidence in this study that a widespread appreciation of nature and natural places exists, which transcends age, gender and location. The extent to which nature is important for young people is illustrated by the proportion who made reference to nature in drawings of their local area. Approximately one fifth of all drawings undertaken by young people of their local areas had natural places as the prominent feature, with a further 43 per cent in the inner city and 58 cent in the suburb which contained references to natural places. This equates to 65 per cent of young people in the inner city and 79 per cent in the suburb for whom nature constitutes a significant part of their local geographies. Whilst not surprising given the large amount of green spaces in the suburb, the figure for the inner city suggests that the more limited green spaces in this area are highly prized by young people as an important element of their locality.

Plate 8.35: "It's dirty between the play area and the bridge in the park. It's a horrible and smelly place with ruins everywhere ... I think it should be cleaned up"
(13 year old girl, inner city)



"It's dirty"

"13 year old girl, inner city"



Plate 8.36: "This is the park. I like it cos it's scenic and you can look at something (the view) there. I was trying to get the horse in the picture"
(10 year old girl, inner area)



Plate 8.37: "Down at the park at sunset ... I like the sun on the water ... just think it's nice"
(15 year old girl, inner city)



8.2.8 Special and sacred places

Many young people have places which are in some way special to them. Having places outside of the home that are special for young people is more likely in the inner city area (60%) than the suburban area (47%), with boys more likely to have a special place than girls (58% compared with 46%). Inner city boys in particular are most likely (68%) to have a special place and suburban girls least likely (44%). Suburban boys and inner city girls showed a similar likelihood to have special places (50%).

Places most often mentioned as being special in both areas are parks and friend's houses. Over and above these places, commercial places are more likely to be cited as being special for young people in the suburb, whereas young people in the inner city are more likely to have a special place out of their neighbourhood. Although the places mentioned as being special appear as ordinary everyday places, their significance is based on the derived experience. Reasons why places are considered as being special can be grouped into three types according to the values and usages attached to them (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2: Reasons for special places (% of total number with special place)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | <u>Male</u> | <u>Female</u> | <u>Male</u> | <u>Female</u> |
| Can do things there | 57 | 56 | 70 | 61 |
| Friends are there | 30 | 33 | 15 | 17 |
| Nice being there | 13 | 11 | 15 | 17 |

Despite young people's need to 'get away' and 'be alone,' special places, in the majority of cases, tend to be valued in terms of having the freedom to 'do things' and where they can enjoy being with friends. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive reasons. Two specific reasons why certain places emerge as being special are due to sentimental attachments which give rise to particular places being treated as sacred, and places which are valued for special purposes.

The elevation of places to the status of being special comes about as a result of the affective meanings and intensity of experience existing in the object relation between self and place. Two young people talked of having a pet's graveyard which was special

to them. One 15 year old, for example, talks of 'the rabbits grave' - a sacred place where she had buried her pets - marked by a clump of daffodils amongst a spinney of trees in a meadow behind her house (Plate 8.38) which she considers one of the places that are most important to her. Places also become sacred through other reasons such as an association with being happy, feeling good, or through some personal activity. For example one 13 year old boy in the inner city area pointed out what he called a 'sacred hill' - a part of his environment which he derives immense pleasure from (Plate 8.39).

Places may also be highly valued as venues for special purposes. These tend to concern activities for which being out of the adult/public gaze is important, such as drinking, smoking or being with a girl friend or boy friend.

"We used to go into one of the (lock up) garages up by the factory to smoke
draw or to drink. We go up the flats now. We sit at the top of the stair well
and skin up or have beers." (15 year old boy, inner city)

"We go in these bushes when we want to be alone with girls or if we've
got a couple of bottles of beer - provides somewhere private and out of
sight to go." (15 year old boy, suburban)

Another 15 year old boy talked about how he valued a secluded place he visited called 'paradise lake'. For this young person the lake is valued not only for its attractive setting but also as a place to get away from 'adult hassle' and as a place to engage in particular activities (Plate 8.40). As the quote accompanying Plate 8.40 suggests, special places become important for providing a particular type of environment which may have a specific function. Special places may have more than one function. In this case the lake also provides an opportunity for fishing. At the same time it provides a different type of social environment in which young people are respected as equals by fellow place users, in this case, fishermen. Places may also remain as special in the memory of the young person as a result of one off special occasions. For example one 10 year old suburban boy referred to the community centre as a special place because he had his previous years's birthday party there.

Plate 8.38: A sacred place: a pet rabbit's graveyard marked by a clump of daffodils.



Plate 8.39: "Sacred hill, cool hill ... I like bombing down the hill onto the cycle path bit, jump over the steps on the corner, round the bend, then jump the traffic lights at the bottom and round into Balmoral Road" (13 year old boy, inner city)



Plate 8.40: A special retreat: “ we really appreciate this place (paradise lake). It’s a beautiful sacred place. It’s the ultimate place to bring a woman ...”
(15 year old boy, suburban)



8.2.9 Conclusion

These different ways of using local places contribute to the complex and diverse nature of children's geographies. Diversity is evident within and between the place transactions of different young people such that the geography of each young person is constituted from multiple place preferences and experiences. These constitute the places of childhood. The use and values of places reveals a remarkable degree of continuity and commonality for many young people. However, whereas the importance of different places move in and out of focus for different young people at different times, for others, an especially valued place (such as a sacred place) may persist over time. What this suggests is that the way in which young people value places is not simply a reflection of the functional characteristics of a place, but the result of different relationships and motivations that different individuals have with and towards local places. The evidence presented here restates the findings of previous studies (Barker and Wright 1955; Gibson 1979; Hart 1979; Moore 1986) which suggest that young people have a range of different relationships with their local environment according to the way in which place affordances are perceived. One of the aims of this study is to explore the way in which young people respond to their environmental contexts. In the following section emphasis will be placed on the different ways young people adapt their environment.

8.3 Different levels of engagement with place

8.3.1 Introduction

Children's ability to adapt and shape micro-environments has been well known since the work of Lynch (1977), Hart (1979) and Ward (1978). Ward (1978: 86) for example stated that "children will play everywhere and with anything". In many cases young people's transactions with place involves the adaptation of environmental features for a purpose other than what they were designed. Gibson (1979) introduced the concept of place affordances to signify the opportunities or 'ecological resources' (Heft 1988) that the environment offers the child. The notion of place affordances is a relational concept based on reciprocity between the child and the environment in which children perceive what behaviour is possible in particular places. Having the opportunity to engage with local environments provides young people with rich and diverse opportunities for play and learning (Moore 1986; Wals 1994). For young people the whole neighbourhood is potentially usable. As section 8.2 illustrates, young people use neighbourhood places in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. This section will consider some of the ways in which young people adapt their local environment for different uses. Evidence from this study suggests that young people may adapt their environments in one of three ways. First they may simply appropriate a place for a different use; second, they may change the value or purpose of a place by physically altering or rebuilding it; third, the place may simply be transformed using their imagination. Examples of these will be considered in turn.

8.3.2 Appropriated spaces

Young people will appropriate spaces for a range of different purposes for example to meet and hang out and to play sports and games, to sit, mess about or reflect according to what motivates them at the time. However, young people's use of places are not always for the purpose of undertaking a specific activity but sometimes involve serendipity and spontaneity as new places and hidden corners of their neighbourhoods are discovered. Spaces young people appropriate for hanging out are considered in Chapter Twelve. Emphasis here will be placed on the ways in which young people appropriate local places in the course of play and exploration. These activities take many forms for example: games, building and crafting, racing, play fighting and role plays, which entail young people using different parts of the environment in different ways (see also section 8.2.3). In this way the whole neighbourhood becomes the playground for the young person, providing endless opportunities for play, fun, excitement and learning. Observational surveys reveal that young people appropriate four main types of environmental space. Street spaces, green spaces, organisational spaces and derelict/wasteland. A distinction can be made between young people's alternative use of space and use of objects in environmental space. These will be discussed according to the four types of places mentioned above.

Streets, particularly spaces in close proximity to the home, provide convenient places for spontaneous and informal play. One of the most important issues concerning young people's appropriation of neighbourhood street space is that it allows (particularly young) children to play in close proximity to their homes as Williams (1995: 110) suggested. Homespaces, as Moore (1986) calls them, (spaces in the immediate vicinity of the home) are convenient and accessible and allow young people the opportunity to flow in and out of street play. This is important for young people who may have a small amount of time available to play, for example after school and before it gets dark, when parents and/or time do not permit activities which take the young person further away. Moore (1986) likewise noted that even where there are attractive alternative locations, a substantial amount of play will still occur on the street. This is particularly the case for 10 - 12 year old boys as well as girls.

Street spaces provide opportunities for a range of children's games and activities as outlined in section 8.2.3. In appropriating neighbourhood street space, young people use street furniture in diverse and novel ways. Roads become skate board runs (Plate 8.41) or arenas for play (Plate 8.42), cul-de-sacs develop into play grounds (Plate 8.43) car parking areas become football areas (Plate 8.44), safety barriers and scaffolding become climbing frames (Plate 8.45), building sites provide sand pits to jump into, street lights become reference points or accessories for climbing, the end walls of buildings become goals and apartment blocks become adventure playgrounds (Plate 8.46).

Plate 8.41: Using the street as a skate boarding track



Plate 8.42: Street play using the kerbs as 'bases'.



Plate 8.43: Suburban cul-de-sacs as play grounds



Plate 8.44: Playing penalties in a small street car park



Plate 8.45: Instant play equipment!



Plate 8.46: “ Through the middle are the flats where they have lifts and we go up and hang off the top balcony. And we climb out of the window at the top and onto the roof. We also run over them cars to see who wins. There’s normally a green escort there which has been junked” (12 year old boy, inner city)



The second type of neighbourhood space commonly appropriated for use by young people are green areas. Unlike parks, these are not designated for play, but young people use them anyway (Plate 8.47, 8.48). Given the absence of places for sport in both areas young people use whatever spaces they can find. In the inner city area, green areas are inevitable choices given the general lack of open neighbourhood space. In the suburban area despite the availability of parks and open green spaces, few green spaces provide a flat area for sports and games. Those that do are colonised by young people and used in much the same way as street locations.

Given the limited amount of recreational spaces, the appropriation of the third type of neighbourhood space - organisational spaces - becomes easier to understand. Organisational places are spaces designated for particular social or economic land uses. In this study four examples of such places can be identified - school grounds, the external peripheries of community places, commercial places (chiefly outside of shops) and industrial spaces. In both areas, young people use school grounds unofficially to play football (Plate 8.49). In some cases this type of invaded place use arises from the opportunities different spaces afford young people, given the lack of availability of designated alternative places. In other cases school grounds simply offer somewhere different to play. The conflict of adult and child agendas here is clear. On the one hand young people are seen as trespassing and likely to cause damage, but from the young persons point of view they are utilising facilities which provide appropriate opportunities.

The second type of organisational space includes industrial estates. Appropriation of these type of spaces appear less contentious and less of a problem for both young people and the designated place users. For example one group of young people use a small industrial estate, after the units have closed up, as a football pitch. There is little risk of damage, there are no residences nearby and it is free from traffic. In this particular case young people appear happy with this appropriated football space and receive no conflicts with other place users. The appropriation of commercial spaces and the external peripheries of community buildings are mainly used for meeting up and hanging out and are discussed elsewhere (Chapter Nine).

The last type of neighbourhood space commonly appropriated by young people is derelict or wasteland sites. These spaces provide young people with opportunities to go wild without conflict with adults and also provide opportunities for exploration and discovery (Plate 8.50).

Plate 8.47: Using what ever space is available for play.



Plate 8.48: When football facilities are not available trees often make ideal goal posts.



Plate 8.49: The school yard provides an alternative venue for football when the school is closed.



Plate 8.50: A place to go wild: "... we used to come in here ... and smash the windows. Basically it's somewhere to come and cause havoc ..."
(15 year old boy, inner city)



A number of previous writers (Hart 1979; Moore 1986; Nabham and Trimble 1994) have highlighted the importance of wild places or urban wastelands for children. In the course of this study a number of questions arise concerning the implications of children's need for wild places for environmental planning and management. The first concerns the safety of these places and the second concerns how consideration of these place needs may be incorporated into environmental planning. The implications of young people's environmental needs for local planning and decision making will be considered fully in Chapter Thirteen, however a few points are worthy of mention at this stage.

The potential environmental hazards in many wild and wasteland sites for young people in this study, such as chemicals, pollution, electrical hazards and broken glass, raise the question as to how beneficial these places are for young people. Whilst providing opportunities for adventure and learning, they also pose considerable risk of danger. Despite young people's awareness of such dangers, it would appear prudent for local planners to ensure the safety of derelict or wasteland sites whilst not preventing young people from using them. The second question concerns whether it is possible to plan such places without losing the attraction for young people. Ward (1978), for example, notes how even adventure playgrounds, which emanated from observing young people's environmental behaviour on patches of wasteland and derelict sites, robs young people of the chance to discover and adapt the environment in their own way. In many cases part of the value of derelict/wasteland sites is the fact that they are forbidden, that they are organic (in the sense of evolving incidentally) and that they are unique. And in any case as Ward (1978: 73) argues "no matter how *we* might consider play potential in our present and future designs, children will continue to interpret this in their own way".

Young people's appropriation of neighbourhood places reflects a need for different types of environmental space within the neighbourhood. The fact that specific places are not available is not necessarily a problem since there is value to young people, over and above appropriated place use, in the process of adapting landscapes to alternative uses. The crucial issue is the extent to which young people are allowed or tolerated in their appropriated uses and whether such uses are safe.

8.3.3 Modified places

Another feature of children's environmental culture is the way in which they add, change or rebuild the details of a particular part of the landscape in some way in order to use the place or the environment in a way unspecified in its original form. This section will highlight two ways in which young people modify their environments.

First, modification of the landscape may have a purely functional objective simply to gain access. In the inner city area, for example, the construction of a new fence of

insufficient height around the play area to contain ball sports led young people to frequently losing their football. The gate providing access to the area behind the fence was kept locked. As a response young people simply pulled one of the slats off the fence so as to provide easy access to retrieve their ball (Plate 8.51). Whereas the Council or local residents may consider this an act of vandalism, for young people it does not constitute a criminal activity rather an appropriate response to an environmental constraint. Second, young people may make temporary, small scale changes to their environment for example by building bridges (Plate 8.52) or dams or through the creation or enhancement of environment opportunities, for example, by building a cycle jump (Plate 8.53).

8.3.4 Imaginary and mythical transformations of place

Adapting environments involves imposing a different set of values on the landscape. An important dimension to this process of landscape adaptation is the child's use of their imagination. An analysis of the importance of imagination in young people's construction of place is important not only in highlighting the richness and distinctiveness of young people's transactions with their local environment but also in illustrating the capabilities of young people as active environmental agents. Places are important for their mythical abstract properties as well as in terms of their functional properties.

Young people demonstrate abundant creativity in inventing and simulating experiences using their imagination. These may occur as role plays or games which involve imaginary characters or scenes not obvious to the onlooker. These type of activities appear to occur when young people's imaginations and creativity mediate between the young person's experiential desires and the reality of their social and environmental circumstances. Vignette 8.1 and Plate 8.54 illustrate this point.

8.51: Pulling the slats off the fence provides access for young people to retrieve their ball when it goes over the fence.



Plate 8.52: Building a bridge across a brook. Simple modification of the landscape provides a fulfilling range of environmental opportunities



Plate 8.53: Constructing a bicycle jump enhances environmental opportunities in the cul-de-sac.



Yvonne & J. 'Shipwrecked in the gutter city'

Nigel and Lisa (aged 10 and 11) live in a row of three the back of a small industrial estate. This part of the neighbourhood is plagued with prostitution and herb growers by night but by day remains relatively safe. There is a park at the corner of the road but this is beyond the parenting eye of their parents, across a busy road and is frequently host to drunks and siting people hanging around. In light of this their parents are happy for them to spend their time playing 'at the top.' 'At the top' refers to the top of the street where access into the industrial estate has been prohibited by pavements and bollards which create a small area safe from traffic where they can play. One particular activity they related involves playing on a shipwreck adventure. They pretend they are explorers, who are being rescued, who have stayed away on a ship. In this case the road space in between the bollards represents the ocean in which they pretend the ship they are on is sinking and have to try and swim across to the deserted island, represented by the adjacent bushes (shown). The capture's innocence and richness of this childhood experience is however marred by the reality of harmful discarded waste lying around the bushes in the form of used condoms and syringes.

Plate 8.54: An isolated area of greenery in a heavily built up environment



walk down it. Apparently you can actually see through ... the trees go transparent and you can see through them ... and people say that ... if you look up at the trees sometimes in the alley you see a log hanging down and when you look up again it's not there. I was in the alley and someone saw a log hanging down, but when I looked up it wasn't there.

Vignette 8.1: Shipwrecked in the inner city!

Nigel and Elsa (aged 10 and 11) live in a street facing the back of a small industrial estate. This part of the neighbourhood is plagued with prostitution and kerb crawlers by night but by day remains relatively safe. There is a park at the bottom of the road but this is beyond the caretaking eye of their parents, across a busy road and is frequently host to drunks and strangers hanging around. In light of this their parents are happy for them to spend their time playing 'at the top.' 'At the top' refers to the top of the street where access into the industrial estate has been prohibited by pavements and bollards which create a small area safe from traffic where they can play. One particular activity they related involves playing out a shipwreck adventure. They pretend they are orphans, who are best friends, who have stowed away on a ship. In this case the road space in between the bollards represents the sea in which they pretend the ship they are on is sinking and have to try and swim across to the deserted island, represented by the adjacent bushes (photo) The apparent innocence and richness of this childhood experience is however marred by the reality of harmful discarded waste lying around the bushes in the form of used condoms and syringes.

Events such as these may on the one hand appear rich and fruitful experiences for young people, developing creative potential and using their own abilities to create enjoyment. On the basis of Elsa's expressed dislike of the area, another interpretation is that fantasy play is used as a way of temporarily escaping the reality of an undesirable neighbourhood.

“ ... it's a bit of a weird area ... horrible really ... and scary ... I'd like to live somewhere else, like near my Grandma's in Yorkshire”

(Elsa: 11 year old girl, inner city)

Fantasy and imagination in the way young people relate to places may also be intertwined with the telling of stories. One 10 year old boy relates the story of 'Bloody Mary' connected with the 'badger run' (alley way) between nearby houses (Plate 8.55)

D: “... there's the alley which we like ... you can climb trees”.

B: “What do you like about the alley?”

D: “Nothing much. People say there's a myth about Bloody Mary ... she had her hair chopped off and one day they see her walking through and she tripped up. The next day he saw her combing her hair. It's never happened to me ... but probably because I never dare go and watch, but there's always something that you think, is it true, or isn't it? Some people say the alleyway goes red for 5 minutes on certain dates if you walk down it. Apparently you can actually see through ... the trees go transparent and you can see through them ... and people say that ... if you look up at the trees sometimes in the alley you see a leg hanging down and when you look up again it's not there. I was in the alley and someone saw a leg hanging down, but when I looked up it wasn't there.”

Such evidence suggests that young people's relationships with place are more than functional, they also have a mythical value which stimulates intrigue, curiosity, awe and wonder.

Plate 8.55: Bloody Mary's alley.



Figure 8.2 The lock-up

The idea for this particular group of young boys who spent a lot of time out in their neighbourhood, was that a disused lock-up garage behind a doggy factory. This place served a number of functions. It provided a social centre to hang out, away from the other sites, somewhere to go when it was raining, a place to try and smoke, and a place to go to be alone. Inside the den, discarded materials (such as chairs, tables, etc.) and their own graffiti decorated the inside walls.

The lock-up was, in effect, a special place for these young boys. A place where they could retreat from the adult gaze and spend time together, engaging in customised talking, making fun of each other and stories of bravado.

A second type of den is a structure constructed out of man-made materials (Hogg 1998). Young people use whatever they can find to construct dens such as sheds. In this particular case the den is made out of discarded bits of wood and cardboard with an old plastic sheet for the roof, all of which are then draped over.

The third type of den is the natural den made out of natural materials in natural places. Natural dens were the most common form in the shops or markets. Unlike dens made out of man-made materials, natural dens were most common in the suburban locations.

8.4 Constructing places: Dens, hideouts and bases

Another way in which young people engage their fantasies in the course of their interactions with their environments is through the identification with, and construction of, bases or dens. In interview young people rarely talked of their dens and hideouts, but during neighbourhood tours dens were high priority places to visit. However, these dens are not always self evident, rather they tend often to be imaginary places within a clump of bushes rather than an obvious structure. Dens and bases as geographical entities tend to be located within the space between the imagination of the young person and the physical environment itself. The construction of dens is one of the most symbolic and dynamic ways in which young people modify their environments. Five common types of dens are evident within the two areas of this study: dens made out of pre-existing man-made structures; dens built out of natural materials in natural places; hideaways within pre-existing natural refuges; hideouts which are made from man made materials; and landmarks which are used as bases or meeting points. Examples of these will be considered in turn to exemplify the importance of dens to young people.

The first type of den are those created out of pre-existing man-made structures. The example provided here is a den created by a group of young inner city boys out of an old lock up garage (Plates 8.56, 8.57, Figure 8.3)

Vignette 8.2 The lock up

The den for one particular group of young boys, who spent a lot of time out in their neighbourhood, constituted a disused lock-up garage behind an empty factory . This place served a number of functions. It provided a social centre of their own, away from the adult gaze; somewhere to go when it was raining, a place to go and smoke and a place to go to be alone. Inside the den, discarded materials found nearby such as mattresses, chairs and sofas provided the furniture for the interior and their own graffiti decorated the inside walls.

The lock up was, in effect, a special place for these young boys. A place where they could retreat from the adult gaze and spend time together engaging in endless joke telling, making fun of each other and stories of bravado.

A second type of den involves structures constructed out of man made materials (Plate 8.58). Young people use whatever they can find to hand to construct dens such as these. In this particular case the den is made out of discarded bits of metal and cardboard with an old plastic sheet for the roof, all of which had been dumped there.

The third type of den is the natural den made out of natural materials in natural places. Natural dens were the most common forms in one shape or another. Unlike dens made out of man made materials, natural dens were most common in the suburban location.

Plate 8.56: The lock up garages which the Main Street gang had colonised as a den.



Plate 8.57: Inside the lock up with all mod cons - chairs and beds.



Figure 8.3: Drawing of disused garages turned into a den.

(11 year old boy, inner city)

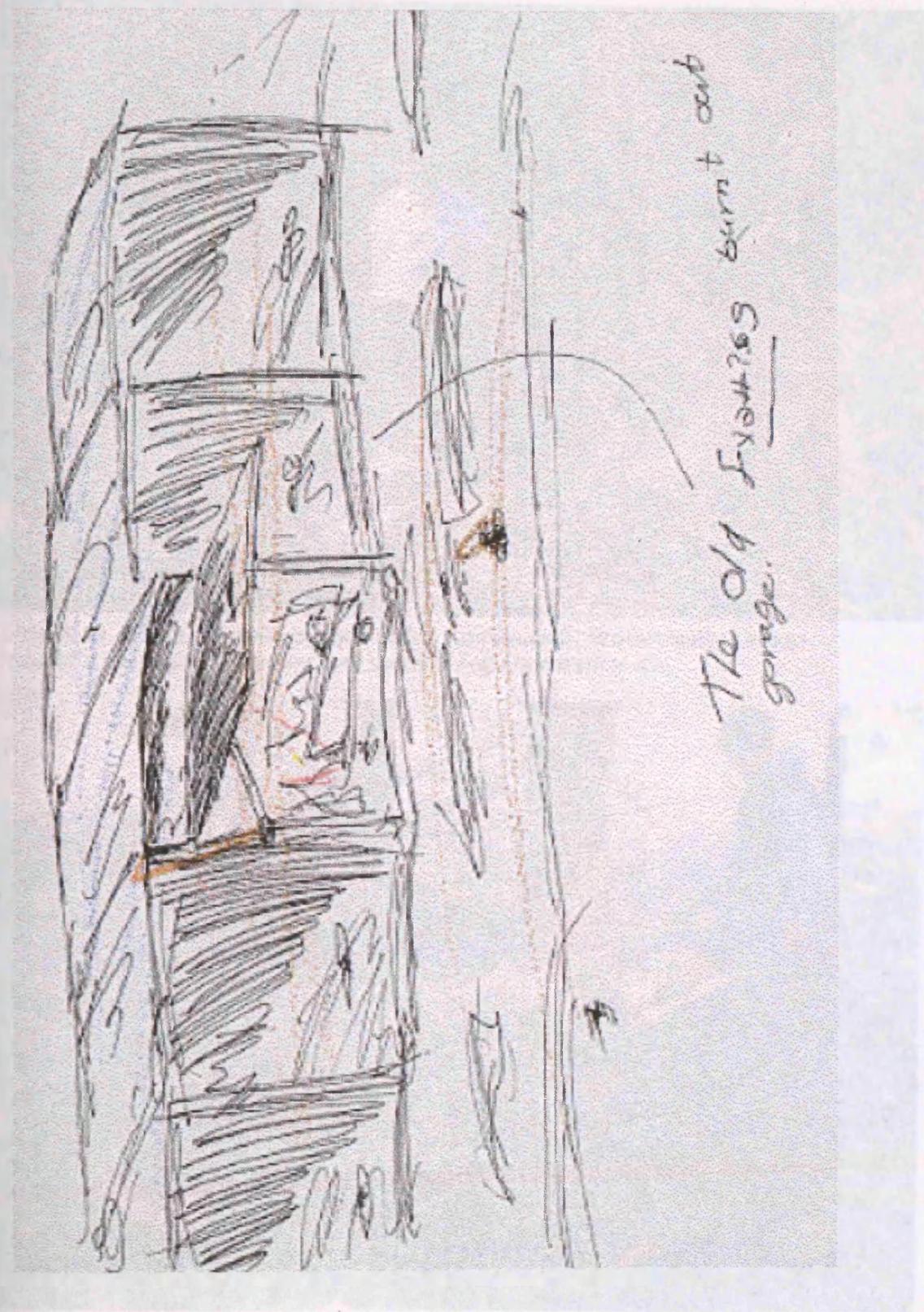


Plate 8.58: “ I used to come here a lot a couple of months ago but it’s been trashed now. We found all the things ... like cardboard and bits of metal and plastic sheet for the roof ...”
(12 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 8.59: This is den number one called ‘timberland’. We normally have to rebuild it every time we come here because someone trashes it.



Plate 8.59 shows one example of a natural den and the following extract from field notes provides an accompanying place narrative.

Vignette 8.3: "Timberland": the life and times of a natural den
(Neighbourhood tour with 11 year old boy, 20/2/97)

On arrival at one of his dens Ben observes that somebody has 'trashed' it and says so nonchalantly. He says quite coolly that it happens all the time and immediately sets to rebuild it. He pulls all the logs away then methodically replaces each one in a square around a young tree. They then put smaller twigs and leaves on top. Earth is pushed around the bottom log nearest the ground to seal the gap. His friend (who has accompanied us) is desperate to be accepted by (Ben) and offers to bring some plastic covers from home. Ben's response suggests that his friend is trying too hard and being too practical and hasn't grasped the essence of the activity. As Ben diplomatically insists, it is about using what they can find. In exasperation his friend suggests that it looks just about finished, however Ben says it still needs more work done on it. He wants it right. The den in this case is referred to as a hideout. When finished Ben climbs on top of the structure in order to get up the tree. The tree serves as a lookout. They can then descend back down into the den to hideout.

Dens and hide outs in nature such as this are sites of multiple place uses as different groups of young people use the same place and no doubt in turn each personalise the den in their own right. As one 10 year old boy states about his dens:

"... if we find it it's ours, if they find it it's theirs."
(10 year old boy, suburban)

In most cases young people are aware of other young people using 'their' dens but accept it as inevitable. The 11 year old boy in the case study above states:

"I don't mind if others use it and make it better, but I can't be doing with those that trash them. There's another den called "cats keep" but it keeps getting trashed so I don't go there now."
(11 year old boy, suburban)

However in another case a 13 year old boy expresses his annoyance at other young people using his den by stating:

"... other young people come here - mainly at night ... I don't like it when others come as it's our place and we want to keep it a secret. If others build a den we just pull it down."
(13 year old boy, suburban)

The fourth type of den are hideaways within pre-existing natural refuges. This is the most numerous of the dens that came to light in the course of this study with examples in both inner city and suburban locations. They are typically gaps within a small coppice or piece of undergrowth (Plates 8.60, 8.61). These types of dens tend to be used in three types of ways. First as a brief hiding place, second as a refuge to be alone or get away from family and third as a place to go and eat sweets and talk.

In many cases these type of dens are places within the undergrowth - rather than a definite structure. In one case a 13 year old boy refers to his den as the whole wood, within which he has a 'proper' den and a look out. The fourth type of den are simple (normally natural) landmarks which serve as bases or meeting points. This might be a tree or a bush or a place by the river.

Dens and bases as described in the last two cases are almost imaginary in that they are present only in the minds and spirits of the young people concerned. In Plate 8.62 this particular den is characterised as a house complete with hallways and doorways, albeit not evident to the onlooker. The particular door in the photo is the garage door because it is where the bikes get driven in and is constructed out of twigs hung over bits of string. However, dens are important beyond the satisfaction derived in their construction. They also provide an opportunity for developing and consolidating friendships.

"... dens are important because you can learn something new about friends and about friendships by getting on well and sharing."
(10 year old boy, suburban)

The results presented here have suggested that dens are sources of pride, ownership, achievement and belonging for young people and provide a safe, and often secret, haven outside of the family home. They also provide excellent examples of the multiple forms of place adaptation that young people engage in.

Dens, hideouts and bases are important facets of young people's geographies. They are in effect hidden geographical worlds of childhood, constructed within the shadows and margins of adult worlds. However, dens are environmentally precarious features vulnerable to competing place values, between different young people and with adults. Local planners and decision makers are frequently unaware of the special status of young people's 'hidden places' such as dens. As such, in the course of urban land use, planning and redevelopment, environmental opportunities valued by young people may be lost. The competing perspectives and environmental values of young people and local planners will be considered in more detail in Chapter Thirteen.

Plate 8.60: "... we hide in here and spy on people or just sit and talk, we don't do much else here"
(10 year old girl, suburban)



Plate 8.61: A den in the corner of an inner city park: "... we just sit here and talk sometimes ... it's good to have somewhere to run away to"
(10 year old boy, inner city)



Plate 8.62: " This is base number two - 'cat's keep'. Another of our dens.



Young people and their environmental concerns are not always young people respond to their culture and very according to the age of various beliefs and motivations which characterise particular groups of young people. Green organisations incorporate white values and structures, young people's activities of age is often a response to constraining environmental structures rather than an expression of defiance or disobedience.

Think through investigation of children's geographies, the capacity and creativity of young people as social agents in their own right - a new paradigm for the first part of the book. The book examines how to facilitate young people as environmental resource and become something in this way young people's environmental needs may be better understood. One particular aspect of young people's environmental transition, which has not been acknowledged here and which is often overlooked is the phenomenon of being out. This will provide the theme of the following chapter.

8.5 Conclusion

Whatever the character of the environment young people demonstrate an abundant adeptness and resourcefulness in their creative use of their urban landscapes giving rise to rich and diverse local geographies. What emerges are places of meaning for young people within urban environments - parallel worlds which often remain hidden to the adult eye.

By way of conclusion to this chapter, three observations will be made concerning young people's use and experience of local places. First, despite the influence of cultural changes in late modernity, which have given rise to growth in commercialised leisure and recreation activities and information media, young people still value 'traditional' outdoor childhood pursuits and places. In particular parks, open green spaces and street locations are favourite places for young people in both inner and outer locations in this study.

Second, young people appear to value a variety of different pursuits and places within their local area, giving rise to complex and overlapping childhood geographies. Places of meaning for young people emerge out of the interaction between different groups of young people and their environmental contexts. The way in which young people respond to their contexts will vary according to the sets of values, beliefs and motivations which characterise particular groups of young people. Given that contexts incorporate adults values and structures, young people's adaptation of space is often a response to constraining environmental structures rather than an expression of defiance or disobedience.

Third, through investigation of children's geographies, the capacity and creativity of young people as social agents in their own right is clearly demonstrated and the rationale for facilitating young people as environmental decision makers becomes compelling. In this way young people's environmental needs may be better understood. One particular aspect of young people's environmental transactions which has not been acknowledged here and which is often misunderstood is the phenomenon of hanging out. This will provide the theme of the following chapter.

Chapter Nine

Geographies of hanging out

9.1 Introduction: locating hanging out within geographies of young people

There is a growing recognition of the diversity of children and youth cultures (Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Matthews *et al.* 1998a; Skelton and Valentine 1998), each with their own geographies. Emerging literature on the geographies of young people, pays scant attention to the phenomenon of 'hanging out' in public places. Many earlier studies of young people hanging out (see for example Corrigan 1979; James 1982) were conducted within the context of working class (particularly male) sub cultures for whom hanging out emerged as an important part of their social life (Corrigan 1979). According to these earlier interpretations of youth subcultures, hanging out on the streets was viewed in terms of symbolic expressions of resistance by working class youth. Evidence from this study, however, provides little indication of hanging out as a ritual of resistance rather, suggests that hanging out is a diverse and productive activity in its own right. Hanging out takes on a range of different forms in different places, and involves different individuals and groups, including girls as well as boys.

For many adults, hanging out is seen as an unproductive activity (Marshland 1993) in which young people pose a threat to the moral order of public life (Cahill 1990; Valentine 1996a). Views such as these, however, mask an underlying richness and diversity of young people's experiences of hanging out, and undermine the integrity of hanging out as a socially meaningful activity. James (1982) suggested that rather than doing nothing, young people are in fact doing something when they are hanging out. However, little is known about what exactly young people do when they hang out, the diverse forms that hanging out takes, the reasons why they hang out in particular places and the way in which they use the environment in each case. These aspects of young people's lives will be explored in the course of this chapter.

The chapter will begin by investigating the importance of hanging out for young people, the diverse forms it takes and the social activities undertaken whilst hanging out. It will then go on to consider the importance of 'place' in hanging out, identifying young people's preferences for particular places to hang out, the way in which place acts as a contingency factor in hanging out and what young people do in particular places. The chapter will conclude by considering gender dimensions to hanging out.

9.2 Just messing around doing stuff: the experience of hanging out

9.2.1 Hanging out as a meaningful activity

Adults and young people often have conflicting views of hanging out. For many adults, it is interpreted as being an aimless pursuit with "nothing better to do" (Marshland 1993: 47). Corrigan (1979) suggested that young people spend time hanging out as a result of a lack of alternatives. Evidence from this study, however, indicates that whilst this may be true for some young people, for many, hanging out is a meaningful social activity involving young people coming together in order to spend time with friends. In this way hanging out may be understood as a medium through which social and recreational objectives can be achieved (Noack and Silbereisen 1988; Cotterell 1996). Whilst it is conceivable that an individual may choose to hang out in a particular location on their own, there is little evidence of young people referring to solitary place activities as 'hanging out'. Instead, when asked how they most like to spend their free time, 72 per cent of young people in the inner city and 62 per cent of young people in the suburb talked about activities involving their friends. Young people also stated that they were happiest 'when they were messing about with friends' (44% inner city, 57% suburb). This chapter will therefore refer to hanging out as an activity involving friends.

Approximately two out of three young people in both locations said they often hung around with friends and did nothing in particular. Doing 'nothing in particular' does not involve the absence of meaningful activity, rather it is characterised by young people spending time together during which time spontaneous and informal interactions dominate and unprogrammed activities or actions are free to develop. Even when alternative venues exist, young people often choose to spend time hanging out outdoors. This suggests that young people do not always want a comprehensive programme of 'curricularised' (Ennew 1994) and structured activities, but instead desire some time to use as they decide. Hanging out is therefore an activity through which the social agency of young people may be given expression within different environmental contexts.

Hanging out can be interpreted as a strategy constructed by young people to meet more than one need. Hence whilst being with friends is crucial to hanging out, 'getting out' may also be paramount¹ (Table 9.1).

¹ In most cases hanging out tends to occur outdoors, but this is not always the case. Young people may also hang out indoors (see section 9.3.3)

Table 9.1: What young people most like about being outside
(% site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
|-----------------------|----|-----------------------|----|
| Freedom | 16 | Freedom | 17 |
| See/play with friends | 15 | See/play with friends | 13 |
| Fresh air | 13 | Fresh air | 11 |
| Get away from family | 9 | Better out | 9 |
| Better out | 9 | More space | 7 |
| Everything nearby | 6 | More things to do | 6 |
| Sunshine | 5 | Pleasant/clean/safe | 5 |
| Can play football | 5 | Can play football | 4 |

Nine out of ten young people in both locations stated they prefer to be outside if they can. Whilst they reveal an inclination to see and spend time with friends, being outside is clearly of importance when hanging out. This again corroborates the notion that hanging out is a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon. Table 9.1 reveals three sets of reasons to explain why young people are more inclined towards going out than staying in, which intertwine to provide a motivation for hanging out. First, in identifying the need to get away from the family and the sense of freedom they enjoy when they are out, they are in effect acknowledging the benefits of having the opportunity for self determination.

“It’s just the freedom we want ... to make as much noise as we want so that other people don’t complain ... that’s why we normally go to the park ... because we can dance, sing, do everything we want cos there’s not ... if we go in the middle of the park there’s hardly no houses around ... and ... we can just do whatever we want ... without nobody saying ‘oh you can’t do this, you can’t do that ... ” (14 year old girl, suburban)

For many young people the home provides an unsatisfactory environment to spend their free time or be with friends. Young people may have their own space within their own homes, but these are essentially parental places governed by parental rules, where they lack the freedom and autonomy to be themselves and are thwarted by interruption from family members. Another 14 year old girl said:

“I like being inside like with my family with them but sometimes you just need your space. And like if you’re inside too often you just start arguing with your parents and everything” (14 year old girl, suburban)

Many parents similarly acknowledged the importance for young people to 'get out'.

"At some point they've got to get out of the house, because you know, otherwise there's no ... everybody just goes crazy ..."

(Inner city father)

This need for separation from the family could be simply because of the therapeutic benefit of gaining respite from everyday demands or, alternatively could be because being outside offers an opportunity to nurture self dependence. This extends the notion of 'responsibility', as one of the four needs of childhood identified by Kelmer-Pringle (1986), into the socio-spatial realm of the neighbourhood.

A second reason why many young people go out if they can is because of the higher level of social opportunities available outside. At its simplest level going out allows young people to spend time with friends in a free manner. Although young people may bring friends back home in some instances (for example when the weather is bad, or to listen to music) being outside offers more space and a wider range of possibilities, for example to play football, for cycling, exploring or for fun.

"You can never get bored of being outdoors, there's always something different happens"
(10 year old boy, suburban)

"You can muck about ... having fun, just doing things you wouldn't normally do"
(11 year old boy, suburban)

"... we go out because there's nothing to do inside. It's boring to stay inside. Outside you can be with your friends, socialise and have a laugh"
(15 year old boy, inner city)

A third, not unrelated, reason why young people are allured by the 'outdoors' is in terms of a sense of enhanced well being derived from being outdoors. Whilst some young people simply stated that it is "better out," others were more exacting, stating that they enjoyed the fresh air, nature or being in the sunshine (see Chapter Eight).

"I just like being in the fresh air ... having lots more space ... dunno really ... just makes you feel better"
(11 year old boy, inner city)

Being outside for young people appears to provide some kind of benefit which they are not always able to identify, only that they like it.

9.2.2 Hanging out as a diverse social practice

Hanging out is an activity common to many different groups of young people, however, it means different things to different people. Understanding the geography of hanging out is therefore an imprecise endeavour due to variations in the way young people conceptualise their own behaviour. Whilst some young people talk unambiguously about hanging out, others, particularly younger teenagers, refer to their activities in terms of 'messaging about' or 'playing around'. This section will explore the diverse ways in which young people experience hanging out and the variable forms that hanging out takes.

Hanging out is often perceived in terms of older teenagers spending time in groups on the street. However, this study reveals that younger children also hang out together. Table 9.2 shows that hanging out increases with age in the suburb, but in the inner city the trend varies across the age range.

Table 9.2: Age differences in hanging out (% of age/site sample)

| <u>Age</u> | <u>Inner city</u> | <u>Suburb</u> |
|------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 10 | 95 | 64 |
| 11 | 70 | 77 |
| 12 | 83 | 81 |
| 13 | 77 | 83 |
| 14 | 86 | 85 |
| 15 | 90 | 83 |

In contrast to the suburban area where 64 per cent of 10 year olds said they hang out, 95 per cent of inner city 10 year olds stated that they spent time hanging out. These differences could be due to contrasting cultures of parenting wherein 10 and 11 year olds in the inner city have far greater freedom to spend time hanging out outdoors than in the suburb.

“ My mum doesn't let me go to the park on my own ... and I'm only allowed as far as (road name at end of cul-de-sac). Any further and my mum takes me in the car.”
(10 year old girl, suburb)

In the inner city area younger children have more freedom within their neighbourhood as this 10 year old girl demonstrated:

“When I go out with my friends I normally just go and call for one of my friends and then we just walk around and ...”

(10 year old girl, inner city)

The increasing trend for young people in both locations to spend time hanging out as they get older reflects a gradual easing of range restrictions, but also the increasing importance of social interaction with peers. However, hanging out for 14/15 year olds may take a different form than for 10/11 year olds giving rise to diversity in the experience of hanging out. The experience of hanging out is therefore variable within and between different groups of young people. Variations in patterns of hanging out for boys and girls will be considered in section 9.4.

Participant observation and in depth interviews reveal a diversity and richness in young people’s activities whilst hanging out, in which coherent and complex webs of communication, mutual support, inter-personal relations and multi-faceted relationships with the environment take place. Insights into what young people of different ages do when they hang out (Table 9.3) reveals that hanging out is characterised as primarily a social activity involving interpersonal communication and coming together to share common experiences. Although these are common features of young people hanging out, they vary in degree between locations.

Table 9.3: What young people do when they hang out (% of those hanging out in each location)

| <u>Inner city</u> (total no. hanging out =68) ² | | <u>Suburb</u> (total no. hanging out =81) ² | |
|---|----|---|----|
| Talk | 68 | Talk | 84 |
| Have a laugh/mess about | 51 | Have a laugh/mess about | 23 |
| Play games | 19 | Play games ³ | 7 |
| Football/sports | 7 | Walk/talk | 4 |
| Ride bikes | 3 | Ride bikes | 4 |
| Nothing in particular | 3 | Football/sports | 4 |
| Others (including shopping, listening to music) | 3 | Others (including shopping, match making) | 2 |
| Walk/talk | 1 | Walking the dog | 1 |

² Interviewees may have provided more than one response.

³ One of these responses was climbing trees.

Table 9.3 indicates that young people are most likely to spend their time talking whilst hanging out (84% suburb, 68% inner city). In contrast to adult views which interpret young people hanging out as getting up to no good or wasting time, the evidence here suggests that young people are in fact engaged in meaningful social interaction. Hanging out, as distinct from play and sport, is an important part of young people's lives in which they have the opportunity to relax and interact, to catch up on the latest news, to talk about recent events, to make future plans, to provide mutual support and generally enjoy being in the company of friends.

“... we just talk about stuff that has happened, what we've done in the day, what everybody's doing tomorrow, where we are going to meet next time, whose walking who home ...” (15 year old girl, suburban)

In this respect what young people do when they are hanging out is no different from what adults do when socialising, for example, in a pub. The only difference is that young people are in the public eye.

The second major activity young people engage in whilst hanging out is having a laugh and messing about. Whereas suburban young people are more likely to spend their time talking than young people in the inner city, the latter are more likely to spend their time having a laugh and messing about than in the suburb (51% inner city, 23% suburb). Reasons for these differences are unclear, however, it is likely that they arise through different forms of socialisation in terms of leisure lifestyles and acceptable (or 'normal') social behaviour. For example, young people in the suburb are more likely to be deterred from 'messing about'⁴ and guided into structured activities. In contrast in the inner city, parents are less likely to intervene in young people's freetime with the result that inner city boys and girls are more likely to be left to their own devices in making use of their freetime. Further insights into what 'having a laugh' and 'messing about' means for young people will be provided in the following section.

9.2.3 Having a laugh and messing about

The common characteristic of hanging out for different groups is spending time with friends. Hanging out is, therefore, essentially a universal euphemism for a generic set of social activities young people commonly engage in whilst spending time together. When asked what they most have in mind to do when they go out, young people almost unanimously seek the company of friends and to 'have fun', 'mess around', 'doss about', 'have a laugh' or 'just do stuff'. Whilst the form that these activities take varies between groups, these generic characteristics of hanging out are overwhelmingly consistent. For many young people, having a laugh or messing about and being with friends are synonymous social ventures, as this 14 year old boy related:

⁴ The practice of 'messing about' will be explored in section 9.3.3.

“... I normally wouldn't ... go out and have that much of a good a time on my own, so I would have to be with my friends, but having a good time is probably more important than just (emphasises) being with my friends ... because I see my friends every day and every night anyway”
(14 year old boy, suburban)

Having fun or messing about involve a range of activities undertaken according to whim. These normally involve larking about (Plate 9.1), play fighting (Plate 9.2), joking, teasing, mucking about (Plate 9.3) constructing narratives of bravado, doing impressions, playing games (Plate 9.4) and keeping each other entertained. For example, on one occasion young people were found enthusiastically playing charades round the side of the community centre (Plate 9.5).

For many young people, having fun appears to be a creative and important way in which they can regulate the impact of other aspects of their lives such as family and school, as the extract of a conversation with a 14 year old below suggests.

Interviewer: “What do you most have in mind to do when you go out?”

Girl: “Have fun. Forget about school. Relax and have a good time with all my friends.”

Interviewer: “What does having fun mean to you?”

Girl: “Just letting my hair down, not being worried about what I've got to do. Especially after school when you've been told what to do all day. You just wanna go somewhere where there's no rules or nothing. So having fun really, just so that I can do what I want, within reason, where I know that I can muck about and just laugh about my friend's talk.

One 14 year old girl described their activities whilst hanging out, in this case in a friend's house, in the following way:

“... just doss ... relax ... nothing really when I think about it. We don't do nothing. We watch films, get some videos out. Then this half term my friends have decided to become DJs and they were trying to connect stereos up together ... But no, we don't really do nothing ... (pause) ... just sit there, talk, muck about ... stuff that we can't do when other people are about. That's it really”
(14 year old girl, suburban)

This quote reveals the importance of social opportunities which provide the freedom for serendipity in their use of free time. What it also reveals is that dossing about does not mean doing nothing, rather entails a range of activities which young people may not necessarily set out to engage in. Whilst providing entertainment such activities also serve as stop gaps until something better comes along. Observational surveys reveal that young people are often simply waiting for something to happen or waiting for someone to suggest an idea for something to do (Plate 9.6). To this extent hanging out is about managing time.

Plate 9.1: Larking about round the back of the community centre



Plate 9.2: Play fighting: "... we just hang about the telephone boxes flooring each other (...) and tripping each other up and play fighting and just like ... hanging about (...) and there's a bunch of girls that come down so we just have a laugh with them as well sometimes"
(13 year old boy, inner city)



Plate 9.3: "Just messing about down Spencer football ground with Steve and Michael"
(13 year old boy, inner city)



Plate 9.4: Hanging about on the street looking for action



Plate 9.5: An evening's entertainment: playing charades



Plate 9.6: Sitting around waiting for something to happen



Kelmer-Pringle (1986) identifies 'new experiences' as one of the needs of children. Hanging out provides a medium through which new experiences may occur. For many young people the neighbourhood becomes all too familiar, progressively yielding fewer new opportunities. In this way local places become increasingly less able to satisfy the changing needs of young people. At the same time many young people are either not allowed out of their neighbourhood or do not have the financial means or transport to pursue alternatives.

Faced with this situation young people tend to adopt one of a number of strategies. One scenario is that, in search of excitement and new experiences, they draw on their own creativity to explore hidden corners of their neighbourhood or engage in novel ways of using their local environments (see Chapter Eight). However, in the course of these activities, young people may transgress the 'boundaries' imposed by adults and in so doing be seen as threatening or 'out of place' (as will be considered in Chapter Ten). Another scenario is to look to drugs and alcohol for stimulation.

9.2.4 Hanging out as an expression of identity

Whilst not evident from the interview data, participant observation during this study revealed that hanging out is important in creating a social forum in which identities, roles and behaviours are shaped, challenged and expressed. In this way hanging out provides opportunities for social learning and personal development. Contrary to popular views that groups of young people hanging about are engaging in acts of defiance or trouble making, evidence from this study suggests that young people's behaviour whilst hanging out is motivated not by their position with respect to adults but with respect to themselves and their peers.

"We're normally too busy chatting or whatever to worry about whether anyone's watching".
(15 year old boy, suburban)

Figures 9.1a & b together with Vignette 9.1, provide an illustration of internal group dynamics whilst hanging out, in which behaviour can be closely linked to identity and status within the group. In this case the group is all male. The vignette shows that the activities tend to be motivated more by questions of identity and social dynamics within the group rather than with adults. Indeed there is little evidence in this study to suggest that young people engage in performances of display as markers of resistance with respect to adults. Instead, if conflict with adults arises it is the result of young people's particular use of the environment and adult attitudes towards their presence, rather than an avowed intention to conflict with adults. Adultist views which interpret young people's behaviour whilst hanging out as anti-social, perpetuate moral panics about young people in public places and undermine their integrity as place users. The following section will reveal the spatial nature of hanging out, in terms of the types of places young people choose to hang out in and the reasons for these choices.

Vignette 9.1: 'Constructing and contesting male identities'

(Extract from field notes 22/8/97, 8.35pm, the Play area, Semilong)⁵

Six boys aged 10 -14 years hanging around the play equipment in the play area. Three of them are familiar to me and three I have not seen before. As I approach, the three 'newcomers' are wary of me and despite friendly greetings from the other three, immediately adopt a defensive and aggressive stance. The talk is about fights, who is 'hard' and who is 'harder'. Wayne it appears has recently been beaten up by Mickey Lea. The 14 year old, Luke, just listens. Then Luke's mate Stevie turns up with Aaron (age 13). Aaron wants to play football, but no one else does. After 5 minutes he leaves asking where Adam is. Apparently some of them are off to a club. Moments later 15 year old Adam (Luke's brother) comes by. One of the younger lads asks Adam whose toughest between him and his brother. Adam modestly says that his brother is the tougher. Apparently Luke and Stevie go to boxing at the working men's club, as does Wayne. Adam then produces a tenner and some change from his pocket and goes off to the shop. Stevie follows. Adam comes back with some chocolate milk and heads off home. Stevie sits on the 'spider' (item of play equipment) eats a bag of crisps and chucks the packet on the ground. He then opens a chocolate bar and scoffs that. By 8.50pm two local girls turn up in a car. Stevie and Luke are immediately there chatting them up through the fence. One of the 'newcomers' then proves he can climb the fence. Jamie does not want to be out done so does likewise. When they come down off the fence, they jibe each other and eventually break into a fight, apparently testing each other out. There is street credibility at stake here! The girls then leave after which Ryan turns up with a can of Red Stripe lager and a big smile. He is feeling smug. Seems like he's got draw, so Stevie, Luke and Ryan go off for a smoke. Wayne tags along hopefully, but then reappears a few minutes later. All of a sudden a mother of one of the 'newcomers' arrives looking for him. Apparently he has to be in at 9pm, and she has come to make sure he is. He goes but has left some street credibility behind. Wayne and Jamie do not have to be in until 10 pm.

⁵ The names of the people in this vignette have been changed.

Figure 9.1a: Behaviour observation of young people hanging out in an inner city playground.

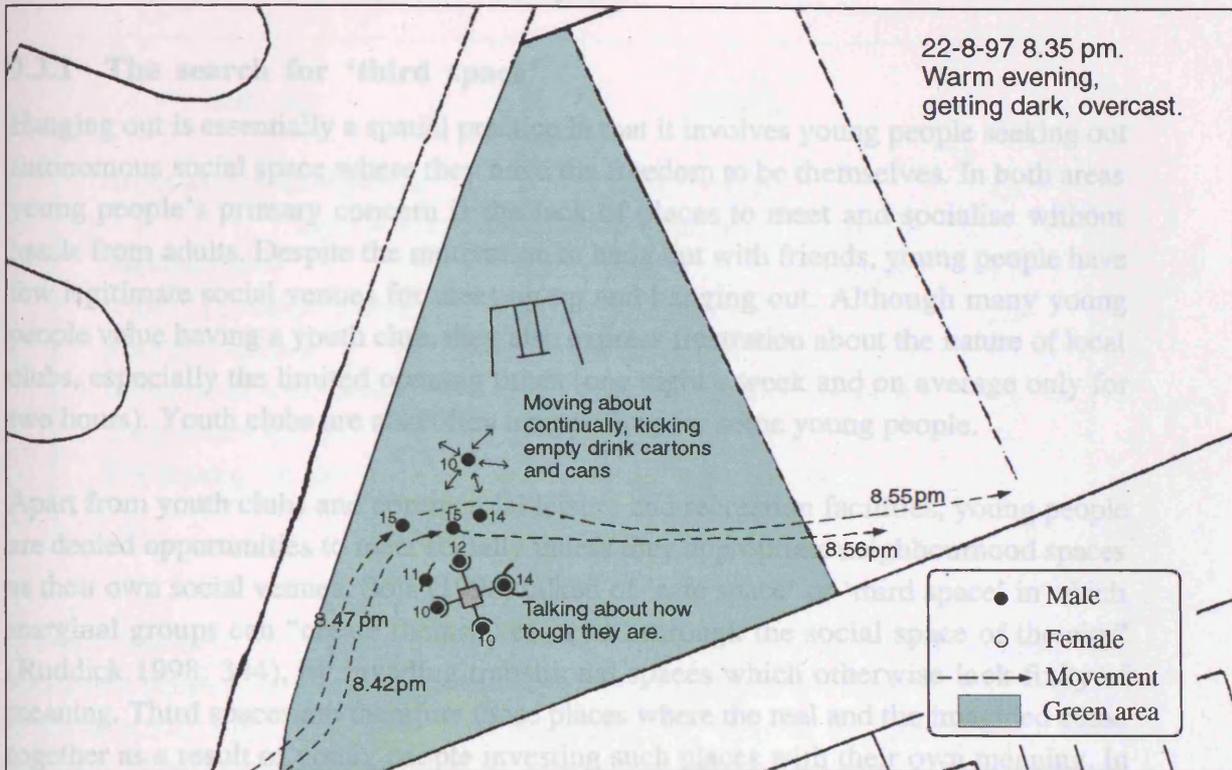
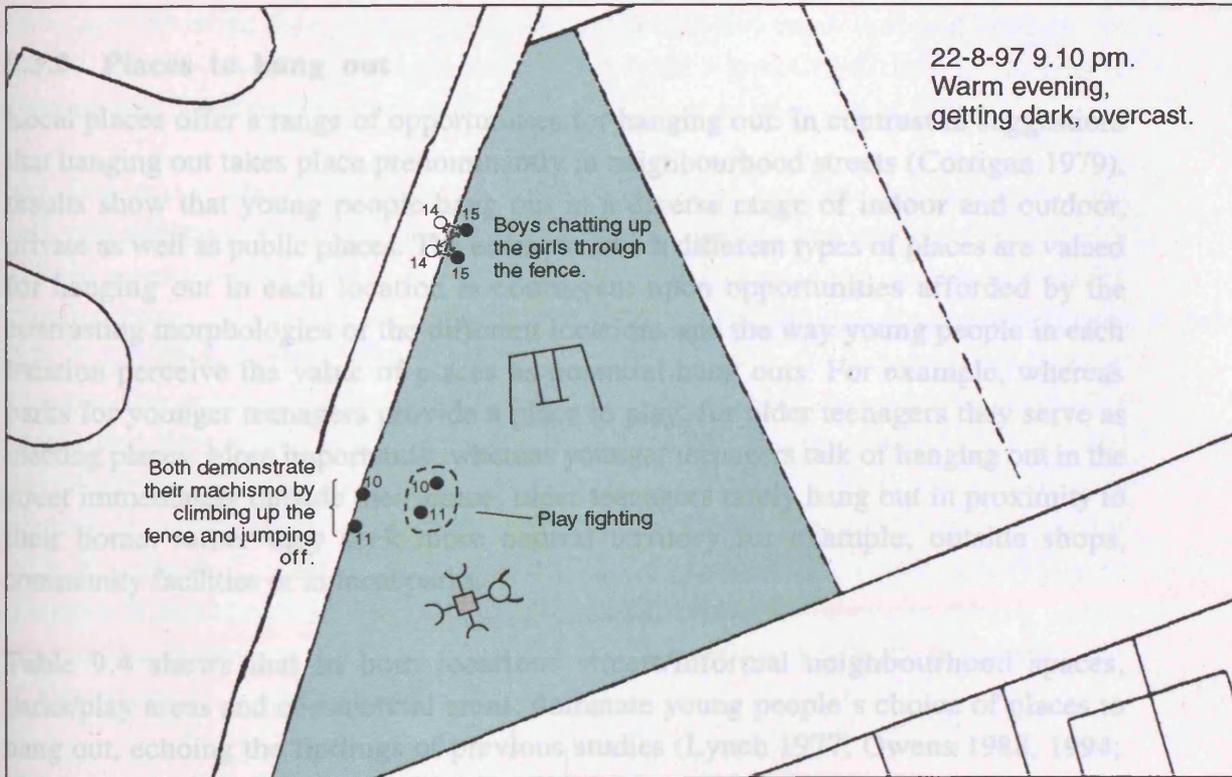


Figure 9.1b: Behaviour observation of young people hanging out in an inner city playground.



9.3 Hanging out in place and space

9.3.1 The search for 'third space'

Hanging out is essentially a spatial practice in that it involves young people seeking out autonomous social space where they have the freedom to be themselves. In both areas young people's primary concern is the lack of places to meet and socialise without hassle from adults. Despite the motivation to hang out with friends, young people have few legitimate social venues for meeting up and hanging out. Although many young people value having a youth club, they also express frustration about the nature of local clubs, especially the limited opening times (one night a week and on average only for two hours). Youth clubs are also often unappealing for some young people.

Apart from youth clubs and commercial leisure and recreation facilities, young people are denied opportunities to meet socially unless they appropriate neighbourhood spaces as their own social venues. Soja (1996) talked of 'safe space' or 'third space' in which marginal groups can "create themselves in and through the social space of the city" (Ruddick 1998: 344), by invading transitional spaces which otherwise lack fixity of meaning. Third spaces are therefore those places where the real and the imagined come together as a result of young people investing such places with their own meaning. In this way hanging out, for example on the streets, is the outcome of young people mediating the disjunction between their desire to socialise and the lack of places intended for young people.

9.3.2 Places to hang out

Local places offer a range of opportunities for hanging out. In contrast to suggestions that hanging out takes place predominantly in neighbourhood streets (Corrigan 1979), results show that young people hang out in a diverse range of indoor and outdoor, private as well as public places. The extent to which different types of places are valued for hanging out in each location is contingent upon opportunities afforded by the contrasting morphologies of the different locations and the way young people in each location perceive the value of places as potential hang outs. For example, whereas parks for younger teenagers provide a place to play, for older teenagers they serve as meeting places. More importantly, whereas younger teenagers talk of hanging out in the street immediately outside their home, older teenagers rarely hang out in proximity to their home, rather they seek more neutral territory for example, outside shops, community facilities or in local parks.

Table 9.4 shows that in both locations streets/informal neighbourhood spaces, parks/play areas and commercial areas, dominate young people's choice of places to hang out, echoing the findings of previous studies (Lynch 1977; Owens 1988, 1994; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Woolley and Amin 1995; Malone 1998).

Table 9.4: Popularity of local places as hang outs (% of total site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
|-------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| Street/informal neighbourhood space | 58 | Park/play area | 42 |
| Park/play area | 52 | Street/informal neighbourhood space | 31 |
| Other Northampton area | 16 | Commercial areas | 26 |
| Round local area | 13 | Each others houses | 17 |
| Commercial area/town | 9 | Other Northampton area | 12 |
| Each others houses | 7 | Round local area | 9 |
| Community places | 1 | Community places | 1 |

Despite similarities in the range of places young people value for hanging out, locational differences are evident. Inner city young people are more likely to use the street/informal neighbourhood spaces for hanging out, whereas suburban young people are more likely to favour commercial areas and each others houses. Figures 9.2 and 9.3 indicate the specific locations where young people have been reported and observed hanging out. However, these maps are based only on data from the semi-structured interviews and places where repeated observations were undertaken. They also only show specific rather than general types of places mentioned (such as round local area or at each other's houses). The maps therefore provide a simplified view of patterns of hanging out. None the less some important place characteristics can be identified.

The first type of places young people value as places to hang out are the 'street' and informal neighbourhood spaces. These commonly include garden walls (Plate 9.7), school premises after school hours (Plate 9.8), incidental open spaces, electricity junction boxes (Plate 9.9), ends of terraces (Plate 9.10) and the street itself (Plates 9.11, 9.12). In most cases these places are chosen because they are near to the home or because they provide a convenient place to sit without adult interference. Table 9.3 shows that young people are more likely to hang out on the street or in informal neighbourhood spaces in the inner city than in the suburb. This is partly due to an absence of suitable alternatives, such as homespaces for hanging out, but also the result of local cultures. There are two dimensions to this. First, because community life on the street is part of a common characteristic of daily life in the inner city, young people are less conspicuous on the street. Second, hanging about on the streets is less tolerated in the suburb.

Figure 9.2: Places where young people hang out in inner city Semilong.

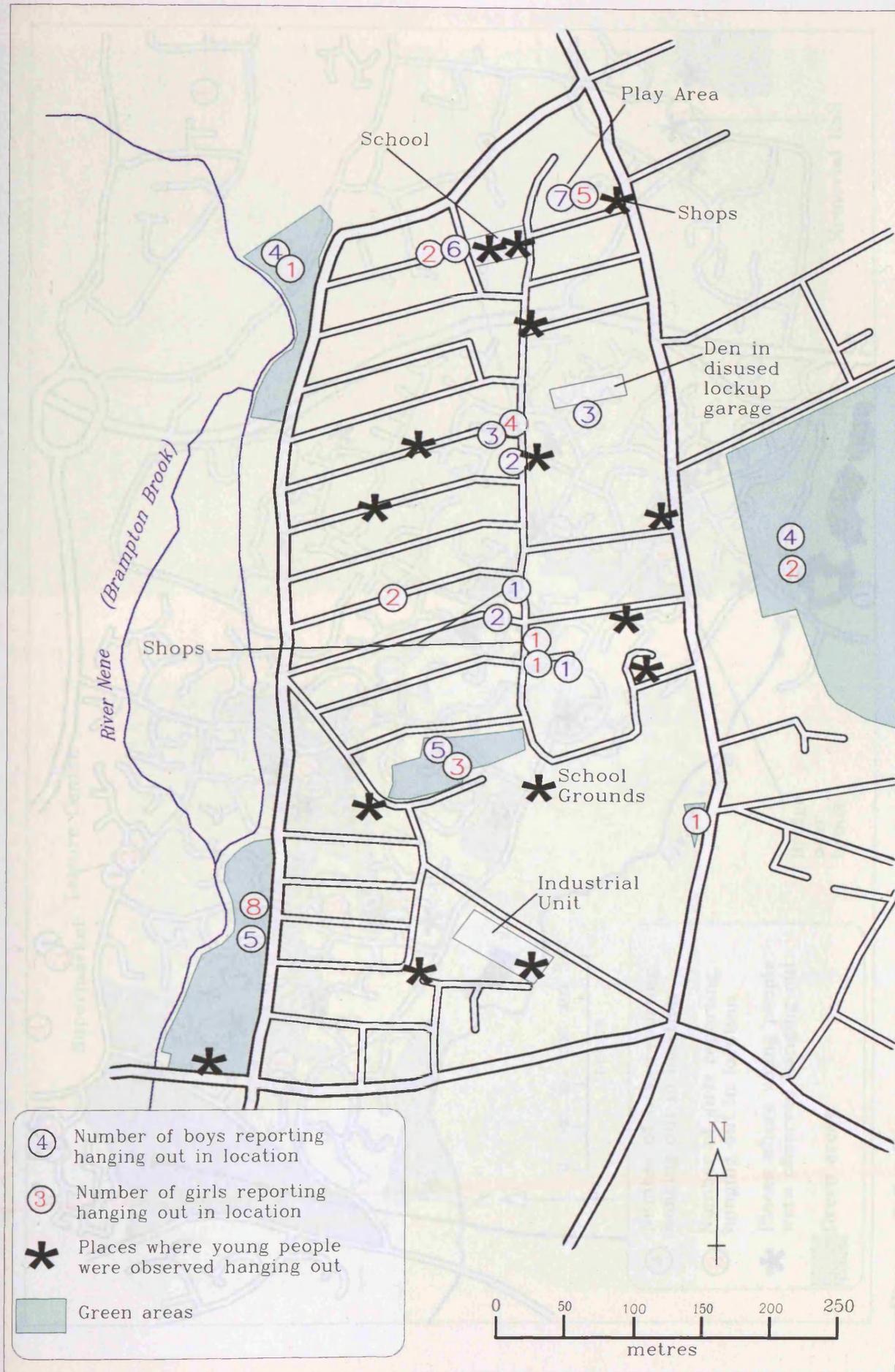


Plate 9.7: 'Make yourselves comfortable lads': sitting around on a garden wall



Plate 9.8: School grounds after hours: a convenient 'third space'.



Plate 9.9: Using street furniture as somewhere to sit



Plate 9.10: A local meeting point: “this is where we all meet by the green”
(15 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 9.11: Hanging out 'at the top'



Plate 9.12: Hanging out in a suburban cul-de-sac



The morphology of the two areas are also instrumental in contributing to differences in hanging out. The more 'tightly planned' suburban landscape, made up of either private residential spaces, private commercial spaces or public spaces allotted for a particular land use, yields fewer 'liminal' or 'third' spaces that young people can colonise. Whereas abandoned or disused sites are a permanent feature in the inner city, in the suburb such places are limited to building sites which offer only short term opportunities for hanging out (Plate 9.13). As a result suburban young people are forced away from residential areas to open green spaces (Plates 9.14 and 9.15).

Hanging out outdoors in neighbourhood space therefore does not only involve the street, it also involves discreet and sheltered informal neighbourhood spaces, for example around local shops, community facilities and in parks/playgrounds. In the suburban location one of the community centres provided the focal point for many young people (Plate 9.16). Hidden refuges such as this provide a place to go away from the adult gaze, as well as light and a degree of shelter, to sit around and chat, smoke, drink and mess about. In the evenings especially, these places act as outdoor social clubs for young people. Despite being constantly told off from adults for hanging around the centre, observational surveys reveal complex patterns of activities which are not unlike those inside a youth club or even a pub as Figure 9.4 and Vignette 9.2 indicate.

A second set of places where young people choose to hang out are parks and play areas. As mentioned in Chapter Eight, parks provide the space to spend time messing about, play games and take advantage of the facilities provided. However, young people may also colonise play areas and parks without an intention to use the facilities but because they are convenient places to meet up and spend time together away from the adult gaze. In these cases young people use the play equipment as furniture to sit around on (Plate 9.17). Sibley (1995a) drew attention to the way adolescents may be perceived as being 'out of place' in children's play grounds. For Sibley (1995a) teenagers' discrepant use of children's playgrounds is a reflection of their 'ambiguous status', wherein they seek to distance themselves from childhood but are simultaneously denied access to the adult world. The result is for children's play grounds to become 'liminal spaces' for teenagers to hang out in.

Plate 9.13: Proposed building plots provide a space to hang around



Plate 9.14: "The 'green bench' where we meet when the Far Cotton lot come over. It's somewhere to sit and talk and muck about and then we go down the park"
(14 year old girl, suburban)



Plate 9.15: A place to spend time with friends and get away from it all



Plate 9.16: "The community centre. We sit a round the back out of the wind".
(15 year old boy, suburban)



Vignette 9.2: Hanging out at Blackmore community centre

Round the Blackmore community centre is one of two major hang outs in the suburban area. Every evening between 7.30 and 8.00pm young people start to gather, with as many as forty young people gathering in one night. In the summer when the evenings are still light, young people stay out of sight behind the Community Centre. When it gets dark, young people freely associate around the open field - standing and sitting on the ground, the play equipment and the solitary bench or round the side of the centre. In a bid to dissuade young people from congregating in this area, the bench has been taken away. Even the litter bin has been removed with the result that the area has become strewn with litter. There are few other place users at this time so this area temporarily becomes an outdoor youth club. The youth club, inside the centre is only open for two hours a week on a Thursday night. The lack of financial commitment and resources means that even when the young people get inside the centre there is little to do and so the youth club becomes little more than an inside place to hang around. Even before and after the youth club young people hang around outside the centre. The young people readily admit that they are bored, but are motivated to hang out by the desire to be with friends, even in sub-zero temperatures. When the weather becomes particularly inclement they huddle close to the sides of the Centre. Although they are congregating in public open space, they are accused by the secretary of trespassing. As a result of graffiti and vandalism to the Centre, fencing has now been erected to keep young people away. Nonetheless the lack of alternative places to go, the proximity to the shops and the relative autonomy this place provides gives rise to the persistence of young people hanging out here and the consequent identification with this place as their patch.

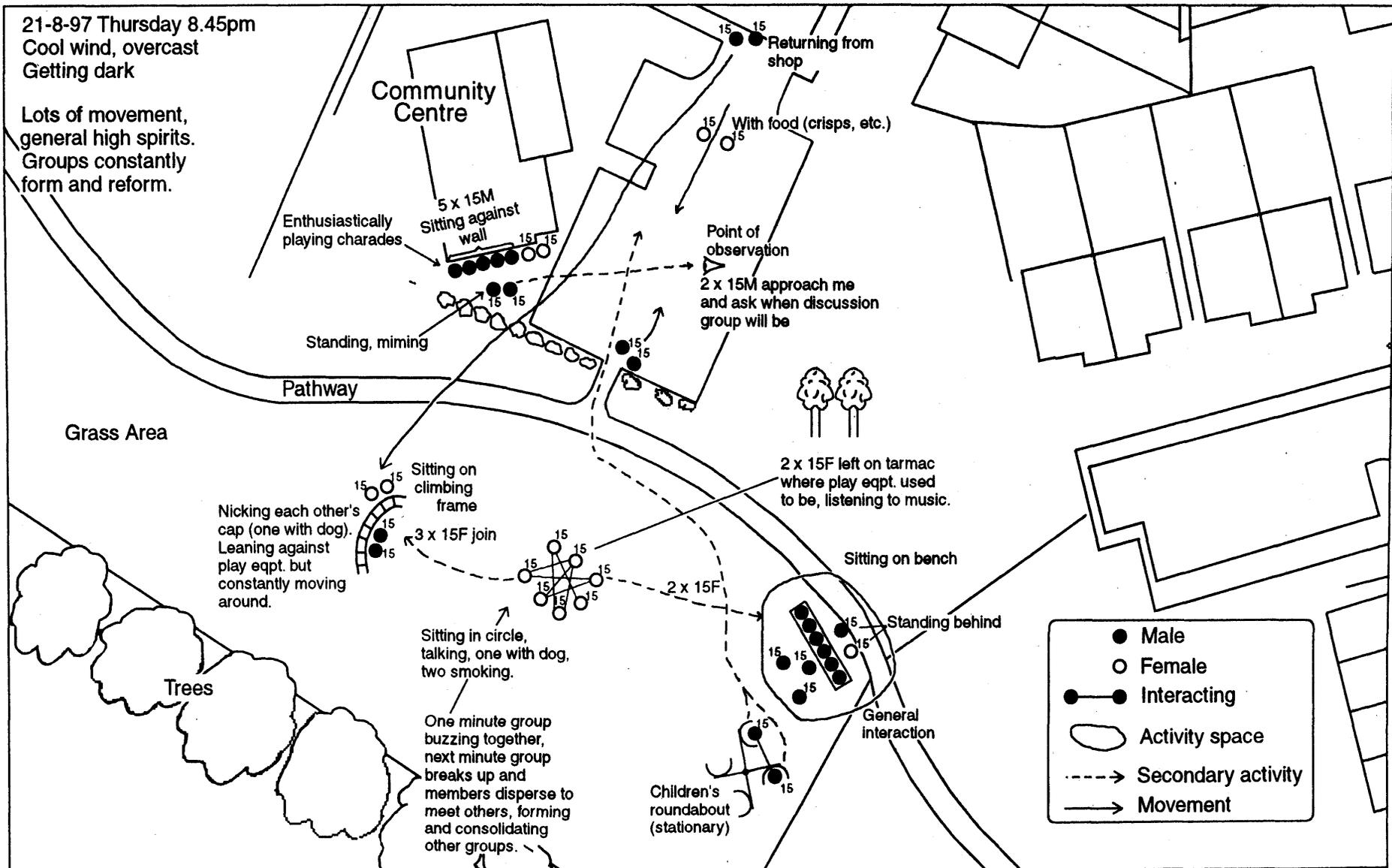


Figure 9.4: Complex patterns of activity hanging out around a suburban community centre.

Plate 9.17: Using play equipment to sit around on



A third set of places where young people hang out is around commercial places such as local shops.⁶ Local commercial areas are neutral and transitory semi public spaces where young people can blend in with the everyday activities of people coming and going. Apart from the opportunity to buy drinks, snacks and cigarettes, they offer warmth, shelter and light.

“ Macs, where I hang around at night with my mates, we either hang around there or sit in the park at the back and in the chippy from about 7pm-9pm”
(13 year old girl, suburban)

In the suburb, commercial areas are more popular as hang outs than in the inner city (Table 9.3) largely due to two vibrant shopping locales in the area which act as a magnet for young people (Figure 9.5) However, observation surveys suggest that despite the data shown in Table 9.3, young people in the inner city are also frequently sighted hanging around outside local shops. The difference between observed and reported behaviour is possibly that, young people do not class such activities as hanging out, rather just a pause to eat sweets and ice creams before returning to the nearby play area or moving on (Plate 9.18).

⁶ Young people also spend time hanging out in town centre shopping malls. However, this is not an explicit focus of this study so will not be considered here.

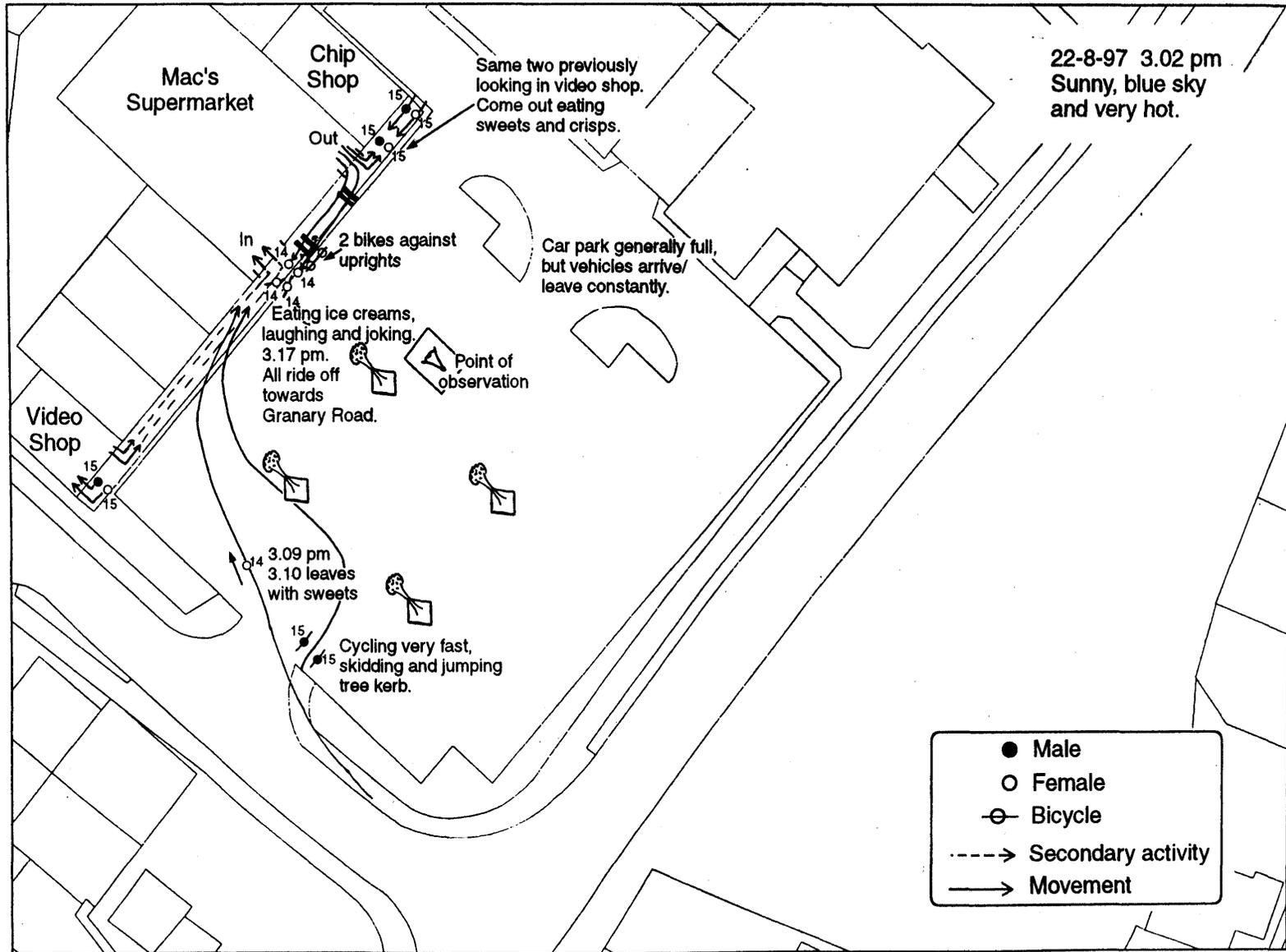


Figure 9.5 Behaviour observation of young people's activity around a local suburban retail area.

Plate 9.18: Stocking up with sweets and refreshments before going back to the play area.



9.20) or among (Plate 9.21). Others appear to be even less directed by the environmental setting, preferring instead to walk or sit whilst they hang out.

'I think there is 3-4m enough for young people. They've got quite a few shops and things but not... like... there's not enough for young people really. That's why a lot of the time we're just walking about and hanging out.' (14 year old boy, interview)

rather than simply hanging out. This is an expression of young people's agency, and the nature of the contexts in which young people hang out and the way young people respond to these contexts provides an alternative understanding of the phenomenon of hanging out as a cultural activity that is shaped by their environmental contexts. For example, in the case of the 'open' public places, young people hang out from their place using young people often simply move us to find alternative places to gather. In this respect places are merely contextual factors interacting upon the primary cultural and linguistic etc.

The attraction of different places to hang out varies according to a number of criteria for example: the convenience of the place in terms of accessibility, the availability of light and shelter, having somewhere to sit, the availability of space to do what they want and freedom from adult interference. One 14 year old boy talked of the merits of the place where he hangs out in a neighbouring area by stating:

“...where I meet friends every night. There’s nice sneaky places down the side to not be seen and have a spliff. There is a phone box over the road and everyone knows the number so they call to see who’s out. Everything you need is around ... in (place name) there’s places to sit like ... around in the streets ... You can basically find anywhere to hang around, so there’s little places everywhere. You can go and sit in the churchyard, you can sit outside the memorial, up the rec, on the climbing frame in the rec, little hut in the rec, little tin hut. Go and sit in there and things like that. But there’s nowhere like that in (own neighbourhood) to go”
(14 year old boy, suburban)

This quote illustrates an underlying rationale in the choices of places to hang out. However each place may afford different possibilities for hanging out according to how young people seek to spend their time. Hence whilst younger teenagers tend to use parks for games and sports, older teenagers value open green spaces as places where they have the freedom to sit and talk away from adults (Plate 9.19), to drink beer (Plate 9.20) or smoke (Plate 9.21). Others appear to be even less directed by the environmental setting, preferring instead to walk about whilst they hang out.

“I think there is ... not enough for young people. They’ve got quite a few shops and things but not ... like ... there’s not enough for young people to do. That’s why a lot of the time we’re just walking about and things”
(14 year old girl, suburban)

Rather than seeing hanging out simply as an expression of young people’s agency, consideration of the contexts in which young people hang out and the way young people respond to these contexts provides an alternative understanding of the phenomenon of hanging out as a reflexive social process within different environmental contexts. For example, in the event of ‘open’ public places giving rise to hassle from other place users, young people often simply move on to find alternative places to gather. In this respect places are merely contingent factors impinging upon the primary objective of hanging out.

Plate 9.19: Play areas provide a space to sit around and talk in a large group



Plate 9.20: A discreet place to sit and have a beer



Plate 9.21: A place to stop for a fag



Conversation with a 14-year-old boy reveals:

Boy: "Well a lot of times some people's parents won't let us just go round to their's."

Interviewer: "So you just go to wherever there is...?"

Boy: "Yeah... and just... go all over the place. For 'bout three weeks over the last month, everyone was down in Harington (village), cos there was a girl who had a fire-bomb then."

(Interview with 14-year-old boy, suburban)

While being outside provides advantages in terms of space to mess about, play football or congregate in larger numbers given the situation, young people will often choose indoor places to hang out where they can sit and talk, listen to music and be warm. This is especially the case in winter when it is cold and worse when it is dark. Indeed young people in both areas (47% East Hunsbury; 24% Strablong) stated that what they most disliked about being outside was the wet and cold. However, within the context of a lack of opportunities for hanging out in indoor locations, the importance of being with friends is such that young people will hang out even in harsh weather conditions (Plate 9.27). In contrast, in the summer being outside is an attractive proposition.

"...mainly we don't have anywhere to go when it's warm in the winter. It's alright in the summer, we're always out, but in the winter there's only the youth club like Thursday nights and that's about it mainly unless we've got somebody's house to go to." (14-year-old girl, suburban)

9.3.3 Hanging out indoors

It is often assumed that hanging out is an outdoor activity. Table 9.3 reveals that young people also talk of hanging out in each other's homes. This is more likely for suburban young people than those in the inner city. The tendency for young people to hang out in each others homes depends on the size and availability of household space. Suburban properties are typically larger than in the inner city, allowing young people to shut themselves away in their own room with friends and be undisturbed. In the inner city, the houses are not only smaller but many young people do not have their own bedroom. The second factor relates to the socio-economic makeup of the two areas and the fact that it is more likely for both parents in East Hunsbury to be in employment than is the case in Semilong and therefore greater opportunities for young people to have the house to themselves.

“... one of the friends whose house we've been round, his dad isn't in so we get to do what we want ... as long as it's all tidied up his dad doesn't mind.”
(14 year old girl, suburban)

Friend's houses constitute important contingency opportunities for hanging out, when parents are not there, providing what is referred to as 'free houses,' as this conversation with a 14 year old boy reveals:

Boy: “Well a lot of time some people's parents aren't in so just go round to their's”.

Interviewer: “So you just go to where ever there's ... ?”

Boy: “Yeah ... and just ... go all over the place. For about three weeks ... over the last month, everyone was down in Hardingstone (village), cos there was a girl who had a free house there”.

(Interview with 14 year old boy, suburban)

Whilst being outside provides advantages in terms of space to mess about, play football or congregate in larger numbers given the choice, young people will often choose indoor places to hang out where they can sit and talk, listen to music and be warm. This is especially the case in winter when it is cold and wet or when it is dark. Indeed young people in both areas (47% East Hunsbury; 21% Semilong) stated that what they most disliked about being outside was the wet and cold. However, within the context of a lack of opportunities for hanging out in indoor locations, the importance of being with friends is such that young people will hang out even in harsh weather conditions (Plate 9.22). In contrast, in the summer being outside is an attractive proposition.

“ really we don't have anywhere to go where it's warm in the winter. It's alright in the summer, we're always out, but in the winter there's only the youth club like Thursday nights and that's about it really unless we've got somebody's house to go round”
(14 year old girl, suburban)

Plate 9.22: Hanging out in Winter: "what's important is not whether we're in or out, but being able to have fun ... be with friends, though we prefer to be in"
 (14 year old boy, suburban)



Table 9.5 shows that regardless of gender young people in the inner city are more likely to hang out than those in the suburbs, suggesting that location rather than gender is the most influential factor in hanging out. However, when asked if they 'often' hang around with friends doing nothing in particular? a different picture emerges, with suburban girls most likely to agree with this statement (Table 9.6)

Table 9.6: Young people who hang about with friends doing nothing in particular (% possible sample)

| | Inner city | Suburb |
|-------|------------|--------|
| Boys | 63 | 24 |
| Girls | 29 | 58 |

The researcher did not conduct an additional program about young people's leisure time when they simply a double check, using the restriction of young people who do not hang out in particular (Hoxby, 1992; Coakley, 1999), to investigate the extent to which hanging out is important to young people

It is clear from the discussion so far that place is an important factor influencing the geography of young people hanging out. One further distinction important at this stage is between gender.

9.4 Gender patterns of hanging out: a significant distinction?

In contrast to many previous studies (Cohen 1972; Corrigan 1979; James 1982) which characterise hanging out mainly as a preoccupation of working class (largely male) young people, evidence from this study reveals that hanging out is a widely practised activity amongst girls as well as boys in both locations (Table 9.5).

Table 9.5: Gender differences in hanging out (% gender/site sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | <u>Suburb</u> |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <u>Boys</u> | 89 | 81 |
| <u>Girls</u> | 83 | 79 |

Table 9.5 shows that regardless of gender young people in the inner city are more likely to hang out than those in the suburb, suggesting that location rather than gender is the most influential factor in hanging out. However, when asked if they 'often hung around with friends doing nothing in particular'⁷ a different picture emerges, with suburban girls most likely to agree with this statement (Table 9.6).

Table 9.6: Young people who 'hang about with friends doing nothing in particular' (% gender/site sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | <u>Suburb</u> |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <u>Boys</u> | 68 | 59 |
| <u>Girls</u> | 69 | 79 |

⁷ This question did not constitute an adultist judgment about young people's behaviour rather was simply a double check, using the sentiments of young people which have emerged in previous studies (James 1982; Corrigan 1979), to ascertain the extent and nature of hanging out amongst young people.

There are two possible explanations for these patterns. First, different young people may simply have variable interpretations of hanging out. For example, despite the higher visibility of young males on the street, hanging out for girls may involve less visible and less active place transactions such as sitting around talking which they do not specifically classify in any particular way. Alternatively girls may view hanging out in negative terms, for example, as an activity undertaken by young people they consider to be disreputable or unruly.

“... when you get gangs hanging around Macs or Tescos ... it’s bad because it looks pathetic ... and it’s quite frightening ... they think they’re so hard ... I think they must be sad people ... that they have to hang around outside the shops ...” (12 year old girl, suburban)

Nonetheless girls were frequently observed hanging out and often in mixed gender groups with boys. For younger children in both locations this was more the result of demographic characteristics of young people within the limited home range of the street. For older teenagers, mixed gender groups of young people hanging out were more likely in the suburb. In contrast, in the inner city many of the older girls stated that they simply did not like the type of boys they encountered in their local area so did not tend to hang out in their home area. Instead they tended to associate with their friends in other areas of the town. For one group in the inner city area, the presence of both girls and boys on the street changed throughout the duration of the research. As the group of older (15 and 16 year old) girls left school, their presence within groups hanging out on the street and in the play ground was replaced by a boys only group.

Whilst these changes may be characterised in terms of gender differences, gender itself may not necessarily be the most influential factor in accounting for the patterns. It may be just as likely that the patterns may have resulted from differences in lifestyle. Table 9.7 shows that boys and girls engage in different activities whilst hanging out, but that these vary within and across locations.

Table 9.7 indicates that boys engage in a wider range of activities when hanging out than girls. In particular, whereas boys are more likely to engage in more active pursuits such as messing about, playing football and sports or bike riding, girls are more likely to spend time sitting on the periphery talking. On one occasion in a suburban cul-de-sac, whilst a group of three 12/13 year old boys were constructing bike jumps, two girls sat on the kerb side chatting, watching and playing with their tamagotchis⁸ (Plates 9.23, 9.24). However, these gender differences are not always clear cut. Boys may equally spend time whilst hanging out just sitting around talking.

⁸ These are small hand held ‘cyberpets’ which young people can interact with.

Plate 9.23: Young boys engaged in active pursuits whilst hanging out in a suburban cul-de-sac



Plate 9.24: The girls sit and watch the boys from the sidelines



Table 9.7: Gender differences in activities whilst hanging out (% of gender group hanging out in each location)

| <u>Inner city boys</u> (total no. hanging out = 39) | | <u>Suburban boys</u> (total no. hanging out = 47) | |
|---|----|--|----|
| Have a laugh/mess about | 56 | Talk | 74 |
| Talk | 49 | Have a laugh/mess about | 28 |
| Play games | 13 | Play games ⁹ | 11 |
| Football/sports | 13 | Walk/talk | 6 |
| Ride bikes | 5 | Ride bikes | 6 |
| Nothing in particular | 5 | Football/sports | 6 |
| Listening to music | 2 | Others (including match making and walking the dog) | 4 |
| <u>Inner city girls</u> (total no. hanging out = 29) | | <u>Suburban girls</u> (total no. hanging out = 34) | |
| Talk | 93 | Talk | 97 |
| Have a laugh/mess about | 45 | Have a laugh/mess about | 18 |
| Play games | 31 | Play games | 6 |
| Others (including shopping and walking/talking) | 6 | Others (including shopping and walking/talking) | 6 |

Gender differences and similarities also vary according to location. Inner city boys and girls are both more likely to mess about than suburban boys and girls, whereas the latter are both more likely to spend time talking. Despite a degree of similarity between activities boys and girls engage in whilst hanging out, these results tend to restate gender differences in freetime activities found in previous studies (Hendry *et al.* 1993; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1995; Pearce 1996).

The lack of clarity in gender differences in hanging out is also evident with respect to the popularity of different places for hanging out. Table 9.8 shows that gender differences in popular places to hang out vary according to location.

⁹ See footnote 3.

Table 9.8: Popularity of local places as hang outs according to gender
 (% of total gender / site sample)

| <u>Inner city boys</u> (total n = 44) | | <u>Suburban boys</u> (total n = 58) | |
|---|----|---|----|
| Park/play area | 64 | Park/play area | 36 |
| Street | 39 | Street | 19 |
| Other Northampton area | 11 | Commercial areas | 17 |
| Round local area | 9 | Each others houses | 15 |
| Informal neighbourhood space | 7 | Other Northampton area | 10 |
| Commercial areas/town | 7 | Informal neighbourhood space | 7 |
| Each others houses | 2 | Round local area | 3 |
| Community places | 2 | | |
| | | | |
| <u>Inner city girls</u> (Total n = 36) | | <u>Suburban girls</u> (Total n = 43) | |
| Park/play area | 44 | Park/play area | 30 |
| Street | 28 | Commercial areas/town | 26 |
| Informal neighbourhood space | 11 | Each others houses | 12 |
| Each others houses | 11 | Round local area | 12 |
| Round local area | 11 | Other Northampton area | 9 |
| Commercial areas/town | 11 | Informal neighbourhood space | 5 |
| | | Community place | 2 |

Despite the lack of clear cut distinctions in places where boys and girls hang out, three major differences can be highlighted. First, in the suburban area both girls and boys are more likely to hang around commercial areas than girls and boys in the inner city area. However, within the suburban location girls are more likely to hang out in commercial areas than boys. This may be due to differences in choices of free time activities or simply because there are more commercial areas in the suburban area. The expression of desire by young people in the inner city area to spend money or go to shops when they have money to spend suggests that differences in cultural preferences with respect to commercialism are not so important but are dependent on the availability of such opportunities within each location. In this respect locational differences in patterns of hanging out by commercial areas appear to be contingent upon locational factors rather than solely the outcome of gender or lifestyle differences.

A second difference is in terms of the greater likelihood for young males in the suburban site to hang out in each other's houses. Although there was little difference for girls in both locations, for boys there were clear differences in patterns of hanging out in each other's homes. What this suggests is that traditional gender patterns in terms of the use of the home for hanging out are blurred in the suburban location whereas in the inner city they are tending to be reproduced. As Valentine and McKendrick (1997) suggest, a merging of gender differences in patterns of leisure and lifestyle activities may be the result of contingency factors such as more protective parenting practices in the suburban site which effect both boys and girls.

The tendency for suburban boys to hang out in each other's homes as much as suburban girls could also be the result of a higher level of attractiveness for staying indoors in the suburban area as a result of larger houses (as mentioned earlier). Rather than attributing a single causal factor to emerging patterns, however, it is likely that resulting patterns are the outcome of a range of inter linking factors. The convergence of locational factors (concerning the nature of the built environment), cultures of parenting and young people's lifestyle preferences in creating multiple differences in hanging out seem more useful for understanding trends in hanging out.

The third major distinction concerns hanging out on the street and in informal neighbourhood places. Boys are more likely to hang out on the streets and in informal neighbourhood spaces than girls in both locations. However, patterns between boys and girls are obfuscated by locational differences with inner city girls more likely to hang out on the street and in informal neighbourhood spaces than suburban boys (46% inner city male, 26% suburban male; 39% inner city girls, 5% suburban girls). This greater tendency towards hanging out in neighbourhood space in the inner city seems likely to be due to the lack of home spaces in the inner city area compared to the suburban location and the prevalence of street-based leisure cultures.

What emerges from these results is that whilst it is possible to discern some gender differences in hanging out, patterns are not clear cut rather, are intertwined with location and lifestyle. Gender differences in hanging out are clearer in the inner city area, whereas in the suburban area, distinctions between boys and girls are more blurred. What this suggests is that gender is not in itself necessarily significant in delimiting the geographies of hanging out rather, that contingency factors - such as size, nature and demographic structure of the locality, environmental opportunities and common lifestyles - are all pertinent in accounting for geographical variations in hanging out.

9.5 Conclusion: reflections on hanging out

What emerges from these findings is that hanging out is a variable and valuable activity for young people not dissimilar in nature to the activities of adults spending time with peers within social settings. Whilst the exact nature of the activities young people engage in differs between groups, hanging out primarily involves spending time with friends whilst at the same time having the freedom to engage in whatever activities are chosen. Young people are clearly enriched by the process of hanging out. It provides a social balance in their lives wherein the structures imposed on them through family and school can be temporarily cast aside.

The evidence presented here suggests that there is a need for clarification of Corrigan's (1979) assertion that young people hang out as a result of a lack of alternatives. Whilst structural constraints, such as a dearth of environmental opportunities, unquestionably reduce the range of environmental possibilities for young people, my findings suggest that hanging out is often a positive course of action designed to meet a range of social and recreational objectives. To this end hanging out needs to be reinterpreted as symbolic of young people's capacity as cultural producers. What is less clear is why young people refer to activities that are clearly in various ways meaningful to them, in such deprecating ways as 'doing nothing' or 'dossing about'. One explanation could be that they are devaluing these activities because they would rather be doing something else. Another explanation could be that they are simply mirroring critical popular attitudes about young people spending time in seemingly unproductive activities.

Whilst hanging out is a common activity for many young people, the nature and experience of hanging out differs between groups. Differences do not necessarily emerge according to gender, but as a result of a combination of factors concerned with the nature of the locality, environmental opportunities, cultures of parenting and young people's lifestyle preferences.

Chapter Ten

Young people and the conflict with adults over neighbourhood space

10.1 Introduction

Young people's use of neighbourhood space takes place within the context of social relations between adults and children and the way neighbourhood space is structured. Valentine (1996b) talks of the 'moral landscapes of childhood' in which young people's use of public space is interpreted according to the dual constructions of children as 'angels' or 'devils', which have given rise to growing public concern about the behaviour and well being¹ of young people in public places (Cahill 1990; Valentine 1996a). Urban public space is increasingly being restructured as private space according to dominant adult values and usages (Matthews *et al.* 1998b; Valentine 1996a). In this way the boundaries between young people and adults are reproduced spatially, positioning young people as 'outsiders' (Matthews 1995; Sibley 1995a) in urban neighbourhoods in relation to the dominant values and structures of adults. In an attempt to find their own social space, young people often come into conflict with adults. Neighbourhood public space is therefore a domain in which the values and status differential between adults and children are 'repetitively' reproduced and contested, giving rise to geographies of conflict, transgression and exclusion (White 1993; Sibley 1995a; Valentine 1996a).

This chapter will explore different ways in which adults and young people come into conflict through their use of neighbourhood space. It focuses on the way in which young people's use of place often differs from that of adults and is compounded by assumptions of appropriate behaviour codified into childhood. With reference to three different scenarios in which conflict takes place, it will consider how popular stereotypes influence adult views of young people's use of place, how the ambiguous nature of transitional spaces gives rise to conflict and in turn how young people reconstruct neighbourhood space through geographies of transgression. The chapter concludes by outlining the conflicting agendas between social policy attempts to control and regulate young people's use of public space and, on the other hand, their right as equal citizens to use neighbourhood space.

¹ The vulnerability of young people in public space will provide the focus for Chapter Twelve.

10.2 Contested status, contested spaces: young people's struggle for neighbourhood space

10.2.1 Introduction: getting grief and being hassled

A number of recent studies have highlighted how young people come into conflict with adults in the course of their place transactions (White 1993; Jeffs and Smith 1996; Valentine 1996a; Guilliat 1997). Whether hanging out in a group, playing games or moving through their neighbourhood, young people in both areas frequently voiced their frustration with what was commonly termed 'getting grief' from, or being hassled by, adults in the course of their neighbourhood place transactions (54% inner city, 45% suburban). In spite of the fact that survey evidence reveals that hassle from adults accounts for, on average, only one fifth of the cases where young people get hassled², subsequent communication with young people - for example through in depth interviews, informal conversations and neighbourhood tours - demonstrated how conflicts with adults are a frequent occurrence in their daily round. 'Getting grief' involves being reprimanded in some way by adults when they perceive young people to be behaving in an inappropriate way. Conflict between adults and young people is therefore characterised by adults imposing their value systems on young people in the public domain, in the form of social and geographical boundaries around young people's use of place.

Social boundaries may be imposed by adults on the basis of assumptions codified into childhood concerning social norms of behaviour and adult attitudes to young people's use of place and space. Alternatively conflicts may occur as a result of the restrictions posed by geographical boundaries and the way space is produced (as an adult space). These two types of boundaries frequently intertwine to impose socio-spatial limitations on young people's use of space and place. This section will consider three scenarios in which conflict occurs, as a result of the disjunctures between young people's desire to use public space and the boundaries imposed by adults. First, as a result of the intolerance of some adults towards young people's presence in neighbourhood spaces on the basis of stereotypical views of young people. Second, when conflict arises from young people's use of transitional spaces, for example, green spaces adjacent to residential buildings. Third, when young people cross social and geographical boundaries intentionally in the course of their transactions with place. These are not mutually exclusive categories, instead they provide a way of making sense of the fluid and dynamic social processes which evolve and change according to different situational contexts in which conflicts take place.

² In the remaining cases young people experienced hassle from other young people. See Chapter Eleven.

10.2.2 Stereotypes in space: conflicts arising from young people's 'legitimate' use of space.

Many accounts young people provided of 'getting grief' occurred in places which young people have a 'legitimate' right to use such as the street and open public spaces. This section will consider cases where conflict arises in free public places which both adults and young people have a right to use, when young people are not engaged in anti-social place behaviour, but are 'given grief' by adults anyway. In these situations conflict appears to arise out of adults fears and anxieties about young people, rather than any misdemeanours of young people. Many young people talked of getting told off, moaned at or accused for behaviour perceived by adults as socially unacceptable, but which young people considered as being 'normal' or 'reasonable', such as laughing, shouting, running or hanging about.

Getting grief is a part of everyday life for many young people and may arise simply as a result of young people being on the streets as the extract from field notes reveals (Vignette 10.1, Plate 10.1).

Vignette 10.1 A street corner flash point

(Extract from field notes, Semilong 22/8/96, 2.15pm)

'It's 2.15pm in the summer holidays. The Main Street gang³ are hanging around the corner of Rutland Street, looking over the back wall of the empty corner shop for charcoal. Apparently they want to have a barbecue but haven't got any charcoal. As we stand chatting a woman walks between us apparently in a bad mood. There is tension between the woman and the group for some reason. One of the lads, Brendan, flicks a small stone at her back as she goes by. She turns round and says to him "I'm ***** sick of you lot" and pushes him. Brendan's older brother Richard intervenes "Don't you touch my brother ..." She then retorts about them picking on her son. Richard then calls her an 'old dog' and she storms off, both parties exchanging insults'.

In cases such as these, mutually antagonistic relationships may develop as a result of adults reacting negatively to groups of young people on the street. Young people hanging out in street spaces are seen as discrepant on the landscape even though their presence may arise as a result of an absence of alternatives.

³ This gang consists of about eight boys aged between 10 and 15 years. They are the most frequently sighted group in the neighbourhood and have a reputation as being unruly.

Plate 10.1: The setting for a street corner confrontation between young people and a passing adult: hanging out on the street often invites conflict with adults who perceive young people to be up to no good.



...naturally if you are a group of kids, that is what you are going to be doing.

Comments such as this reflect a dominant adult perception of young people as irresponsible or out to create problems. The fact that young people's use of public space is frequently not tolerated suggests that young people themselves are not valued or understood (Crompton 1991). Attitudes towards young people vary at best slightly and at worst colonial and reflect a culture where territorial space young people hang out in is not theirs and where their presence is seen as a threat to adult authority. Young people, however, more often than not do not fit adult stereotypes of young people, but are seen as less useful and frustrated by adult attitudes. Dominant adult attitudes of young people appear to be based on models of socialisation which are based on the assumption that young people are in various ways socially inferior to adults and therefore in need of adult guidance. In reality young people frequently have a clear sense of their social values, but as inferior or subordinate, not different to adults.

In those cases where young people may appear to act in an uncontrolled way this is normally for good reason, for example, because they have not been shown respect themselves. Disrespect may become mutualised and accepted as a self-defending strategy which shapes future behaviour and attitudes. As one 15-year-old boy stated:

Even in the suburban area, with a greater profusion of open space where young people can go away from adults, young people report conflicts.

“... in summer we go down the brook but people complain saying ‘you get away from there, it’s too late at night for you to be staying down there’. So then we don’t go down there” (14 year old girl, suburban)

“The police give us constant hassle and in the park by Macs a man came out and threatened my friend with a knife. All we were doing was standing there chatting.” (14 year old girl, suburban)

Underlying many of the conflicts between adults and young people is an apparent mistrust and dislike of young people.

“Adults think we’re pains in the ass, vandals, that we’re no good and all that ... just causing trouble all the time” (15 year old boy, suburban)

Despite popular concerns about media influences on young people, this boy went on to suggest that it was the TV that most influenced adult views of young people.

“ You see ... documentaries on youth today, ... and they see all the vandalism and under age drinking and all that, that’s all they show, so naturally if you are a group of kids, that is what you are going to be doing.” (15 year old boy, suburban)

Comments such as this reflect a dominant adult conception of young people as irresponsible or out to create problems. The fact that young people’s use of public space is frequently not tolerated suggests that young people themselves are not tolerated or understood (Comedia 1991). Attitudes towards young people appear at best ignorant and at worst intolerant and reflect a culture which misunderstands young people and fails to accept and value them as equal citizens. Instead, many adults expect young people to fit their conceptions of childhood. Young people, however, more often than not do not fit adult stereotypes of young people, but are none the less aware and frustrated by adult attitudes. Dominant adult attitudes of young people appear to be based on models of socialisation which are characterised by an assumption that young people are in various ways socially inferior to adults and therefore in need of adult guidance. In reality young people frequently have a clear sense of their social values, not as inferior or subordinate, but different to adults.

In those cases where young people may appear to act in an anti-social way, this is normally for good reason, for example, because they have not been shown respect themselves. Disrespect may become internalised and replayed as a self-fulfilling prophecy which shapes future behaviour and attitudes. As one 13 year old boy stated: “

... adults just think we're horrible little gits". When asked why he thought that, he responded: " ... because we are horrible little gits". These characteristics, however, were not corroborated in the course of working with this boy during the research. Adult clashes with young people arise because their views and attitudes towards young people are often out of keeping with the way young people actually are, emphasising what is lacking in young people from adult perspectives rather than acknowledging their positive characteristics.

Interviewer: " So what would you say are the biggest problems living around here?"

Boy: "The hassle you get off people, because there is nothing to do, we all walk around and all you get is 'you're doing this wrong, you're doing that wrong'. No one ever comes round and says 'you're not a bad bunch of kids' or anything. It's always putting us down or something."

The clash of values between young people and adults over young people's use of place is seen most clearly in the moral panics which emerge from the disjuncture between popular public views of young people and first hand observation of young people (see Vignette 10.2).

Vignette 10.2 Constructing young people as a problem within the micro political context of the Parish Council

Attendance at a Parish Council meeting in the suburban area revealed the level of concern about young people hanging about outside in the local area. Members in attendance went to great lengths to try and put together a picture of the extent and troublesome nature of the problem of young people hanging out around the local area. Observational surveys immediately after the meeting at one of the more critical locations where young people had been noted as causing a nuisance, however, told a different story. A large group (approximately 30 in number) of 14 - 16 year olds were hanging out on the local recreation ground by the play equipment. The time was 8.30, there were no other place users about and there were no residences in close proximity. It was a summer evening and young people were clearly enjoying the buzz and interaction of hanging out - talking mostly, laughing and joking, some smoking, some riding around on bikes, some sitting on the play equipment. In the course of my observation a policeman had turned up and was talking with some of the young people. On closer investigation it appeared that, despite the local complaints that had brought about the police presence, the police officer was unable to find anything problematic or illegal with what the young people were doing. It seemed that it was just that local residents simply didn't like young people hanging about in a large group.

Subsequent observations over the course of the research revealed similar disjunctions between the moral panic of Parish Council members and local residents and the contrasting behaviour of young people in the local area. Conflict concerning young people's use of local places is therefore partly dependent on adult social relationships with, and attitudes to, young people.

Interviewer: "So what do you think of society's attitude is of young people?"

Boy 15: "They don't care, they just think we are a waste of space and we are just here to muck things up for them."

Interviewer: "What do you mean by muck things up for them?"

Boy 15: "Like if you see all the graffiti and that around, we get blamed for all of that and stuff like that. We will go down the road and we will get them looking at us, staring at us. It just annoys me because they were our age once, more than likely they roamed the streets in their little groups and they probably didn't like other people treating them like that, so why do they do it?"

He goes on to say:

"Later on tonight I will probably go out and probably go to Burger King and then will, what is it, Tuesday? Probably all just walk around all night and I guarantee that we will get hassle off someone, it could be someone driving past in their car, someone walking their dog or the old bill. We are bound to get aggro off someone. They will just say ... most of the time they just tell us to go away, we don't want you round here, instead of causing a lot of trouble we just walk away."

Others talked of experiencing prejudicial adult attitudes when going into shops.

"... we get blamed for quite a lot when anything happens. And when we go into shops people don't like teenagers ... think we're going to nick something, so follow us around" (15 year old girl, suburban)

"If a lot of us go into shops, and sometimes Tesco's, we don't get allowed in because they think we're going to steal something" (14 year old boy, suburban)

Young people's use of public space is therefore closely linked to prevailing conceptions and social status of children and youth. What is commonly interpreted as a 'youth problem' appears on closer reflection to be a societal problem arising out of the inequalities in citizenship status, a dislike and intolerance of young people and a lack of places to go. The evidence provided here suggests that young people may be hassled simply for being young people. There will undoubtedly be some young people who will be troublesome, however, to stereotype all young people in this way commits a status offence since there are also adults who cause problems. The difference is that all adults do not get stereotyped as a result. Young people are not considered equal citizens and are therefore accordingly constrained in their spatial activities. Even when they are

engaged in activities which are 'normal' for young people, or in places which are designated for young people (such as play areas), they are often not tolerated, as the case study below demonstrates.

Vignette 10.3 The Play Area in inner city Semilong (See Plate 10.2)

The play area is one of the few places that is specifically allotted for young people to use. It is also one of the most popular places for young people at this end of the neighbourhood. However local residents frequently complain about young people being around there, the way they use the available space and the poor condition of the area. Young people regularly asked for the play area to be improved but no one listened. On the contrary when local residents complained about young people being down there the response was immediate in the form of police patrols. Some of the intolerance and lack of acceptance of young people playing in urban space is captured by these comments by local residents which emerged in the course of a community consultation exercise seeking support to improve the play area:

“There are already too many noisy, abusive and uncouth children running loose in this vicinity ... the thought of encouraging them (young people) into an area that should be dedicated to the care and safety of the elderly seems outrageous.”

“... with all the trouble we're tolerating, this so called play area should be demolished and replaced with O.A.P. bungalows. There are plenty of parks nearby where young and old can play, or is it that they can't cause devastation in the parks.”

“... we already suffer dreadfully around here with the (Semilong) youths. The harassment, vandalism, pulling down walls, fences, uprooting the elderly tenants gardens, breaking into sheds, vandalising cars etc. The youths in this area are behaving like wild animals...”

“The proposed area is already a haven for yobbos ... we try and keep our gardens neat but to no avail because the savages from there (play area) come charging through destroying everything in their path”

(Comments from local residents).

Plate 10.2: Inner city play area: site of conflict with local residents.



It is not to suggest that local residents did not have valid concerns. In fact, rather, that their concerns and fears may have been exaggerated and fueled by popular stereotypes, media sensationalism and local politics. After a year of working and living in the community with the young people, I can assure you that the perceptions about them did not fit with their acts. Whilst they continued to shouting and by being they also felt that this was normal which playing football, but they had no objection in smoking cars and pushing up flowers.

A further accusation by 4 residents that the youth and community centre, that had recently opened, had brought a drug problem into the area was completely unfounded. (As secretary to the aforementioned centre as well as being a regular resident in the neighbourhood, I have solid grounds for refuting this claim). It is clear what appears to be happening is that local residents simply do not like these young people and do not like the play area being there and therefore search for the activities of young people on the basis of popular stereotypes in order to get the problem moved out of their 'backyard'. Indeed one resident indicated that these accusations were based more than anything on their own fears.

"... the majority of us are elderly and disabled and are afraid of modern youths..." (Local residents)

These comments illustrate the way in which moral panics about young people in public places are constructed on the basis of an 'othering' of young people as less than human, as untamed savages out of control, running feral through the neighbourhood. This 'othering' of young people has also been noted by Archard (1993) who identifies the significance of children's separateness from adults in their expected behaviour, their worlds and the expectations placed on them. It also illustrates the way in which social constructions of childhood are reproduced in space in terms of geographies of exclusion. According to Parkin's (1979) theory of social closure, this process of social exclusion occurs when a dominant group (in this case adults) exercises power over a subordinate group (in this case young people) and in doing so seek to maintain a hegemonic position in which their values dominate.

Confronted by these reactions some of the young people, who frequently use the play area, expressed bemusement and stated that they did not see what they were doing as wrong and that they just wanted to play football. Moreover, adult perceptions of young people were difficult to substantiate and seemed to be based more on media stereotypes and moral panics than actual incidents, as a local newspaper report about this play area demonstrates (Figure 10.1). In following up both the comments from local residents and the newspaper report, it was difficult to find evidence to support these claims. This is not to suggest that local residents did not have good cause to complain rather, that their concerns and fears may have been exaggerated and fuelled by popular stereotypes, media sensationalism and moral panics. After 3 years of working and living in the community with the young people in question, some of the accusations about them did not fit with their style. Whilst they admitted to shouting and swearing they also felt that this was normal when playing football, but they had no interest in stealing cars and pulling up flowers.

A further accusation by a resident that the youth and community centre, that had recently opened, had brought a drug problem into the area was completely fallacious. (As secretary to the aforementioned centre as well as being a researcher resident in the neighbourhood, I have solid grounds for refuting this claim). Instead what appears to be happening is that local residents simply do not like these young people and do not like the play area being there and therefore scandalise the activities of young people on the basis of popular stereotypes in order to get the problem moved out of their 'backyard'. Indeed one resident intimated that their accusations were based more than anything on their own fear:

“... the majority of us are elderly and disabled and are afraid of modern youths...”
(Local resident)

Figure 10.1: Local newspaper report about conflict with gangs of young people in the inner city. (Northampton Chronicle and Echo, 28/10/96)

■ Life is a misery because of young vandals, say petitioning OAPs

Pensioners to fight back against gangs



■ SCENE OF TROUBLE— Norfolk Terrace, in Semilong
CF picture 19412

PENSIONERS on a Northampton housing estate are fighting back after being terrorised by a gang of children for more than a year.

The residents have been the victims of a catalogue of crimes including alleged assaults.

Many keep their curtains and windows shut even during the daytime.

Now the OAPs are joining forces by collecting a petition in a bid to halt the attacks.

One frightened 67-year-old from Norfolk Terrace, Kingsthorpe Road, Semilong, said: "Nothing is sacred and these children have the most foullest language you can imagine.

BY JULIE CROSS

"We have to shut our curtains and windows even when it is still light because we are afraid they might throw something through."

"They have thrown stones at me but luckily they didn't hit me in the face."

The nearwars have made the elderly people's lives a misery by:

- Stone-throwing
 - Pulling up plants
 - Smashing fences
 - Breaking down a front door
 - Covering a door handle with glue
 - Swearing and shouting
- The pensioner, who is co-ordinat-

ing the petition, added: "They have destroyed gardens, pulled up plants and smashed down fences."

"We don't object to them playing but we don't want to be tortured by children. They don't even live in the area."

The petition is to be handed to Northampton Borough Council leader John Dickie in the hope he will be able to help stop the abuse.

Northamptonshire police spokesman, Cliff Annick, said: "We are aware of a problem with youths in that area. Juvenile nuisance is a notoriously difficult complaint to deal with as usually the people who are responsible have left the area by the time the police turn up."

This creates a social dilemma such that if young people's behaviour is seen as unacceptable and leads to adults, particularly those who are vulnerable, being harassed, then the wider issue of young people's discretionary rights to use public space and to participate in decisions relating to public life, the notion of "appropriate behaviour" is also an uncontracted possibility through integrative approaches to community development, which may be based on moral panics.

... the young as well as adults is if only some way in the play area has also caused the highest ranking damage to property, law etc. and great distress. Physical have had to check room for ... make it possible only to be met by what are the ... (Local sources)

In a classic response to feelings of vulnerability this resident went on to echo the sentiments of others by saying that: “ ... I really think they deserve the facilities only if supervised”. This reflects a desire amongst many of the local residents to control and contain young people’s place behaviour and demonstrates a lack of understanding of young people, in terms of their need for recognition and responsibility rather than further restrictions. It also suggests that they see childhood not as a ‘right’ but as conditional on adult values. Social constructions such as this are clear exemplifications of the everyday structures and practices which shape children’s geographies.

However, adults and older residents also have rights which need to be taken into account. Just as young people do not like it when they are not respected, they in turn should respect the rights of others. There is a problem in that young people may not respect the views and rights of adults because they are not respected, but adults may not respect young people because they do not always behave in ‘appropriate’ ways. There appears to be a disjunction here between what young people and adults consider appropriate behaviour. There is also a clash of interests between young people’s right to use designated space and residents right to live peacefully and without fear.

There appears to be three major reasons for this conflict. First is that young people are faced with an overall lack of social and environmental facilities. Young people are therefore forced to make the best they can of the opportunities which are available. Second, the location of the play area in close proximity to local residences, including sheltered homes for the elderly, is the result of bad planning wherein the incompatibility of the interests and needs of young people and residents has been ignored. Third, adults appear to be fearful, ignorant and intolerant of young people such that even in an area specifically designated for young people, they are not tolerated. Taken together, these factors fuel conflict in which young people are progressively alienated as ‘other’ - as demons and troublemakers - which in turn exacerbates conflict through their responses to adult attitudes.

This creates a social dilemma such that if young people conform to social expectations as laid down by adults, their unequal social position is perpetuated. On the other hand if young people’s democratic right to use public space and to representation in decision making is upheld, the notion of ‘appropriate behaviour’ could be reconstructed proactively through integrative approaches to community development, rather than being based on moral panics.

“... the young as well as youths not only cause havoc in the play area but also around the houses causing damage to property, cars etc. and great distress. I myself have had to check them for causing trouble only to be met by abuse and bad language and more trouble” (Local resident)

Whilst adults might see their actions in terms of their right as 'majors' to contribute to the socialisation and control of young people; for young people such incursions constitute unnecessary interference in their neighbourhood activities and undermine their right to play.

"... all people ever do round here is complain ... about the play area, they (adults) don't like it, just cos sometimes the ball goes over and bounces ... and ... hits a car and then this lady comes over and starts telling us off and that, and we apologise, and she says she's ... going to ring up and close down the play area and all that"

(13 year old boy, inner city)

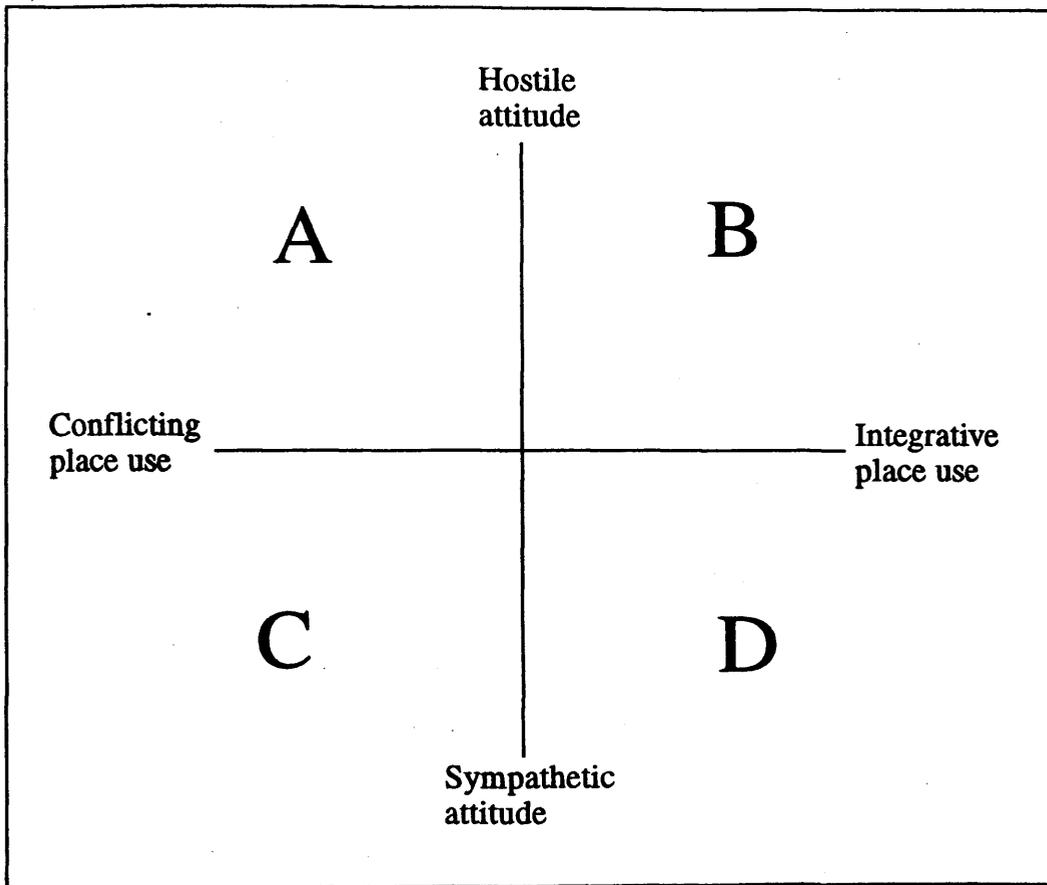
This case study suggests that the likelihood of conflict occurring depends on the way in which different adults respond to young people and their use of local places. The nature of these responses are in turn dependent on how different adults 'see' young people. Whereas some adults may justify criticism of young people's use of space on the basis of popular attitudes or an actual or ongoing conflict they may have experienced, others may be more empathic towards young people. The nature of this interaction can be understood in terms of two inter linking continuums (see Figure 10.2).

The continuum of adult attitudes towards young people ranges from a supportive and sympathetic stance to a hostile position wherein young people are likely to get into trouble whether they have done anything wrong or not.⁴ On the other continuum is the nature of young people's place use ranging from place uses which are integrative - that is to say which are compatible with other place users and do not compromise community well being - to place uses which conflict with those of other place users.

According to Figure 10.2, in **A** and **B** young people's place use is likely to be met with hostile attitudes from adults regardless of whether they are transgressing boundaries or not. In **A** young people's place use conflicts with that of adults and is likely to be contested by adults. In **B** young people's use of place does not conflict with that of other place users, but young people experience conflict anyway, as a result of the negative ways young people on the street are construed. In cells **C** and **D** the response to young people is one of tolerance, understanding and acceptance. In these situations adults do not stand in conflict with young people. All the same, in the case of **C** conflicting place uses are still likely to be checked, but unlike **A**, are dealt with more constructively through negotiation and dialogue on equal terms.

⁴ 'Doing wrong' is somewhat problematic as a result of its adultist assumptions. A young person, for example, might be using place in a reasonable manner, but might be told off simply because an adult does not want them there. 'Doing wrong' therefore pays little attention to the social contexts in which inequality in social relations between adults and young people tends to exist.

Figure 10.2: Schematic representation of interrelationship between adults and young people which give rise to conflict.



In cell **D** a sympathetic and supportive attitude to young people gives rise to a harmonious environment in which young people's place use is integrated into the life of the community with the result that conflict is unlikely. In this zone disjunctions between adults and young people are resolved pragmatically through an ongoing process of collaborative social learning.

This framework for understanding conflict is highly simplified in that there are numerous contextual factors which influence the actions of young people, the response of the adult and the overall context in which the interchange occurs. For example locational factors such as the availability of space, level of provision for young people and nature of the built environment influence the overall context. For the young person, past experiences with adults, personality type in acknowledging and dealing with other people's points of view and the influence of parenting styles and social culture are likely to influence the nature of place use and responses to adult reactions⁵.

For the adult, the frequency of the incident, potential impact of young person's place use and past experiences of young people are some of the factors which might influence the nature of their response. There is not the space in this thesis to explore these interconnections, rather to draw attention to the multifaceted and variable nature of place conflicts between young people and adults. It is also important to highlight the fact that they can not be explained by single factors, rather are embedded in broader contexts of social provision and social relations between adults and young people. These tensions are especially clear with conflicts which arise when young people use transitional spaces.

10.2.3 Negotiating the margins: conflicts between adults and young people over transitional space

In many cases young people are faced with inadequate social and environmental facilities. Young people are therefore forced to make the best they can of the opportunities which are available. These are often incidental 'semi-public' or 'transitional' spaces, sandwiched between public and private realms, for example, public spaces and routeways around local authority housing or neighbourhood streets. Although young people invariably do not intend to cause a nuisance, innocent acts of play may conflict with the place needs of adults, such as the desire to live peacefully or to safeguard their property. During one observational survey of a game of football in an inner city street involving a group of lads (Plate 10.3), the football set off a car alarm, which triggered an angry response from the car owner.

⁵ This emerges as an important influence on young people's place behaviour, particularly in terms of crossing boundaries and respect for other place users. Chapter Seven has already highlighted many of the pertinent arguments so will not be replicated here.

Plate 10.3: Playing football on the street involves clashes with other road users and runs the risk of damage to parked cars.



These are the types of conflict that occur when young people play in urban parks and local residences.

"I get really angry about people always having a go at me... When we play football against the wall it gets it all the old people complaining and have a go at us (Figure 10.3). An old bloke says we're noisy and that we're not allowed. To get a bit more we have stones in the park."

In this case, the old bloke probably will have a good reason such as the constant pounding of the ball against his wall. However, because of the particularities of the situation in which the views of both parties could be recognized, harmonized and down between rather than around, the old bloke and the young people giving rise to a "relationship of mutual and mutual antagonism" (Wallerstein 1996: 2). Experiences such as this are symbolic of the everyday conflicts between young adults and young people who share the same neighborhood space. It suggests that part of being young is about negotiating the politics of position within the urban space and the consequent negotiation of young people's experiences. This type of situation is similar to the events described in previous studies, however, the difference here is that young people's views are not being recognized or taken into account.

On another occasion during a neighbourhood tour with three thirteen year old boys, they showed me how they liked to go running across the grass in the centre of a block of flats and leap off a wall onto the grass. As they did so a local resident opened a window and told them to clear off. Adults may hence seek to move young people along, not necessarily because young people's behaviour is unreasonable, but because they do not want such place uses impinging upon their residential space or property.

However, within these transitional spaces, boundaries are often unclear, especially with respect to whether young people should or shouldn't be there and the nature of their behaviour. In this sense transitional or semi-public places are ambiguous spaces in which there is lack of clarity about what purposes a piece of open space serves. Just as young people may appropriate these spaces for their own ends, adults may also seek to exert their place values. They may do this by responding according to an assumption that because they are young people and not in a play area, they shouldn't be there and therefore construct their own boundaries (which may be fictitious), as a way of exerting power over young people.

“ ... if we sort of like sit too near the windows by the flats or we play ball up there, the old lady up there comes and moans at us and tells us to go away or if we ... go round the corner and sit on the step we get told to go away ... so we just ignore them and move a bit further along (laughs) and still make a lot of noise.” (15 year old girl, inner city)

These are the types of conflict that occur when young people play in close proximity to local residences.

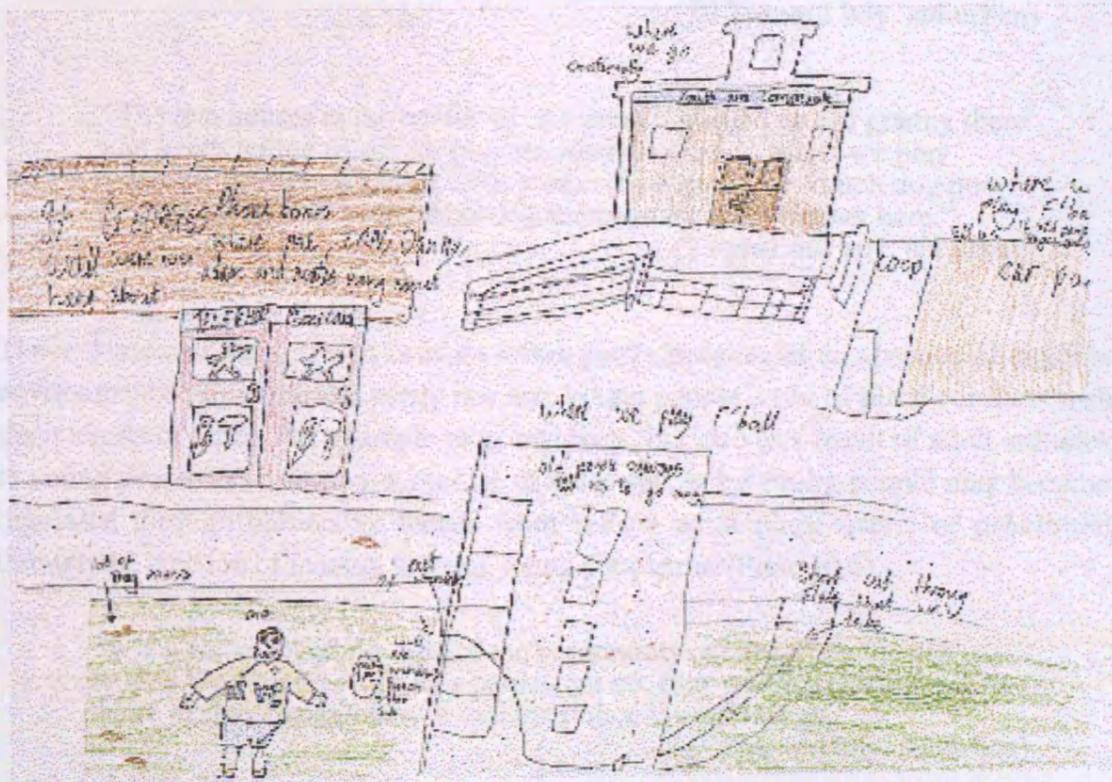
“I get really angry about people always having a go at us ... Where we play footie against the wall (Plate 10.4) the old biddies come out and have a go at us (Figure 10.3). An old bloke just has a go at you for no reason. To get on his nerves we throw stones at the garage” (13 year old boy, inner city)

In this case, the old bloke probably did have a good reason (such as the continual pounding of the ball against his ball). However, because of the unlikelihood of dialogue in which the views of both parties could be reconciled, boundaries are drawn between, rather than around, the old bloke and the young people giving rise to a “relationship of mistrust and mutual antagonism” (White *et al.* 1996: 5). Experiences such as this are symbolic of the everyday conflict between many adults and young people when using the same neighbourhood space. It suggests that part of being young is about negotiating the politics of position within the social and generational hierarchy and the consequent marginalisation of young people in neighbourhood space. This type of situation is similar to the events documented in section 10.2.2, however, the difference here is that young people's ‘right’ to use these transitional spaces is unclear.

Plate 10.4: "Where we play football against the end of the wall at the end of the flats the old biddies come out and have a go at us." (13 year old boy, inner city)



Figure 10.3: Depicting conflict in a drawing by a 12 year old boy of his local inner city area



A further insight into the nature of this mutual antagonism is illustrated by a subsequent incident involving the same boy and an eleven year old friend with an older resident from the council flats where they play about.

“... Adrian doesn't help much by taking the mick and shouting out and kicking the ball back at the flats, at the old biddies and one of the old ladies once took the ball, so he went over and started firing stones at her door and says 'give us our ball back or I'll get my mum over' and she goes 'get your mum over then cause you shouldn't be playing there' ... and she says 'I'm using this as evidence' and so we just have a go at her ...”
(13 year old boy, inner city)

Conflict is also more acute in the inner city area as a result of a limited amount of open space and the problems of close confinement with both cars and houses which can provide potential trouble spots if windows get broken or cars damaged. However, in the suburban location with a greater amount of open green spaces away from local residences, young people may get hassled all the same. Small patches of open green space are valuable to young people in both areas for informal play and sports activities, or for meeting up and socialising with friends, but their use by young people is frequently challenged by adults.

“ I play on this patch of grass and this lady doesn't like us erm playing on it. It's a big patch of grass, it's got quite a few trees on there ... to play football. And she said to the council I think that she had to look after the grass and she didn't want, like us playing on it. So we're not allowed to play on it any more. I don't really think it's very fair”
(10 year old boy, suburban)

“ The two houses in the corner of 'the green', there's an old granny there who keeps telling us off for playing football there ... but if we play round the back (an adjacent open green area) there's too much dog poo because everybody walks their dog there, so we have to play here.”
(13 year old boy, suburban)

These comments suggest that conflict arises partly because of an absence of suitable environmental opportunities, partly because young people's use of place conflicts with the interests of others, for example local residents, but also as a result of adult attitudes to young people. As a response, the use of these spaces by young people may become regulated through dissuasive words from fellow adult place users, or prohibited through the erection of fencing to keep young people out (Plate 10.5).

“When we sit round the side of the community centre, when the old biddies have bingo or kiddies parties are on, they tell us to go away, that we're trespassing and they'll call the police if we don't go.”
(14 year old boy, suburban)

Plate 10.5: Palisade fencing erected to deter young people from hanging around the community centre.



Landscapes tend to reflect dominant adult values and norms (Christians, 2000; Matthews et al., 1998b). To reorganise urban space and to reorganise the nature of the status quo (in terms of the representation of what values are held, what boundaries and restrictions are imposed, in the face of how the space is used, how the land is owned) however is taking insufficient account of what young people do and think, how they and their place transactions. From the perspective of young people, boundaries are often crossed or transgressed with the goal of exploring and testing them in the course of their place transactions.

Young people tend to cross boundaries for two reasons. The first is when boundaries are crossed unintentionally as a result of the boundaries being unclear (see section 10.2.3). For example in the course of going to a park or a public area of their neighbourhood they may enter onto private property. The second is when young people get up to no good or mischief, as young people do, and innocently be introduced in the course of exploring and testing boundaries of their environment. For example, Palisade fencing is a tall, silver palisade fence that is used to deter young people from hanging around the front yard of a property or public area.

" I remember last year we were sitting down near the community centre,
... and this bloke ... he came at two of my mates because they were
making a bit of a noise, he came out and belted a couple of them..."
(15 year old boy, suburban)

Dominant adult views and interests may be further legitimised through the imposition of local authority by-laws which impose boundaries and controls on the landscape and which have the effect of privatising public space. However, because of the lack of suitable places for young people they use these areas anyway (Plate 10.6).

So far attention has been focused on conflicts in free public spaces wherein it is assumed that both young people and adults have a right to use that space. What emerges is a situation where young people's geographies are constrained by adult attempts to seemingly 'privatise' public space in a way that legitimises adults only. This conflicts with young people's rights to freely use public space. However, one of the situations in which conflicts occur is when young people do not have rights to use certain spaces and cross clearly identified physical boundaries in the course of their place transactions. This provides the focus for the following section.

10.2.4 Crossing boundaries and asserting identity: geographies of transgression

Landscapes tend to reflect dominant adult values and usages (Valentine 1996a; Matthews *et al.* 1998b). To safeguard these interests and ensure the reproduction of the status quo (in terms of the representation of adult values in local places), boundaries and restrictions are imposed in the form of laws and by-laws, policing and land ownership. However in taking insufficient account of young people's needs and interests, boundaries and restrictions often serve to exclude and restrict young people in their place transactions. From the perspective of many young people boundaries are often misplaced or inappropriate with the result that young people frequently cross them in the course of their place transactions.

Young people tend to cross boundaries for one of two reasons. The first is when boundaries are crossed unintentionally as is the case with young people's use of transitional spaces, as a result of the boundaries being unclear or ambiguous (see section 10.2.3). For example in the course of young people's exploration of their neighbourhood they may enter onto private property. Whilst adults might view this as young people getting up to no good or trespassing, for young people, the action may innocently be undertaken in the course of hiding or exploring interesting corners of their environment. For example Plate 10.7 shows a young boy climbing into the back yard of a property to hide whilst playing 'stoney.'

Plate 10.6: "... there's nothing to do round here, there's hardly any grassed areas and if there is, it says 'no ball games'. So we just ignore them and play anyway. What else can we do? ... Well we do go over to St. Georges school and play... but the caretaker comes after us" (13 year old boy, inner city)



Plate 10.7: A case of trespassing or an innocent foray into a hidden corner of the environment to find a place to hide?



Whilst the young people are not causing any harm they are, all the same, trespassing and if caught are liable to be reprimanded by adults. Indeed the whole concept of ownership seems alien to many young people, for whom ownership becomes significant only if it impedes their place transactions. In conversation after the incident in Plate 10.7 the young person seemed quite surprised that I had even suggested there might be a problem with him being on private property and showed no sign that this fact influenced his action in any way.

The second reason young people cross boundaries is intentionally as a positive and informed decision in which the young person is aware they are doing something, or going somewhere, they should not. In some cases young people cross boundaries as a systematic response to overcoming an impediment which restricts their spatial expression. In these cases transgressing social, parental or geographical boundaries therefore does not necessarily constitute defiance or deviance, rather that, if young people perceive the setting of boundaries as too limiting, they will actively seek to satisfy their needs and interests by rewriting the rules and redrawing the boundaries in order to permit their free range of cultural expression.

In other instances, when young people may already perceive a limited range of environmental opportunities, the imposition of boundaries may exacerbate young people's feelings of marginalisation on local landscapes, with the result that they cross the boundaries out of defiance of the limitation imposed. In both of these cases, through their actions young people are in effect saying that they do not want to be constrained, but want to be able to use, experience and learn from their neighbourhoods to the full. In this way space becomes a confrontational sphere where their marginal status can be contested. In Plate 10.8 these two young people use the stairwell of a block of flats to sit and have a smoke or a can of beer, because it provides shelter and is relatively discreet. However, they also said they are often chased off.

One of the reasons why young people may seek to expand beyond boundaries is in search of fun and excitement or new experiences. Similarly young people have been observed sliding down rooves (Plate 10.9) and climbing into people's back yards (Plate 10.10). In Chapter Eight attention has already been drawn to the way in which the lust for adventure takes young people into forbidden places. Whilst some young people may knowingly cross boundaries just to experience something new, others are aware that their actions may well lead them into conflict, whether actively sought or not (Plates 10.11). In some cases the knowledge of likely conflict together with an absence of alternative opportunities for stimulation makes crossing boundaries all the more enticing. The buzz they crave comes when they get chased off (which they call 'getting a leg'), providing young people with what Sibley (1995a) called the 'thrill of transgression'. As one 13 year old boy stated: "... that's basically all it is nowadays, just wind up, leg somebody then you get legged".

Plate 10.8: Young people using the stairwell of a block of flats as a place to have a drink and a smoke are seen as 'out of place' and liable to be moved on.



Plate 10.11
Continuation of a previous slide.

Plate 10.9: Climbing on and sliding down rooves is a way young people can provide their own amusement, but involves encroaching on somebody else's property.



Plate 10.10: Climbing into the backyard of a local property.



Plate 10.11: Playing the boundaries: young people on the school wall invites comment from a passing adult.



As well as being a constraint on young people's place transactions, adult responses and restrictions are, in this way, also a resource for young people. Until recently these actions have tended to be interpreted as young people acting in a deviant or delinquent manner. However, evidence from this study reveals that the dividing line between seeking fun and being antagonistic is unclear. For example one small group of 12 and 13 year old boys related how they get up to lots of mischief but also how much fun they derived from such activities. On a neighbourhood tour they demonstrated how they taunted the postal workers coming off shift by singing "postman twat, postman twat" and antagonised office workers by climbing on the roof of the post boxes outside the office windows (Plate 10.12). They say that if they get told off they just 'give the person lip'.

These types of actions are not necessarily the result of an intention to be defiant or deviant, rather appear to be a way of using the unequal power relationship between adults and young people as a source of fun, by challenging and transgressing the social boundaries within which they are located and seeing how far they can go without getting caught. In this way transgressing social boundaries is a way in which young people are able to contest their subordination and increase their social power. As Gramsci (1971) suggested 'hegemony is never fully achieved - it is always contested' (quoted in Jackson 1989: 53) and involves a wide repertoire of strategies for resistance, negotiation and struggle (Jackson 1989).

Later on the tour with the same boys they demonstrated how they climb onto the wall and jump on to the rooves of the post office vans, using them as trampolines. However, they also added regretfully that they had been caught and so can not do that anymore. Being caught does not involve shame or repentance however, but disappointment and further frustration.

Whereas conventional responses to this type of behaviour are based solely on adult values and concern the need for corrective measures to (re)socialise young people into acceptable behaviour; from a young person's perspective such responses serve to further alienate and constrain them in their ability to satisfy their place needs. To this extent boundary crossing needs to be seen in terms of young people's agenda and the broader context of the structures which constrain them, rather than solely in relation to adult agenda and values of how they would like young people to behave.

Plate 10.12: Climbing on the roof of the post boxes attracts a swift response from office workers.



experience reactive responses which seek to control and deter 'unfavourable' place behaviour.

The evidence put forward in section 10.2 provides an overall sense of the different ways in which conflict between adults and young people may occur. Conflicts, however, do not affect all young people, but are most common for those young people who are most visible and most persistent in their use of place. This is especially the case with gangs who spend a large amount of time on the streets especially in the evenings when other place users have retreated indoors. In particular it appears to be boys who are most likely to experience conflict such as this. This is partly because the activity of boys on the streets is more conspicuous and therefore more likely to lead to conflict, but it appears also due to the different ways in which boys and girls are perceived. Girls do experience conflict, but this tends to be when they are part of a larger group of boys and girls hanging out.

There are two conclusions which can be made from analysis of the role of boundaries in the geography of young people. First, that the spatial worlds of young people are inextricably linked to their social position and their inferior citizenship status. Second, that many of the activities of young people which are criminalised need instead to be reinterpreted proactively in light of some of the restrictions placed upon young people in their place transactions and the availability of alternative environmental opportunities. Whilst it is reasonable to suggest that young people should respect the law in the same way as adults, at the same time young people do not have a say in the setting of boundaries or the making of laws and are often faced with a more limited range of social opportunities compared to adults. The criminalisation of some activities young people engage in could be avoided if young people were allowed more legitimate use of local space and integrated in, rather than alienated from, the everyday life of the neighbourhood. This is not to suggest that young people should be allowed free reign or exempt from the law but instead, that an expectation of social responsibility should be accompanied by full and equal opportunities for social participation. For example, White (1993) found that perceived problems of young people hanging around shopping malls in Australia were reduced by engaging with young people to explore ways in which their desired alternative place uses could be integrated into the daily rhythm of the mall. In the absence of this type of social commitment, young people tend to experience reactive responses which seek to control and deter 'unfavourable' place behaviour.

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10.3 Young citizens and social control: conflicting agendas

Young people are frequently demonised and criminalised for their spatial activities (Davis and Bourhill 1997) and as such attract constant criticism and coercive and repressive responses designed to control and contain them (White 1993; Jeffs and Smith 1996). Whereas White (1993) showed how private security guards affect young people's use of shopping malls, the discussion here will be concerned with the intervention of the police in the course of young people's everyday transactions within their neighbourhoods. There are cases when young people, like any other citizens, are liable to the actions of the police if they break the law. This section, however, is about the way in which intrusive intervention and harassment of young people by an increasing police presence in response to moral panics about young people, emerges as a common feature of young people's daily lives. One 13 year old related:

"... we come out of Macs one time, me and my friend, and we got accused. This policeman comes up to us and goes 'what are you hanging around here for?' ... but we weren't doing anything ... we were just unpadlocking our bikes and about to get off..."

(13 year old boy, suburban)

"... sometimes if the police come down you just stay there and then they just say 'lets move cause you're causing bother.'"

(13 year old boy, inner city)

Responses such as this appear to be the case even if young people are not causing bother. In such cases young people's right to free association is undermined and feelings of alienation and animosity in their neighbourhood transactions are exacerbated. The increasing erosion of social and physical space in this way gives rise to a 'spatial apartheid' (Wyn and White 1997: 139) in which young people are not considered to have legitimate rights in their use of public space and in which, according to Parkin's (1979) theory of social closure, adults use power (in the form of the police) to maintain young people as 'other' and pull them into line with the values and norms laid down by adults. As Jeffs and Smith (1996) argue, policing becomes a means of social control and deterrence, for example, through the use of 'stop and search', justified on the basis of the maintenance of the moral order - a moral order based on the primacy of adult values. Young people's right to use public space is conditional upon social assumptions of 'appropriate behaviour' codified into childhood. As this 15 year old related in response to being asked what were the biggest problems in the area:

“The police because everywhere you turn they are giving aggro. Like my mate Darren, I don’t know if you’ve seen him, he’s quite tall and he’s black and they pulled him over the other day, and just started questioning him thinking he had drugs on him, for no reason. We get it all the time, if you walk down the road in a big group, they will pull us over and then like, we will all have to empty our pockets and all that because they think we are up to no good, just because we are in a big group, and the police just don’t like it.”
(15 year old boy, suburban)

The incident documented in the following quote aptly depicts the way young people’s spatial realm may be affected by police responses to local panics about young people congregating in groups.

“... we were sitting at the bottom near the community centre and the old bill came down and had a go at us ... We were all just sitting there and they all pulled up in their riot vans, the dogs come out and they were coming up to us having a right go at us, telling us that the boys had to go to one side, while they checked our pockets, they just think we’re out to cause trouble.”
(15 year old boy, suburban)

On another occasion in the inner city area four young boys were stopped and cautioned by police as a result of local complaints about young people (see Vignette 10.4 and Plate 10.13).

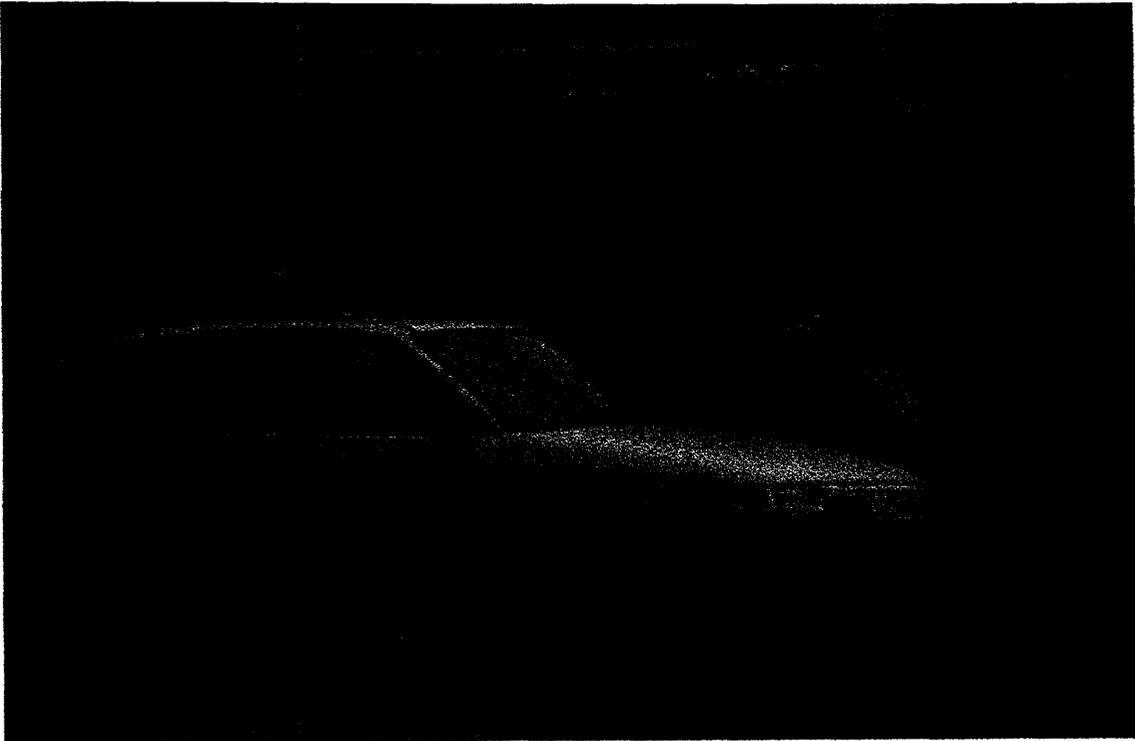
Vignette 10.4: Case study of conflict between police and young people

(Based on field notes of an observational survey in the inner city, 27/8/97)

The time is 4pm on a Wednesday afternoon in the summer holidays. A 15 year old boy, his 13 year old brother and two 15 year old friends (both boys) are sauntering along the street apparently with nothing much to do. They find a can on the road side and have a spontaneous kick about across the road with it. A police car slows as it drives past then continues. The four boys progress slowly kicking the can as they go. A few moments later the police car pulls up at the side of the road, pauses a few minutes then speeds down the road and stop them for no obvious reason.

Apparently the police were being more vigilant in the area as a result of complaints from local residents about young people. The four boys were searched and questioned about what they were up to. They apparently answered “nothing”. All the same they were cautioned for acting suspiciously looking in car windows and creating a disturbance. These activities were not observed in the course of my observational survey.

Plate 10.13: Young people being stopped by police for acting suspiciously.



What this event suggests is that the police needed to be seen to be acting in response to local complaints. In this case the police action appeared to be intended as a deterrent, but in stopping these young people who were not breaking the law, the action of the police undermined these young people's democratic use of local public space. Whilst the police have a duty to ensure a safe neighbourhood, to respond to the concerns of residents, and to uphold the law, in many cases when young people come into conflict with police, it appears to be as a result of moral panics and adult's negative stereotypes of young people rather than for good reason. The fact that local authorities will respond to adult concerns about young people in public places through increased policing, but will pay scant regard to young people's concerns about their neighbourhoods directly reflects negative social constructions of young people and the inequality in social relations between adults and young people.

10.4 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the nature of conflict with adults over neighbourhood public space. Neighbourhood space potentially provides opportunities for young people to express themselves freely and to assert their social position. However, instead of being integrated into everyday life as equal citizens, young people's geographies often become blighted by conflict with adults. Conflict may occur when young people's use of place collides with that of adults, but young people may also experience conflict as a result of the stereotypical views adults may hold about young people and their views of what constitutes 'appropriate behaviour'. The notion of appropriate behaviour is, however, codified into conceptions of childhood and may be at odds with young people's views about 'appropriate behaviour', such that the unequal social relations between adults and children are reproduced and contested in space giving rise to geographies of conflict and exclusion. Conflict is based on a sense of mutual distrust between many adults and young people which alienates young people and exacerbates their separateness from adults.

In contrast to adult beliefs and practices which place restrictions and conditions on young people's neighbourhood behaviour, they unambiguously demonstrate an ability for self determination. The disjuncture that often exists between young people's own inclination for self determination and adult social structures which constrain their actions, provides the situational context within which the liminal and subordinate world of teenagers is lived out and in which conflicts occur. Young people may therefore actively contest boundaries and structures either unintentionally in the course of their environmental transactions or intentionally as a marker of resistance. In response to young people transgressing social and geographical boundaries, public policy attempts to control and regulate young people's use of public space increases chances of conflict occurring and further alienates young people. The contested nature of young people's use of public space is therefore characterised by the conflicting agendas of adults and young people.

Chapter Eleven

Geography of bullying

11.1 Introduction

In the literature concerning young people and conflicts over public space little attention has been paid to the geography of young people's experiences of bullying or harassment from other young people. Yet an increasing number of studies and reports have drawn attention to the extent to which bullying affects the lives of many young people (Besag 1989; Tattum and Lane 1989; MacLeod and Morris 1996; Parnham 1998; Cantacuzino 1998; Kidscape 1998). Most of these have focused on the problem of bullying in schools. Evidence from this study suggests that bullying is equally a problem outside of school, affecting young people's transactions with local places. This chapter is concerned with the way in which bullying blights young people's experience of place. It begins by identifying the extent to which bullying is experienced by young people. It then goes on to consider the different forms that bullying takes and finally, investigates the effects this has on young people's neighbourhood activity space.

11.2 The incidence of bullying

In this study, 46 per cent of young people in the inner city area and 27 per cent of those in the suburban location reported that they had been bullied in some way by other young people. Added to these were another 11 per cent of the total inner area sample and 15 per cent of the total suburban sample who said they had changed their environmental transactions in some way as a result of an awareness of the presence of bullies in the neighbourhood. Amongst the effects of bullying on young people's place behaviour is the avoidance of particular places, such as a park or part of the neighbourhood, as a result of being afraid. In aggregate this means that 57 per cent in the inner area and 42 per cent of young people in the suburban site have had their neighbourhood transactions blighted by bullying. The following comments from young people about what they dislike about their neighbourhood, provide insights into the extent to which bullying occurs, as well as the places and people implicated in the act of bullying.

"I don't really like the area (inner city area) that much ... and there are older kids up the road that pick on you" (10 year old girl).

“Some of the other people round here ... other kids at the top of Semilong come down and push us around” (15 year old boy)

“ I was out on my bike up the other end of Semilong and got bullied by the Main street gang” (12 year old boy).

“There are 3 boys at the top of the road that are bullies. Once when we were playing out they came down on bikes and we hid behind the cars and in doorways until a friend’s mum came out and told them to go away. They swore back at her.” (10 year old girl).

“ Big kids hanging around at the top of the street that pick on you and push you around” (10 year old girl)

In the suburban area bullying was more likely to occur on a one-off basis with no further recurrence. This is possibly due to the larger and more spacious character of the neighbourhood making it easier to avoid further encounters. In the inner city area, on the other hand, the smaller and more compact nature of the neighbourhood makes it more difficult to avoid certain places where bullying occurs, giving rise to ‘repetitive’ (Valentine 1996a) acts of bullying. In the inner city area bullying and intimidation by older teenagers appears to be more persistent and widespread with a small number of notorious individuals seeming to control young people’s use of streets and open space. All the comments above made reference to just two groups of young people. Those referred to as ‘the boys at the top of the road’ frequently sat on the wall at the front of their house located on the main road through the area.¹ Despite the number of suburban individuals with experience of bullying, only 4 per cent considered bullying to be a problem for young people. This compares to 14 per cent in the inner area who suggested that bullying was the second biggest problem in the area for young people².

¹ Because of issues of confidentiality the central location in the neighbourhood of where these boys live and hang out cannot be divulged.

² After traffic related problems

11.3 The creation of hegemonic neighbourhood landscapes through bullying

In her report, Birkett (1998) suggested that bullying most often occurred amongst friends, on the basis that the tormentor must know the victim's weak spots. Bullying at a neighbourhood level takes on a different dynamic in that the victims weak spots tend to be simply that they are younger and/or smaller or alone and therefore vulnerable to intimidation. Of those reporting being bullied, 87 per cent in the inner area and 70 per cent in the suburb mentioned older kids or gangs as the perpetrators. Whereas boys were only likely to be bullied by boys, girls reported being bullied by both boys and girls. This suggests there is a gender dimension to bullying. Results show, however, that girls are less likely to experience bullying than boys. In the inner city area 36 per cent of girls compared to 64 per cent of boys had experienced being bullied. In the suburban area 45 per cent of girls compared to 55 per cent of boys had been bullied. This finding sits in contrast with a recent study (Kidscape 1998) which found that 70 per cent of those bullied were women. The difference could be due to bullying in urban neighbourhoods having a different dynamic to bullying in other settings. For example, in the Kidscape study 75 per cent said they were bullied in school. Women are also more vulnerable in the home.

What this suggests is that it is the power relations between perpetrator and victim rather than familiarity that characterises bullying. The basis for the power relation comes from the strength of the unequal association between bully and victim, either in terms of greater numbers or because of a threat of violence. Bullies often did not operate alone, but in a group (or at least with one other) wherein they automatically had a power advantage over a single individual. Alternatively, threats of violence or intimidation provided the basis for the unequal relation. For example, during an observational survey of one 10 year old and one 12 year old playing on a rope swing, the younger boy dominated the use of the swing by statements such as "give us another go else I'll batter you". This threat was especially powerful since, as the 12 year old knew, any challenge to his authority would invite reprisals from the 10 year old's older brothers and their gang.

Bullying in the neighbourhood takes on a number of different forms ranging from calling names to being physically attacked. Four prominent forms of bullying can be identified. First, are those cases which involve older kids barging in on younger children's games, and either disrupting or dominating the game, or stealing the ball.

"There are too many bullies around. Older kids on West Street ... they take your ball away and kick it where you can't get it"
(12 year old boy)

“ Teenagers at the top sometimes play football when we’re playing, when we don’t want them to.”
(11 year old boy)

“ ... at the top of Craven Street there’s Adam and Luke ... and there’s like their friends, there’s Mickey and that (other) boy ... Jamie that’s it, they’re all round there, and if you go there and you’ve got a football ..., they’ll just come round and say ‘let me kick the ball around’, and if you say no you’re beaten up. You get no choice. And like once when I was playing pogs they walked up ... and nicked my pogs.”
(13 year old boy)

“I like playing football here (play area) but sometimes bigger kids come along and disrupt the games”
(11 year old boy)

A second type of bullying involves ‘extortion’, whereby older kids wait outside shops and either take the sweets the young person has bought, demand money or get the young person to steal or buy things for them on the threat of ‘a good kicking’ if they do not oblige.

“ Big kids at the top of the road ask you for money and if you don’t give them some they follow you home.”
(13 year old girl)

“ The big kids, Adam and Luke at the top of the road ask for money and sweets and chase you ...”
(11 year old boy)

“... once I was in the shop and Adam and Luke were banned from the shop ... and they sneaked in and they’re round the corner and they’re filling their necks with sweets and drinks and everything and they threatened us outside ‘ if you tell anybody then we’ll break your legs’ so we daren’t tell.”
(13 year old boy)

“Older kids ask you to steal for them, when you try to walk away they follow you and say ‘i’ll batter you if you don’t’ ”
(10 year old girl)

A third form of bullying is incidental ‘intimidation’ on the streets as a source of entertainment for the perpetrators. This type of bullying involves taunts, insults, threats and pushing the victims around.

“ I was walking along and other kids started pushing me and provoking me and started hitting me”
(10 year old boy)

“Teenagers along West Street go around beating up your mates.”
(12 year old boy)

**“ Sometimes older kids along West Street threaten you”
(10 year old boy)**

One 12 year old boy talked of how he was most afraid of being bullied by kids he also knew at school. He recounted how he was hassled by a particular gang because he did not wear the ‘in’ clothes. He said he had told a teacher about it but nothing changed.

The fourth common type of bullying is ‘name calling’ and is the most frequent type of bullying amongst girls. One 10 year old girl talked with anxiety about a girl across the street that had a fight with her and kept calling her names. The friend in question referred to the same incident by stating “this girl who used to be my friend and some older kids sometimes start on me and call me names.” Another girl (aged 13) related how she was tormented and called names by a group of girls whilst she was walking past the local play area.

The evidence so far suggests that the problem of bullying is most acutely manifest in popular places that young people use and identify with. As such there is an essential spatial dimension to bullying at the neighbourhood level.

11.4 Spatialising bullying

Although bullying can in theory occur wherever there are at least two individuals, results from this study suggest there is a spatial dimension to bullying. Two dimensions to the geography of bullying can be identified. First, bullying appears to occur in some areas more than others and second, bullying tends to occur in specific types of places more than others. The results in section 11.2 draw attention to the greater likelihood of bullying occurring in the inner city area. It is beyond the scope of this research to provide definitive explanations for these trends, rather offer some tentative suggestions based on numerous observations which may provide the basis for future work.

This study has found that bullies are more likely to emanate from family backgrounds which are materially less well off, have experienced some kind of family break down, whose members are characterised by having low self esteem and limited social capital. This assertion is underlined by the fact that the individuals most often cited for bullying are all school excludees or are unemployed, have parents who are unemployed and have come from broken homes. The specific links between home background and the behaviour of young people are beyond the scope of this project, however, other studies have found that those who bully are likely to have been bullied themselves (Kidscape 1998). From these social contexts bullies appear to emerge out of fear and insecurity in which the development of the individual has been in some way arrested. In search of security, belonging and self worth individuals with shared histories provide a collective space of common identity.

Within different urban locations bullying takes on a spatial character as a result of a struggle for self empowerment with some young people using neighbourhood space as a medium for establishing identity and social status, in an otherwise socially disadvantaged locality. In this respect the presence of bullies in the local neighbourhood comes about as a result of young people's attempts to reconcile a disjuncture between the position of their selves in relation to the family and society in the practice of everyday life. To the extent that the projection of self out from the body reflects the internal self, the behaviour of bullies in neighbourhood space suggests the tyranny of the bully's internal world (Bradshaw 1990a; Miller 1992; Kidscape 1998). Psychology and space thus become intertwined to produce tyrannical spaces. Bullying is therefore an inherently spatial phenomenon in that it entails one individual (or group of individuals) co-opting the space of another.

Predictably, the places where young people reported being bullied mirror the places where young people hang out most. In the inner area 68 per cent reported hassle in the street and 20 per cent in parks and play areas; whereas in the suburban location only 25 per cent reported hassle in the streets but 36 per cent in parks. In the suburb a higher

proportion reported being bullied around shops and commercial areas (29%) than was the case in the inner city (10%). These differences are largely due to the contrasting nature of each area. There are only marginal differences between boys and girls in the places where they have been bullied. Figures 11.1 and 11.2 indicate the specific locations where young people have been bullied in each area.

The effects of the tyrannical regimes which bullies impose on other young people's use of neighbourhood places are two fold. First, young people's activity space as a whole may be blighted as a result of avoiding using places where bullies were known to hang out, giving rise to a fragmented and discontinuous neighbourhood sphere of activity for young people. Second, the quality of young people's transactions with particular places, such as shops, parks and main streets, may be undermined by the adulteration of these spaces by bullies. In this way the geography of bullying is an important contingent factor affecting young people's use of place especially in the inner city area. In response to bullying young people evolve some kind of coping strategy.

One type of response is to confront the problem. The persistence of bullying with any particular individual depends on whether the power relation between perpetrator and victim is maintained or challenged. For those that feel inclined to contest the actions of bullies, either verbally or physically, the likelihood of further repercussions tends to be reduced. One 12 year old boy for example talked of his experiences with older boys at the top of his road, but also of how he dealt with the problem:

"I used to get problems with Adam and Luke at the top of the street when I was younger, but not now. They used to take my ball away when I was down at the play area. One day I just stood my ground and he doesn't touch me now."
(13 year old boy)

This type of response requires considerable courage and may not be an attractive proposition for many young people. There is also a danger that it may not produce a successful outcome.

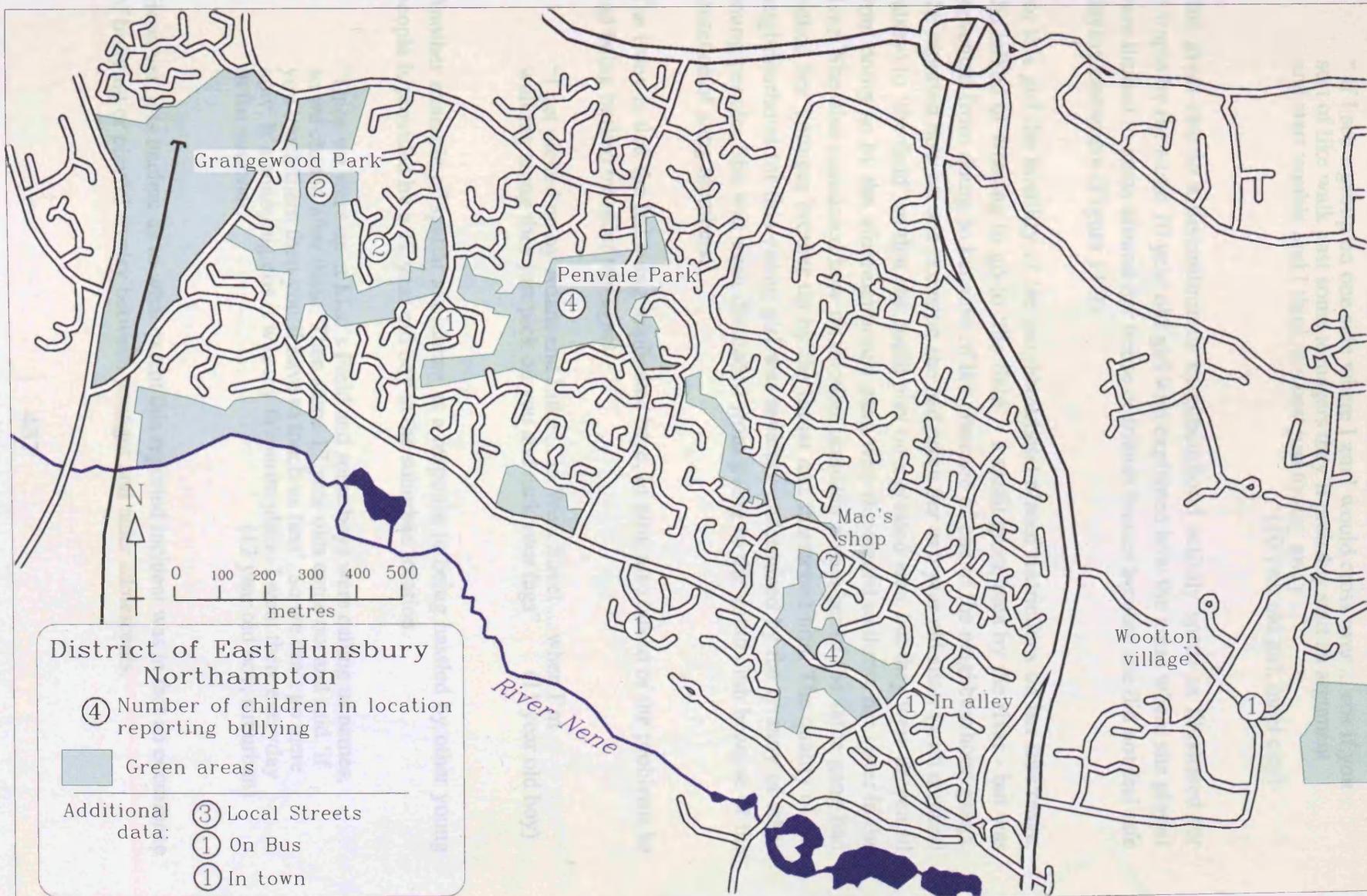


Figure 11.2: Places in the suburb where young people have been bullied (from semi-structured interviews).

For others, particularly younger girls, bullying is dealt with by avoiding certain places.

“ If I see a group on one side where I am I would cross over ... cos if you sort of like walk past some teenagers they'll probably start an argument and start trouble and I think it's best just to stay away ...”
(10 year old girl, inner city)

This gives rise to a discontinuous neighbourhood activity space as illustrated for example by the same 10 year old girl who explained how the areas where she played were limited to areas around her house or friends houses because she did not feel safe playing elsewhere (Figure 11.3).

For this girl the hostility of the neighbourhood placed restrictions on her free range. She talked of wanting to go to 'the field' - a small green area by the river - but was prevented from doing so because of the presence of one of the neighbourhood gangs. She reported how on one occasion she had taken her two year old sister (with cerebral palsy) to 'the field' so that she could play on a grassed area, but they were prevented from doing so by the aforementioned gang who threatened to throw her sister in the river. She also recounted how on another occasion a member of the same gang had picked her younger brother up by the throat and threatened him. The quality of the neighbourhood for this young girl was severely undermined by the tyranny of other young people. She was even dissuaded from going to the youth club because of the presence of gang members.

The irony is that the lad being implicated here, in turn, also talked of the problems he had being bullied by older teenagers.

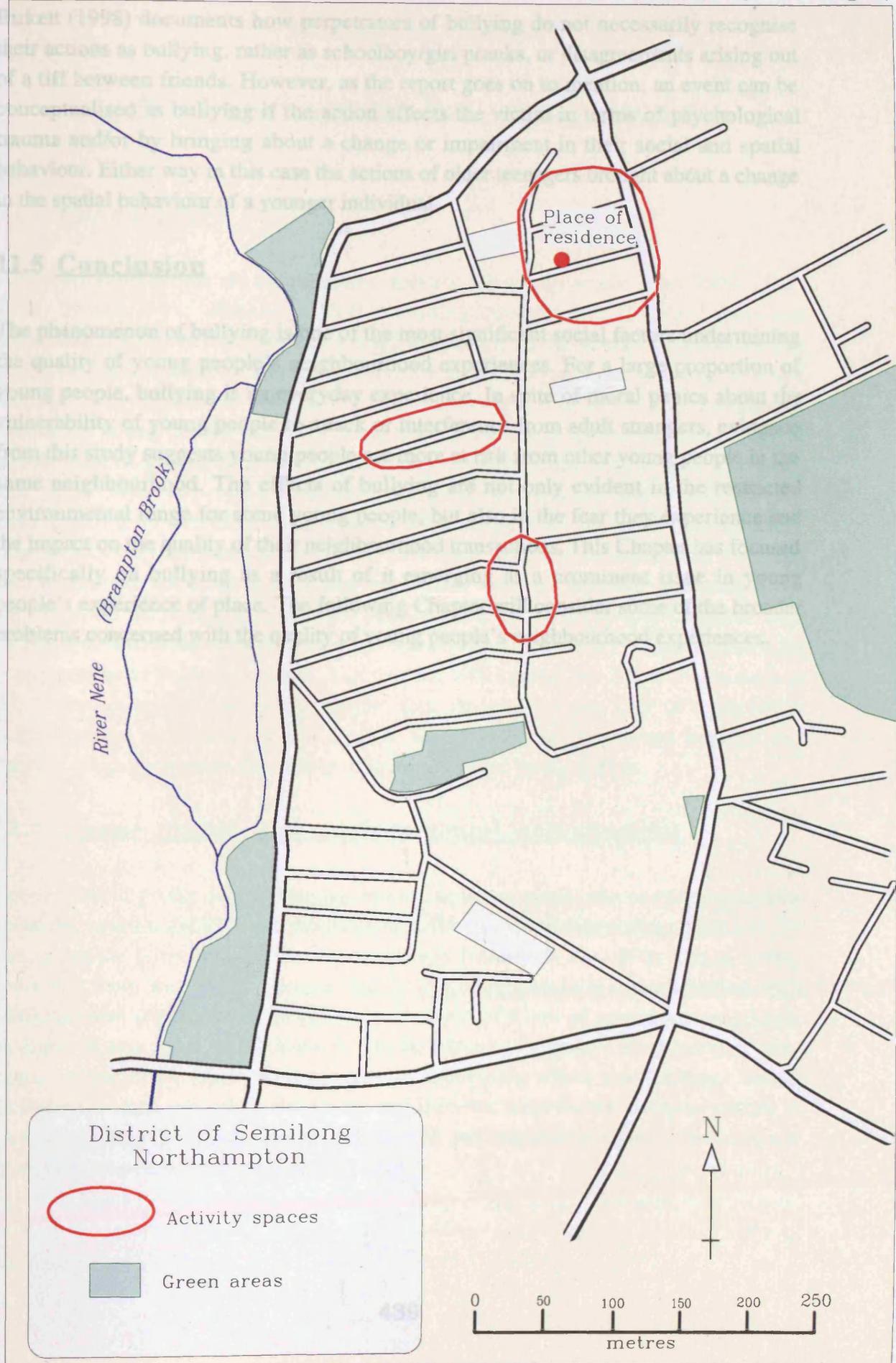
“I get picked on by Adam and Luke ... in West Street ... when I'm walking along they just pick on you and nick your fags” (11 year old boy)

Another example of spatial avoidance as a response to being hassled by other young people is provided by a 12 year old boy in the suburban location.

“Once we were up at Mac's Field and some boys were calling us names, so we chased after them. Then some 17 year olds came out and said 'if you touch them then you'll have to touch us first'. So we can't go there now. It's annoying cos it was my favourite place. I went there everyday in the summer.”
(12 year old boy, suburban)

However, it is unclear as to what extent this reported incident was in fact an occurrence of bullying or playful rivalry between younger and older adolescents.

Figure 11.3: Discontinuous neighbourhood activity space (10 year old girl).



Birkett (1998) documents how perpetrators of bullying do not necessarily recognise their actions as bullying, rather as schoolboy/girl pranks, or disagreements arising out of a tiff between friends. However, as the report goes on to mention, an event can be conceptualised as bullying if the action affects the victim in terms of psychological trauma and/or by bringing about a change or impairment in their social and spatial behaviour. Either way in this case the actions of older teenagers brought about a change in the spatial behaviour of a younger individual.

11.5 Conclusion

The phenomenon of bullying is one of the most significant social factors undermining the quality of young people's neighbourhood experiences. For a large proportion of young people, bullying is an everyday experience. In spite of moral panics about the vulnerability of young people to attack or interference from adult strangers, evidence from this study suggests young people are more at risk from other young people in the same neighbourhood. The effects of bullying are not only evident in the restricted environmental range for some young people, but also in the fear they experience and the impact on the quality of their neighbourhood transactions. This Chapter has focused specifically on bullying as a result of it emerging as a prominent issue in young people's experience of place. The following Chapter will consider some of the broader problems concerned with the quality of young people's neighbourhood experiences.

Chapter Twelve

Neglected spaces for young people

12.1 Introduction

Neighbourhood spaces are an important resource for young people (Hart 1992, 1995, 1997; Moore 1986; Matthews 1992) providing opportunities for play, sport and socialising. Evidence from this study suggests that the environmental experiences that young people derive from their local places are blighted by environmental hazards and inadequate environmental provision. In this respect it is possible to talk of neglected spaces for young people whereby young people are compromised in their ability to benefit from neighbourhood opportunities. In this study young people from both inner and outer areas expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and availability of environmental opportunities in their areas. When asked what they most disliked about their locality they most frequently stated (19% inner city, 28% suburban) that their area was boring with not much to do. When asked what were the bad things generally about the local area for young people, 50 per cent of suburban young people compared with 25 per cent in the inner city noted the poor quality and availability of opportunities for young people as being a problem. This chapter will expose two major dimensions to the neglected spaces for young people; first in terms of the lack of appropriate environmental opportunities and second, in terms of environmental hazards and dangers which undermine the quality of local places for young people.

12.2 Young people and environmental opportunities

Concern about young people hanging around in urban public places raises questions about the extent to which local places offer sufficient environmental opportunities for young people (Corrigan 1979; Hendry 1983; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Cross 1996). Evidence from this study reveals that it is young people's dissatisfaction with environmental opportunities, in particular in terms of a lack of appropriate youth and recreational provision, which gives rise to boredom and a lack of stimulation. Young people talked of two types of environmental opportunity which were lacking - formal facilities for sport, play and socialising; and informal neighbourhood opportunities to mess about and play. Issues concerning the lack and inappropriateness of both of these types of provision will be considered in turn.

12.2.1 Lack of provision

There are three types of formal and informal local provision that young people were concerned about. These are a lack of places to meet, a lack of places for sport and a lack of variety and stimulation in opportunities provided for young people. The major concern in both areas was the lack of places to meet and socialise without hassle from adults.

“I would like there to be ... a place where you could go except for your house, or friend’s houses, ... like where you can stay for a while ...”
(13 year old girl, inner city)

“ ... need ... sort of a youth club or ... certain facilities ... for teens. Like err ... snooker room or something like that ... where people can go and sit and eat, play pool or ... dance ...” (15 year old girl, suburban)

A lack of intended social places for young people results in the tendency for young people to spend large amounts of time ‘hanging out’ outside either sitting around or walking about.

“What they got to do is build a football pitch or something, a little place where you can sit and have a chat or something, or something just to do ... that’s better than ... wandering the streets ... “
(15 year old boy, suburban)

Youth clubs have traditionally been seen as filling the gaps in local provision for young people (Eggleston 1976). However, within these localities youth clubs open for just two hours a week and so often fail to offer the variety of opportunities young people need. Only 26 per cent of young people in the inner city and 35 per cent in the suburb reported that they attended a youth club. Suburban girls were more likely to attend a youth club (40%) than suburban boys (31%), whereas inner city boys were marginally more likely to attend (27%) than girls (25%). Despite this, 65 per cent of inner city young people (69% boys, 61% girls) and 54 per cent of suburban young people (56% girls and 53% boys) stated that it was important or very important to have a local youth club. Only 10 per cent of young people overall thought that a youth club was not important. What this evidence suggests is that young people look to youth clubs as an important source of local provision yet, for some reason, youth clubs are failing to attract young people.

Table 12.1 suggests that there are four main reasons why young people do not attend a youth club. These are lack of information about the youth facilities, lack of appeal, interpersonal factors and perceived ineligibility. Whereas lack of information about youth clubs was the most important factor for non-attendance in the inner city (31%), in the suburb it was a lack of appeal that most deterred young people (34%).

Table 12.1: Reasons young people gave for not attending a youth club
 (% of number not attending)

| <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
|-----------------------|----|-----------------------|----|
| Not interested | 15 | Don't know of one | 20 |
| Don't know of one | 14 | Not interested | 17 |
| Isn't any in area | 14 | No time | 8 |
| Don't like the people | 12 | Don't like the people | 8 |
| Bullying | 7 | They are boring | 8 |
| No time | 5 | Too old | 6 |
| Thought it closed | 3 | Isn't any in area | 5 |
| Too young | 3 | Indifference | 5 |
| Too old | 2 | Thought it closed | 3 |
| They are boring | 2 | Too young | 2 |
| | | Too far | 2 |

Youth clubs were seen as unappealing by 45 per cent of suburban boys and 23 per cent of suburban girls, but in the inner city by only 28 per cent of boys and 4 per cent of girls. This could be due to less attractive youth provision in the suburb or equally because suburban young people have higher expectations of how they want to spend their free time.

“There is a youth club at the Bridge Centre, but my friend used to go there and she says it’s not very good at all. They don’t hardly do anything.”
 (12 year old girl, suburban)

“... the youth club’s boring when they talk about God ... and the leader’s horrible.”
 (14 year old girl, suburban)

The lack of appeal of youth clubs for some was further exacerbated by particular individuals who attended the clubs. One 12 year old girl expressed her frustration about the youth club by saying:

“I went to the youth club but I didn’t like it because people just ran mad really and all the good things were taken up by boys, you had to put your name on a board to have a go on them, but ... then our names got rubbed off, so we didn’t get to have a go on them, so we didn’t really like it, and the lady up there just shouts at everybody, so we’re not going again.”
 (12 year old girl, inner city)

This raises questions about equality of opportunity and the effectiveness of youth workers in maintaining a friendly and supportive environment for young people. Despite this, the inner city youth club referred to in the previous quote was well attended by the 9-13 year olds. For the over 13s however the lack of appeal and the dominance of the same group who hang out most frequently in the street and who are most often mentioned as being bullies, gives rise to boys dominating the youth club. One 15 year old girl stated:

“I know there is the youth centre but I went up there, but there doesn't seem to be very much up there ... it's a good idea but it's not been sort of thought through very much as to what we want ... if they had a few more discos and things like that ... and a few things like just for girls ... because sometimes the girls get intimidated by the boys.”

(15 year old girl, inner city)

In response to the lack of appeal of the youth centre for many older girls, initiatives have been taken to provide a girls only club. Similar initiatives have been taken with older teenagers, by providing a small budget to provide themselves with outreach activities. However, there are examples of good practice to which young people positively respond (see Vignette 12.1).

The success of this particular youth project attracted large numbers of young people from the school (which it is attached to) during the lunch break. In the evenings, however, some young people from the suburban location did not attend for one of three reasons. First, although the youth project is not exclusive in who it allows in, only those young people who attended the school were likely to visit in the evenings. This is mainly due to issues of identity between young people in the suburban location. Second, once young people had left school, for many, it was too far to return again in the evening. This dilemma is coupled with the third reason, the vulnerability young people felt when returning home in the dark.

Vignette 12.1: Jack's place: an example of exemplary practice

This particular youth club is attached to an upper school situated on the northern edge of the suburban site in this study. The club was open every lunch time and two out of five evenings. The club provided a range of activities including pool, table tennis, pinball, table football, a television, music and a tuck shop, each activity occupying its own corner of the centre. Most importantly young people ran the club themselves. Despite being relatively well equipped, on the surface the club did not appear to offer anything unusual, however, clearly the young people were attracted to it. Through interviews and informal conversations with young people in the club, five key factors emerge as being critical in making the club appealing. First, and perhaps most importantly, the young people talked very highly of the club leader. In many ways the club was a reflection of the commitment of this one person to young people. He treated every person with respect, made every person feel important and created a positive, friendly and supportive environment. As one 14 year old girl said about the club leader:

“... he like builds up your confidence and things ... he's easy to talk to as well though ... he's got a really good sense of humour (and) is not like a teacher ... just like someone ... who's there ... like an older student”

The second key factor was the variety of opportunities the club provided including regular pool and table tennis competitions, trips abroad and theme nights. Third, the club provided a free and informal setting within which young people had considerable autonomy to spend their time how they wanted, rather than be directed by a structured youth and community education programme¹. Fourth, a counselling and support service was provided for the young people, such that young people came to confide in and look for support from the youth leader. Fifth, the club was open sufficiently often for it to gain its own dynamic.

¹ There was, however, a clear agenda and mission underlying the youth work carried out.

This case study illustrates some of the important facets which help provide a suitable environment for young people. It also reveals the importance of the nature of social relationships between young people and significant adult others and the benefit of mentoring in youth provision. Characteristics of successful youth provision suggested by the outcomes of this research will be considered in more detail in Chapter Thirteen. At this stage, however, it is useful to make two points in connection with youth provision. One of the failings of existing youth club provision appears to be an inability with some youth workers to connect and work with young people as equals and to provide a relevant and stimulating range of opportunities whilst not being overly prescriptive. A second key observation is the lack of financial commitment, for example, in providing a suitable range of opportunities. A critically important aspect of this is allowing young people to take responsibility for running a centre which provides a youth place, where young people can go to and create a social environment conducive to their own needs. This contrasts with some examples of youth work where needs are determined by the 'professionals'.

Despite exceptional examples of successful youth projects the results suggest that the effectiveness of youth club provision is open to question, in terms of the services being provided and the way in which they are communicated to young people. Youth leaders in both locations stated that the main problem was the continual capping of financial resources for youth provision. As a result one of the problems with the role of youth clubs in local provision is that they are rarely open for more than one night a week. Whilst some young people may resort instead to sports clubs and activities, for others lower levels of material standard of living mean that sport opportunities may be prohibited by the limited range of casual opportunities available in the immediate neighbourhood.

A second major grievance young people have with local environmental provision is with the availability of sport facilities. Young people readily complained about the shortage of both organised (or institutionalised) and casual neighbourhood opportunities for sport. Open green spaces to play sport are often lacking and where they are present are often inadequate, for example, lacking proper equipment (such as football posts or basketball rings, Plate 12.2), are dangerously sited (Plate 12.1) or are prone to conflict from local residents.

"... need to put things up to use like goal posts, tennis courts ... but not supervised ... young people will rebel if they are told to use it. Need to provide things but not fence them" (14 year old boy, suburban)

"Down the park (...) you can't really have a good game cos if you're taking a corner (...) it'll either go in the river or go on the road and cause an accident so you have to be really careful" (13 year old boy, inner city)

Plate 12.1: Not a level playing field! Unsuitable opportunities for playing football.



Plate 12.2: Designated play area in the inner city area without proper football facilities and as a result of close proximity to local residences frequently brings young people into conflict with local residents.



“.. I'd rather be playing football ... but there's no football pitch here and there's no pool table neither ... if they were to build a football pitch, they could put rugby posts in and it would be the right size ... there's nothing round here to do it on ... the nearest place is up the school field and then ... the caretaker chases you off the field ...” (15 year old boy, suburban)

“There's not really like any football teams, or anything, round here. I'm really into basketball at the moment but there's nothing, I have to go all the way up to the racecourse ...” (14 year old boy, inner city)

“ There isn't anywhere to play football because it's all on a slope ... and in the street so you haven't got a proper pitch. And you can't go to the park cos that's all up and down.” (11 year old boy, suburban)

The third major problem with local provision for young people concerns the lack of variety and limited opportunities for stimulation, fun and excitement. On average, 57 per cent of young people in the inner city and 37 per cent in the suburb said they were often bored and 83 per cent of inner city young people and 78 per cent of suburban young people said they wanted a wider variety of things to do. These views were consistent for boys and girls.

“The park. I sometimes go on the swings but mainly play football. It's important to have a variety of things to do in parks.” (12 year old boy, suburban)

“... there's only really the park, there's no other place to go really” (12 year old girl, suburban)

“... there's nothing to do round here, it's boring really, all you've got is the park and after a while you get tired of it, so you stop going there, then you get bored not going out ...” (12 year old girl, inner city)

“I don't find my area very interesting ... there's not that many places to go ... it's just ... not very exciting.” (13 year old boy, suburban)

Boredom appears to emerge from a lack of variety and stimulation in the neighbourhood. Young people engage in contingency activities as a response, rather than as a resolution, to the problem of a lack of provision. Contingency responses tend to be spontaneous in nature and whilst some may bring about creative alternatives, others may be destructive as the following comments illustrate.

“ ... we just look for something different ... more places where you can go to have fun like a place ... but a different kind of place where you can go, it's always open and can go whenever you want” (13 year old girl, inner city)

“ ... there’s nothing much to do in the area ... apart from bike rides. We can’t go on bike rides for the rest of our lives”

(15 year old girl, suburban)

“ until they make new things and new places for young people, there is always going to be trouble ... cos when you get bored, if you get really bored constantly, you start getting angry, you want to take your anger out on something ...”

(15 year old boy, suburban)

“... we go to the racecourse (park) for half an hour and then we get bored and end up having a big row cos we don’t know where to go cos there is no where to go, so we go down the park and it’s boring down there, so we go back to the racecourse again ...”

(13 year old girl, inner city)

These comments suggest that although young people are able, to some extent, to create their own opportunities, they also need a certain level of stimulation in terms of new experiences. However, the question of boredom amongst young people appears to be a bit of an enigma. The most obvious conclusion from the results above is that boredom arises out of having nothing to do as James (1982) and Corrigan (1979) have suggested. However, given that not all young people are bored by what their local area has to offer, this explanation is, on its own, inadequate. It appears more likely that the degree of fulfilment a young person derives from their local area is dependent on the way in which they respond to their environmental contexts rather than levels of provision per se.

Indeed what emerges from this study is that despite lower levels of recreational provision, fewer green spaces and a more drab physical environment, young people in the inner city area appear to derive richer environmental experiences than suburban young people. This finding echoes previous studies (Lynch 1977; McKendrick 1997; Matthews *et al.* 1998a) which show how, despite the apparent environmental and material poverty of some urban neighbourhoods, they often yield richer experiences for young people than those in more affluent suburbs. McKendrick (1997) referred to this as ‘paradoxical poverty’. The paradox in the case of this study is all the more astounding given the abundance of green spaces, higher level of community facilities and the presence of one of the town’s main sports centres in the suburban area.

Reasons for this paradox suggested by this study point to the more heterogeneous nature of the urban morphology in the inner area, which provides young people with a richer and more diverse landscape from which a range of environmental contingencies are possible. Alternatively this paradox could be a reflection of inner city childhoods which are less constrained by care taking practices and which benefit instead from greater levels of freedom within their neighbourhood (as evidence in Chapter Seven suggests). It could also be the result of differences in social cultures wherein suburban

kids have grown up with a dependency on opportunities provided for them whereas in the inner urban area young people have, out of necessity had to place greater emphasis on drawing on their own resourcefulness to satisfy their environmental needs.

These findings pose important considerations for youth policy, leisure provision, community development, environmental planning and parenting. They also raise questions about public attitudes and public policy concerning young people's use of neighbourhood space. Rather than address some of the underlying problems concerning environmental provision with young people, they become further alienated as a result of the priority of adult interests, values and attitudes towards children. When adults do provide facilities for young people they are often based on adult notions of what they think children need and are hence often inappropriate, unappealing and/or tokenistic. These aspects of local provision for young people will be considered next.

12.2.2 Inappropriate provision

Young people in both areas identify a diversity of social, cultural and environmental needs, but frequently express dissatisfaction with the token range of provision in their neighbourhoods. Even in cases where environmental opportunities - such as a youth club, green space or play equipment - are available, young people frequently complained about them being inadequate or inappropriate. Evidence from this study suggests that local provision is commonly seen as being inappropriate in three ways - in terms of being tokenistic, in terms of lacking appeal and in terms of inaccessibility.

The tendency for neighbourhoods to provide token recreational spaces rather than a wide range of environmental opportunities provide a source of frustration for many young people.

“ ... there isn't much ... there is just the play area and the St Andrews Park but I mean that's all the way up there and it's not safe because there's a big river.”
(10 year old girl, inner city)

“I don't go to the park much because it's boring apart from going on bikes through it or sitting there on the grass with friends ...”
(14 year old girl, suburban)

“There's not enough places for children to go, there's only the park and the leisure centre.”
(12 year old girl, suburban)

Token provision leads to a lack of variety for many young people. Even where there is a recreational centre the range of facilities provided appears limited.

“... there is the leisure centre but that’s ... that’s okay, but there’s not much to do apart from swim or go to the gym. Sometimes we don’t want to do those things.”
(15 year old girl, suburban)

“Used to go swimming there but not much now. The fun pool’s not very exciting anymore ...”
(13 year old boy, suburban)

This last comment also suggests that often facilities are unappealing to young people. Lack of appeal may arise out of facilities being inappropriate according to age or interest. The 10 to 15 year olds in this study expressed frustration about available play and recreational facilities tending to be for younger children rather than their age group.

“Like some of the parks they could make stuff like for older kids like our age ... most of it, it’s for Rebecca’s (younger sister) age, like up to seven.”
(11 year old girl, inner city)

“... there is only the little parks, for babies but if they put a few more things like a bigger slide for the older kids ... a few rope things or something ...”
(15 year old girl, inner city)

For many young people, comments such as these reflect dissatisfaction and frustration with facilities provided for them and a situation in which young people’s environmental needs remain, to some extent, unmet. The comments suggest that young people need more than token green spaces and playgrounds. Indeed evidence suggests that children only spend a small amount of their time in allotted play areas (Van Gils 1996). To this extent local planning for children appears to be based on a lack of priority and misguided adult conceptions of young people’s needs. This assertion also appears apt in the context of young people’s views about youth service provision as discussed in section 12.2.1.

The third way in which provision of recreational facilities appears inappropriate is in terms of location and accessibility. In this study many young people appear to be disadvantaged in their ability to use recreational facilities such as sports centres and cinemas in out of town locations, as a result of geographical inaccessibility and the cost of the transport to get there. This was particularly a problem in the poorer inner city area where nearly 50% of families do not own a car and public transport services are too expensive.

“... they could bring a cinema back over coz, if mum can’t take me I can’t go. Like when it was near in town, I liked it when it was there and just go and watch something, but now I can’t just walk down to Virgin (cinema) it’s miles away.”
(11 year old girl, inner city)

“... even going up to Sixfields (retail park) to the cinema that’s difficult because erm ... you’ve got to go into town first then catch a bus from town. So you’ve got to have enough bus fare.”
(14 year old girl, suburban)

“There isn’t much sport to do around ... I go to table tennis training at Weston Favell and there’s tables at Moulton ... but sometimes cos it’s out of the area ... the taxi fares about five pound if you haven’t got a car ...”
(10 year old boy, inner city)

Problems of geographical inaccessibility are matched by the high cost of many leisure and recreation facilities.

“ when zapatak opened it was something like 50 p for half an hour, but now it’s going to well over £2.50 for 15 minutes and now they’re ripping you off”
(12 year old boy, inner city)

“There’s not much to do really. The youth club and Danescamp are the only things but Danescamp is too expensive”
(15 year old girl, suburban)

For many young people the commercialisation and privatisation of facilities are placing local recreational opportunities out of their reach. There is an irony here in that, on the one hand, young people are being lured into a culture of consumption and commercialisation, on the other hand, many young people do not have access or the means to be able to take advantage of many leisure pursuits. This echoes what Furlong and Cartmel (1997) suggested when they stated that young people are caught within an epistemological fallacy whereby the ethos of individualisation is undermined by young people’s capacity to participate as a result of structural inequalities. It also provides evidence of the impact of privatisation of public services and facilities on the lives of young people.

Whilst the suburban young people face similar problems of accessibility, the higher levels of car ownership and wealth provide many (though not all) suburban kids with the capacity to surmount these problems. However, whilst they get to use facilities outside of their neighbourhoods, they lose their independence and autonomy and, as argued in section 12.2.1, may lose out in the quality of neighbourhood experiences. All the same little account appears to be taken of young people’s needs in planning leisure, recreation and transport facilities. And little account is taken of this situation when young people come into confrontation with adults in the course of hanging around outside. At the same time local environmental opportunities are being lost in the course of urban development.

12.2.3 Lost domains: the disappearance of childhood spaces

In both inner city and suburban locations young people lament the loss of environmental opportunities as land uses change. In the course of urban development local officials are often not aware of the value young people attach to different places within their neighbourhood, with the result that places and environmental opportunities once valued become lost. Moore (1986) refers to these as 'lost domains'. In both inner and outer areas young people talked of a loss of open space and valued places.

"We used to go to the den and just sit around in there ... they've fenced it all off now cos they're building some new houses or something ... so we don't go there now ..."
(12 year old boy, inner city)

"when we first arrived here there was loads of places to play football and stuff, but ... now it's like there's not much left and it's too late cos there's like loads of houses being built now ... I used to be able to look out of my window and see for miles and miles over the fields and now all I can see is a brick wall"
(13 year old boy, suburban)

"... there's so many new houses being built, there's hardly any space anymore. There's a new school up there, and it was a really nice field before ... loads of poppies and things on it, and sometimes we went up there in the summer, but now it just isn't ..."
(12 year old girl, suburban)

Children need wild places (Nabham and Trimble 1994) but the loss of such places undermines the quality of environmental opportunities and decreases the attraction, and therefore the potential role, of neighbourhood space in the lives of young people. One parent recognised the encroachment of house building on childhood spaces by stating:

"A bigger frustration for them where we are ... is that what was a bit of spare waste land has actually been built on. So that little bit of open ground has now vanished, which I think is rather disappointing for the kids"
(Suburban parent)

The implications of lost domains are not only reflected in the loss of environmental opportunities for young people, but also in the social and psychological impacts on young people in terms of alienation, apathy, anti social and self destructive lifestyles, as young people search for alternative means through which to satisfy their yearnings.

This section has uncovered insufficient levels of provision of local environmental opportunities for young people in both inner city and suburban areas. Evidence suggests that the provision that does exist is often inappropriate, unappealing or fails to offer the variety and stimulation that young people desire. Young people spend a

limited amount of time in token childhood spaces such as play grounds, instead they respond to their contexts by engaging in contingency activities involving the use of local places in ways other than that which they were designed. One important component influencing the way in which young people respond to their environmental context and take advantage of opportunities afforded by the neighbourhood is the quality of the local environment. This will be explored in the following section.

12.3 Quality of urban neighbourhoods

An important dimension to the diversity of childhood experiences is the quality of the environments in which they live. Evidence from this study corroborates the findings of others (Hillman 1993, Rosenbaum 1993; Bjorklid 1995; Valentine 1995; Satterthwaite *et al.* 1996) which point towards the environment in which young people grow up in being blighted by a range of environmental hazards and social dangers, which impact on young people's experience of place. Young people in both areas mentioned a similar range of environmental dangers. These include local roads, open green spaces, local shops and commercial facilities, derelict or building sites and open water (Figures 12.1 and 12.2)². The different types of danger young people experience in each case are considered below.

12.3.1 Environmental hazards and dangers

The environmental hazard most frequently mentioned in both study areas was danger from traffic. Despite the greater likelihood for street play in the inner city area respondents were less likely than those in the suburban area to quote traffic as a danger (37% as opposed to 63% in the suburban location). None the less, in both areas young people were wary of the potential hazard that roads posed (Plates 12.3, 12.4).

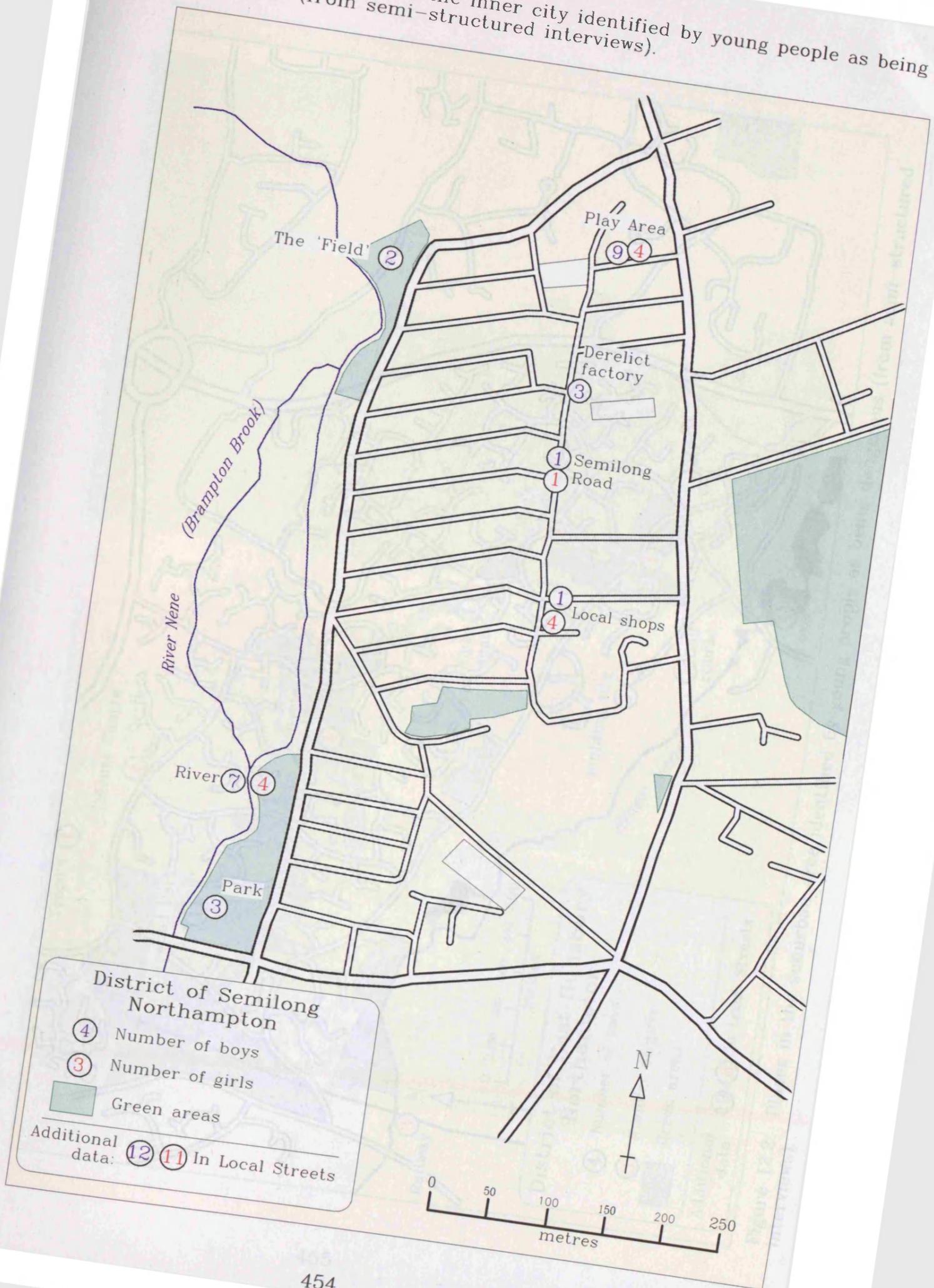
“ The main road at the top (...) is (...) very, very busy in the morning and in the evening. And the road down the bottom that is quite dangerous, my brother nearly got run over on it ...” (15 year old girl, inner city)

“ ... I don't like it because there are too many cars. It's like the M1. It gets really busy and it's bad trying to cross the roads ...” (10 year old boy, suburban)

In the inner city area the neighbourhood is bounded by three main roads and the roads within the neighbourhood are used as a 'rat run' for motorists taking short cuts.

² Figures 12.1 and 12.2 represent solely those findings from the semi-structured interviews.

Figure 12.1: Places in the inner city identified by young people as being dangerous (from semi-structured interviews).



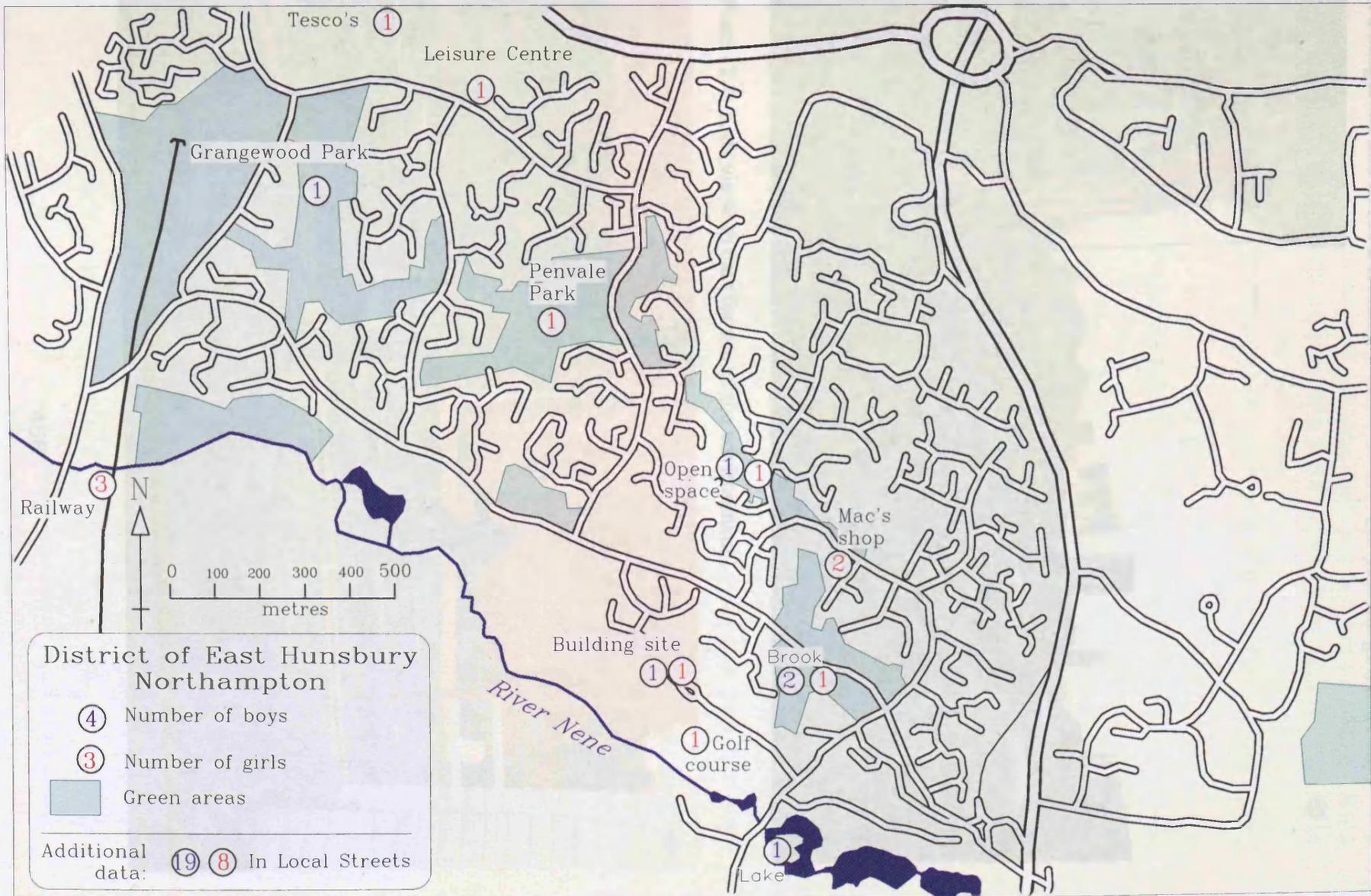


Plate 12.2: A dangerous neighbourhood west of Don't Stop St Andrew's Road.

Figure 12.2: Places in the suburban area identified by young people as being dangerous (from semi-structured interviews).

Plate 12.3: A dangerous neighbourhood road: "I don't like St.Andrews Road.
It's dangerous and needs a crossing"
(13 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 12.4: Kids vie with cars for use of the environment



During the research one 13 year old boy, who had taken part in the research, was knocked over and killed. In the inner city area, traffic was not only a hazard but also a nuisance, interfering with street games being played by young people. In contrast in the suburban area, residential cul-de-sacs provide safe havens for young people, however, the main routeways through the area pose a similar danger as in the case of the inner city.

A second set of environmental hazards with which young people were concerned can be termed urban detritus, including litter, broken glass, used syringes, discarded condoms and dog excrement. These are not only hazardous but also a source of great annoyance to young people particularly in parks and alley ways where young people play, hide, take short cuts or simply explore. These problems were more significant in the inner city area and appeared to affect both boys and girls of all ages (Plates 12.5 - 12.8 and Figure 12.3). Whilst problems such as these posed a serious threat to young people in the inner city, in the suburb they were hardly mentioned. In this way the quality of environmental conditions which young people experience in their neighbourhood contrasts starkly between the two locations.

12.3.2 Social dangers

Valentine (1992a; 1995) has highlighted the extent to which the threats and dangers posed by strangers affects the geographies of young people, in particular girls. Evidence from this study has unveiled similar trends with two sets of social dangers evident in the form of stranger danger - concerning the threat of abduction, attack or mugging - and harassment from adults. In both areas fear of strangers and fear of attack emerged as the most important environmental fears for all respondents. The data in Table 12.2 reveals that young people in the suburban area are far more fearful of strangers and of attack than those in the inner city area. It also indicates that girls are more fearful than boys.

Table 12.2: Social dangers perceived by boys and girls (% gender/site sample)

| | <u>Fear of attack</u> | <u>Fear of strangers</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Inner city boys | 16 | 16 |
| Inner city girls | 25 | 25 |
| Suburban boys | 71 | 57 |
| Suburban girls | 93 | 72 |

Plate 12.5: Polluted river: “ ... we used to go fishing - catching tadpoles - in the river, but it’s disgusting now because of the sewage” (15 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 12.6: Urban detritus blighting young people’s activity space in an inner city park: “... it’s got condoms down here ... I’ve found syringes and all sorts round there. It’s just horrible” (12 year old girl, inner city)



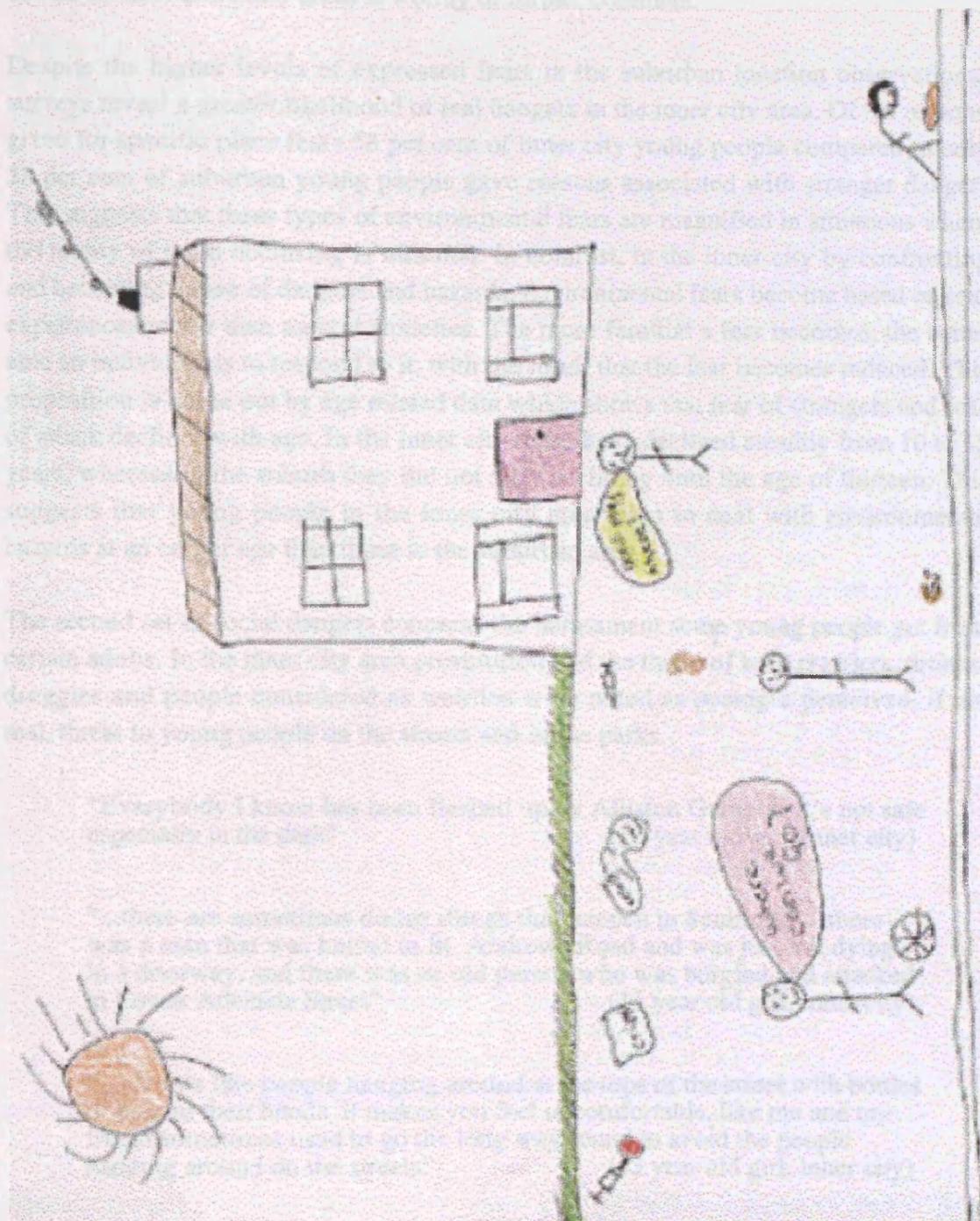
Plate 12.7: Depicting the inner city as a dirty place: “ the alley’s horrible. It’s just full of rubbish and infested with rats and ants and homeless cats. My dad told the council but they didn’t do anything”
(14 year old girl, inner city)



Plate 12.8: Litter and glass undermine young people’s experience of place:
“ ... there’s loads of litter and too much broken glass everywhere and things like that ... recently at one of the play areas this boy fell over and got a syringe in his hand ...”
(13 year old boy, inner city)



Figure 12.3: Representation of hazards and low environmental quality in the inner city. (13 year old girl, inner city)



Keep windows wide, in particular, a problem for girls in the inner city area.

"It's quite safe apart from the ... pestholes, so if you go behind the door, say if you are playing over there, you do get quite a few cats and dogs and they're making you things"

The findings in Table 12.2 are not new but corroborate the outcomes of previous studies (Valentine 1992a; 1995; 1997b). However the large difference between levels of fear in inner and outer areas is worthy of further comment.

Despite the higher levels of expressed fears in the suburban location observational surveys reveal a greater likelihood of real dangers in the inner city area. Of the reasons given for specific place fears 58 per cent of inner city young people compared to only 38 per cent of suburban young people gave reasons associated with stranger danger. This suggests that these types of environmental fears are magnified in situations where the reality of them occurring is minimal. In contrast, in the inner city by confronting and becoming aware of dangers and hazards, environmental fears become based on real experiences rather than mental anxieties. The more familiar a fear becomes, the better able an individual is to respond to it, with the result that the fear becomes reduced. This proposition is borne out by age related data which shows that fear of strangers and fear of attack declines with age. In the inner city these fears declined steadily from 10 to 15 years, whereas in the suburb they did not start declining until the age of thirteen. This suggests that young people in the inner city area learn to deal with environmental hazards at an earlier age than those in the suburban area.

The second set of social dangers concerns the harassment some young people get from certain adults. In the inner city area prostitution and the threat of kerb crawlers, drunks, druggies and people considered as weirdos were noted as posing a perceived, if not real, threat to young people on the streets and in the parks.

“Everybody I know has been flashed up by Alliston Gardens. It’s not safe especially in the dark”
(13 year old girl, inner city)

“...there are sometimes dodgy things that happen in Semilong ... there was a man that was knifed in St. Andrews Road and was just left dying in a doorway, and there was an old person who was burgled and attacked in Lower Adelaide Street”
(13 year old girl, inner city)

“... there’s like people hanging around at the tops of the street with bottles of beer in their hands, it makes you feel uncomfortable, like me and my friend sometimes used to go the long way round to avoid the people hanging around on the streets”
(13 year old girl, inner city)

Kerb crawlers were, in particular, a problem for girls in the inner city area:

“It’s quite safe apart from the ... prostitutes, so if you go behind the flats, say if you are playing over there, you do get quite a few cars stop and men asking you things”
(15 year old girl, inner city)

“... there’s loads of cars circling round to pick up prostitutes and that’s horrible that is”
(12 year old girl, inner city)

Whilst not harmful in the sense of actual bodily harm, as implied with stranger danger, it is the presence or verbal infringement of young people’s space that provides the source of environmental angst.

12.3.3 Implications of hazards for young people’s local geographies

Many hazards that affect children are not such a problem for adults (Matthews *et al.* 1998b). Adults are therefore not in a position to recognise the extent to which urban hazards affect young people unless they consult them. Young people stated that, after parental controls, they were most restricted in where they went by the presence of strangers (19 per cent inner city, 17 per cent suburban), (see also section 7.5 of Chapter Seven).

“it’s just like drug use and the drunks walking around and while you’re walking around ... it’s just weird people around and you want to stay in for safety but you wanna go out and play and be adventurous”
(11 year old girl, inner city)

“... there’s like all these drunkies round here, always smashing bottles on the wall, and drinking, and then when you come to play football the next day, you can’t because there’s all this glass over the floor and you can’t play”
(12 year old boy, inner city)

“... it’s nice to hang around with your friends at night but you can’t because the prostitutes start coming out and the other people that circle around and being young ladies (...), you feel unsafe at night ... so we have to come in (...) before it gets dark ...” (12 year old girl, inner city).

“... when my dad was a little boy, he used to go for miles ... he used to play out like loads of times. And sometimes I wish I could do that. Not have any concern whatsoever ... and just go off where I want. But you can’t really cos there’s too many mad people around.”
(13 year old boy, suburban)

However whilst stranger danger may change the spatial behaviour of some young people, particularly girls, boys appear less affected by such hazards. Behaviour observation for example revealed how 10 year old boys in the inner city area played in a park without any evident fear of the presence of strangers (Plate 12.9, see also Figure 8.1). In this instance the adults were hanging around drinking and although the young people appeared aware, they were not unduly troubled.

Plate 12.9: Playing in the park with adults hanging around drinking



parents about young people's safety when local authorities are providing recreation which further avoids the young people's environmental problems.

"It's not that my mum and dad don't trust me, it's that they don't trust the other people out there. There's a lot of drugs around and stuff. You never know what they're going to do."
12-year-old boy, suburban

"My mum doesn't think it's safe to let me and my brother even allowed to get a bike because there is a road in the area."
10-year-old girl, inner city

Despite the capacity that some young people have for recognizing local hazards, young people, on the whole, remain restricted by their reluctance to perceive local dangers. As a result of environmental and social dangers 45 per cent of young people in the inner city and 34 per cent of suburban young people expressed a high concern they were afraid of riding in their local area. These are shown in Figure 12.5.

Others talked of how they turned stranger danger into a source of fun and entertainment such as this 13 year old boy:

“... we sometimes go and take the mick out of the prossies on the corners. That’s really funny ... and then sometimes these blokes that keep an eye on them ... sometimes legs after you and it’s fun ...”
(13 year old boy, inner city)

Another 15 year old boy recounted:

“ We used to go to the racecourse (park) when we were little because it was the nearest and safest place to go. Now it’s full of queers, perverts and battymen. Once we chucked loads of bangers in the toilets in the racecourse to get rid of them”.
(15 year old boy, inner city)

In spite of the potential threat of social dangers, many young people still spend time outdoors. At the same time they demonstrate a keen sense of awareness of potential sources of danger and a high level of street sensibility in dealing with such threats, when coexisting in the same public space. In this way social dangers become a feature of everyday life, particularly in the inner city area. However, despite young people’s awareness and self dependence in dealing with potential dangers, anxiety amongst parents about young people’s safety often leads to protective parenting practices which further erode the young person’s environmental possibilities.

“... it’s not that my mum and dad don’t trust me it’s that they don’t trust the other people out there. There’s loads of nutters around and stuff. You never know what they’re going to do”
(13 year old boy, suburban)

“my mum doesn’t think it’s safe round here and I am not even allowed to get a bike because there is nowhere to ride it”
(10 year old girl, inner city)

Despite the capacity that some young people have for negotiating local hazards, young people, on the whole, remain restricted by, and vulnerable to, potential social dangers. As a result of environmental and social dangers 48 per cent of young people in the inner city and 58 per cent of suburban young people mentioned at least one place they were afraid of visiting in their local area. These are shown in Figures 12.4 and 12.5.

Figure 12.4: Specified places in the inner city area young people are afraid of going to (from semi-structured interviews).



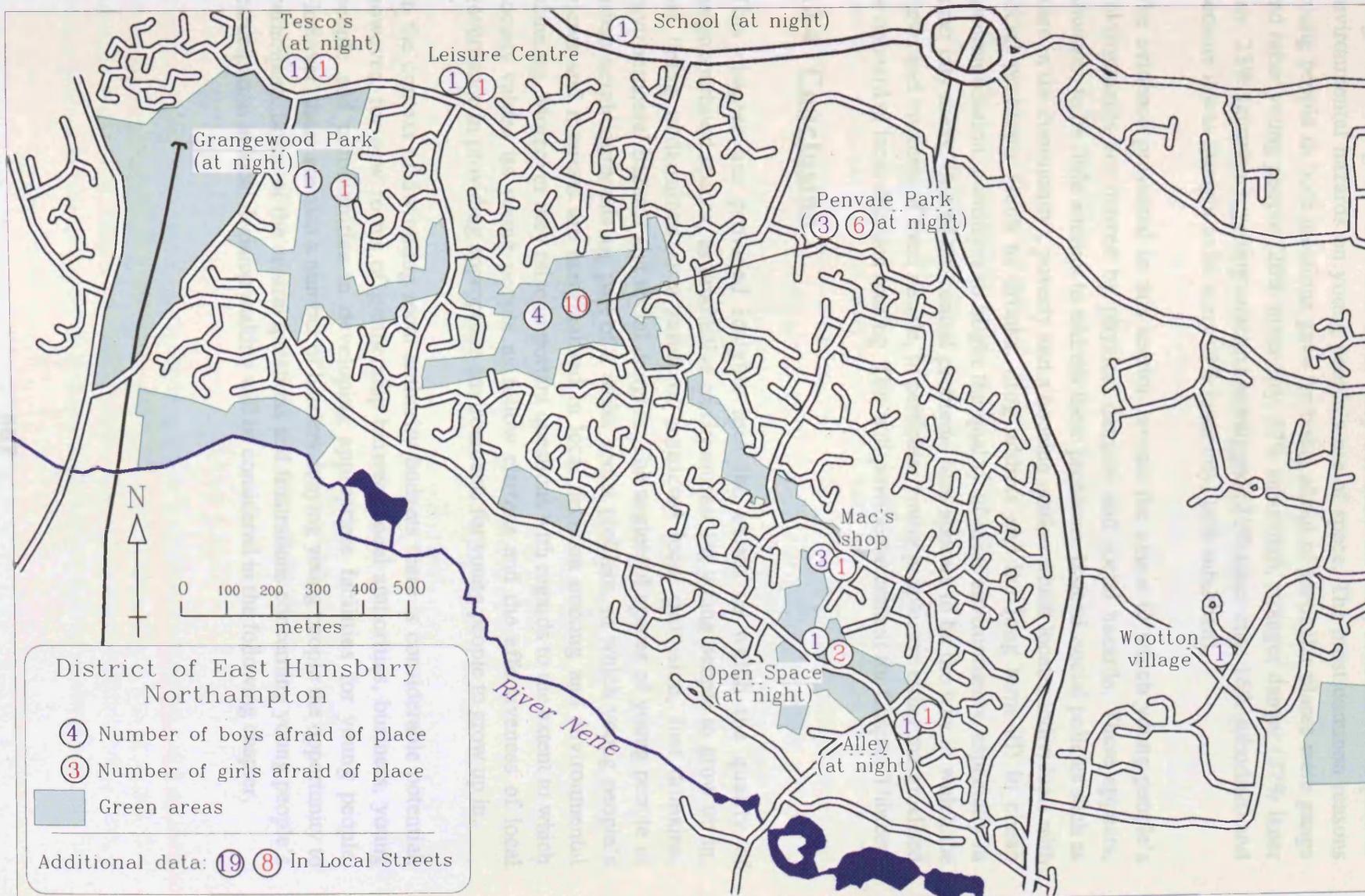


Figure 12.5: Places in the suburban area young people are afraid of going to (from semi-structured interviews).

Figures 12.3 and 12.4 indicate similar trends to the places young people considered dangerous in Figures 12.1 and 12.2. They do, none the less, confirm the impact of environmental hazards on young people's use of space. The most common reasons young people in both locations gave for being afraid of particular places were gangs and other young people (26% inner city, 27% suburban), stranger danger (37% inner city, 23% suburban), getting attacked or mugged (21% inner city, 16% suburban) and because it was thought to be scary (5% inner city, 16% suburban).

The evidence presented in this section reveals the extent to which young people's environments are marred by physical dangers and social hazards. There appears, however, to be little attempt to address these problems. Instead, social policies such as 'care in the community', poverty and a housing market which locates individuals with social problems (such as drunks, drug addicts and the long term ill) in cheap accommodation, continues to blight the quality of local environments, especially in inner city areas. One of the central problems here appears to be the way in which the views and interests of local people, in particular young people, are either marginalised or unheard in local decision making. This will provide the context for Chapter Thirteen.

12.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided insights into the extent to which the quality of neighbourhood spaces, as productive environments for young people to grow up in, are being undermined as a result of restricted local provision, lost domains, environmental hazards and social dangers. The neglected spaces of young people in urban neighbourhoods are part of a wider social problem, in which young people's views and interests are marginalised in local decision making and environmental planning. Moreover they raise important questions with regards to the extent to which society values its young people as fellow citizens and the effectiveness of local governance in providing appropriate environments for young people to grow up in.

In the context of dwindling local authority budgets there is considerable potential, however, for new forms of partnership between local authorities, business, young people and communities in developing appropriate facilities for young people. However, there are also a number of barriers denying young people the opportunity to participate. Some of the central questions and frustrations concerning young people's participation in local decision making will be considered in the following chapter.

Chapter Thirteen

Perspectives on planning local environments for and with young people

13.1 Introduction

The thesis so far has highlighted key dimensions to young people's local geographies. In particular it has revealed the extent to which young people are active in shaping their own social and spatial identities, cultures and geographies. Young people's everyday lives are framed by structures laid down by adults, which young people have had little say in formulating. This study has revealed that young people are frustrated by having insufficient account taken of their views and interests in local decision making. Many problems that young people encounter in the course of their neighbourhood transactions, such as environmental hazards, lack of appropriate provision and social conflict, could be ameliorated if young people were provided with equal opportunities to participate in local affairs. However, evidence also suggests that frustration, disaffiliation and marginalisation may be mediated by new forms of participation for young people. Only then will young people become integrated into the wider community as social actors in their own right. This final chapter will focus on the relationship between young people and environmental planning. It will begin by exploring young people's views on how their environments may be improved and their perspectives on the role young people might play in the process. The latter half of the chapter will consider local environmental planning practices and perspectives of local officials on the involvement of young people in local decisions. Finally, some of the lessons learnt from a case study on children's participation in play planning will be considered.

13.2 Young people's perspectives on neighbourhood improvement and involvement in local decisions

13.2.1 Introduction

There are many studies which highlight children's capacity to evaluate and plan their environments (Hart 1992, 1997; Chawla 1997; Ruse 1997; Adams and Ingram 1998; Johnson *et al.* 1998; Matthews *et al.* 1998i). This study has found that many young people possess an intimate and detailed knowledge about their local environments. The

way in which young people use local places often differs from the relationships adults have with the same environments. As Matthews *et al.* (1998b) argue, many environmental concerns that young people have are not concerns in later life. By virtue of their particular relationships with local environments, young people are well positioned to contribute valuable perspectives to environmental decision making.

This section will consider young people's perspectives on what is lacking in their local environments, salient dimensions to young people's concerns about the quality of their local environments and priorities for change. The final part of the section will consider the perspectives of young people with respect to being involved in environmental planning and local decision making and the different ways they perceive this might be achieved.

13.2.2 Young people's environmental concerns and priorities for change

Young people in both locations shared common concerns about what they felt was lacking in their areas, emphasising in particular a lack of social and recreational opportunities (Table 13.1).

Table 13.1: Young people's views about what is lacking in their local areas (per cent site sample)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total n = 80) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total n = 101) | |
|--|----|--|----|
| Good youth club/place to meet without hassle | 45 | Good youth club/place to meet without hassle | 49 |
| More/better sport facilities | 23 | More/better sport facilities | 33 |
| Better/safer play area | 16 | More shops/commercial facilities | 13 |
| More things to do | 13 | Open/green spaces | 8 |
| More shops/commercial facilities | 8 | More things to do | 8 |
| Safer streets | 6 | Recreational facilities ¹ | 6 |
| Open/green spaces | 5 | Better play area | 4 |
| Cleaner streets | 4 | Safer streets | 3 |
| | | Youth night club | 3 |
| | | More clubs | 2 |

¹ Including ice skating and roller blading

The data in Table 13.1 indicates three broad ways in which young people consider their local area to be lacking. Most importantly young people draw attention to the lack of places to meet and socialise without hassle from adults. The second deficiency concerned sport and recreational facilities such as football pitches, ice skating and roller blading places. Third, young people identified low levels of environmental quality including the safety, cleanliness and suitability of neighbourhood places generally and parks in particular. These data mirror findings in the previous chapter which drew attention to the apparent neglect of neighbourhood environments for children.

These results indicate a relative consistency in what young people found to be lacking in both areas, varying only by degree. Two distinctions are, however, worthy of mention. First, more suburban young people (33%) than inner city young people (23%) identified a lack of good sports facilities. This suggests that the sports centre facilities that are provided are in some way failing to appeal to young people in its catchment area. A second important difference is the greater emphasis placed on the lack of appropriate play area provision in the inner city than the suburb. Observational surveys suggest that this is due to the greater reliance of young people in the inner city area on formalised neighbourhood play space and the greater likelihood for them to spend their time in informal street activities.

Two reasons may be suggested for the shortfall in environmental opportunities. First, because young people's interests are not sufficiently accounted for in the local planning process and second, as a result of locational factors. For example, in the inner city area the compact nature of the built environment means that there is little potential space for development of facilities for young people. In contrast in the suburb, there are numerous pockets of green spaces, but these are landscape features rather than spaces for recreation. Indeed in the more spacious suburban location there is an insufficient level of open space for recreational purposes as recommended by the National Playing Fields Association (six hectares per thousand head of population) (see also section 13.3).

The evidence provided above demonstrates young people's capacity to evaluate the quality of their neighbourhood places and identify aspects in need of change. The initial 63 different responses from which the generic categories in Table 13.1 have been derived, reflect the extent and diversity of young people's concerns with their neighbourhood. More pertinently it reflects the extent to which local decision makers and providers fail to provide adequate opportunities for young people. As well as being able to evaluate competently their environments, young people are also able to prioritise what needs changing. When asked what they would change about their environment young people suggested an extensive range of environmental improvements (Table 13.2).

Table 13.2: Changes young people would like to make to improve their local environments (mention rates)

| <u>Inner city</u> (Total sample n= 80) | | <u>Suburb</u> (Total sample n= 101) | |
|---|----|---|----|
| Clean area | 23 | More meeting places | 21 |
| Safer streets | 13 | Clean area | 16 |
| Traffic safety | 13 | Provide/improve youth club | 14 |
| Provide/improve youth club | 11 | Better sports facilities | 13 |
| Better parks | 10 | Traffic safety | 13 |
| Better sports facilities | 6 | Safer streets | 9 |
| Improve play area | 6 | Bars/clubs/gig venues for youth | 6 |
| Provide more things for young people to do | 6 | Provide more things for young people to do | 5 |
| Places to go/meet | 5 | More places to play | 5 |
| Improve community spirit | 4 | Affordable facilities | 4 |
| Get rid of social hazards | 4 | Get rid of social hazards | 4 |
| Convert factory to green space | 3 | Better parks | 4 |
| Better lighting | 2 | Stop vandalism | 3 |
| More places to play | 2 | Use community centre better | 3 |
| Big child-run play house | 2 | Better lighting | 2 |
| Stop pollution | 2 | Provide cycle tracks | 2 |
| Less police | 2 | Make the place livelier | 2 |
| More shops | 1 | Provide a skating rink | 2 |
| Clean river | 1 | Ban smoking | 2 |
| More information about events | 1 | More trees | 2 |
| Ban dogs in green areas | 1 | Provide nearer cinema | 2 |
| Provide cycle tracks | 1 | Stop house building | 1 |
| Night club/bars for young people | 1 | No dogs in green areas | 1 |
| Affordable facilities | 1 | Stop pollution | 1 |
| Stop vandalism | 1 | Bike park with jumps | 1 |
| Listen to what children want | 1 | Listen to what children want | 1 |
| | | Bowling facilities | 1 |
| | | More young people around | 1 |
| | | More benches to sit on | 1 |
| | | Park keepers | 1 |
| | | Make area more compact | 1 |
| | | Get rid of parents | 1 |

Table 13.2 reveals the range of changes young people would like to make to their local environments in both locations. These fall into two categories: measures to improve the general quality of the local environment and measures to improve the quality and availability of local social and recreational provision. Improving the general quality of the environment emerged as a higher priority for young people in the inner city (49 per cent of total responses compared to 34 per cent in the suburb), whereas issues concerned with improving the standard of social and environmental provision were a higher priority for suburban young people (59 per cent of total responses compared to 45 per cent in the inner city). These differences suggest that whilst young people may be concerned about a similar range of environmental improvements, priorities vary according to location.

The most frequently mentioned improvements to the quality of each area were cleaning the area, making the streets safer and addressing problems of traffic safety. Specific measures that were mentioned include getting rid of social hazards (strangers and weirdoes), improving street lighting, preventing pollution (for example of the river), tackling vandalism and banning dogs from green areas. In both locations the majority of changes proposed, however, were concerned with improving social and recreational provision.

“... I would like there to be ... like a place where you could go except for your house or a friend’s house, but a safe place, not a place where it’s dangerous, like where you can stay for a while, but longer than like down the park .. you don’t stay that long cos it starts getting dark and then you have to go home ... because there’s nowhere else to go”

(13 year old girl, inner city)

“ ... there’s nothing really around here ... just the park, that’s all there is, so it’s quite boring ... it would be good if there was a place to go ... a place with other young people and games and things to do ...”

(12 year old girl, suburban)

Within this category, young people most frequently suggested improvements to the provision of social venues such as youth clubs and places to meet. The second priority was better parks and play areas and a better standard of sports facilities. Young people in the inner city were more concerned about improving parks and play areas, whereas suburban young people prioritised improving sports facilities. The third most cited set of improvements relate to improving the range of opportunities available, such as bowling and ice skating, as well as making facilities financially and geographically more accessible, in particular with regards a cinema.

Tables 13.1 and 13.2 provide clear evidence of young people's capabilities in evaluating, and prioritising changes to, their environments. When taken together with the perspectives of young people derived through interviews and numerous encounters on the street in the course of this study, there is ample evidence to argue for young people's views and interests to be taken into account in local decision making.

13.2.3 Young people's experiences and attitudes with respect to involvement in environmental improvement.

Despite young people's ability to evaluate their environment and prioritise changes, they frequently express frustration about not having their views and interests taken into account in local decision making. Only 19 per cent of young people in the inner city and 14 per cent in the suburban area said they had previously made suggestions about improving opportunities for young people. However, in almost all cases the outcomes were seen by young people as unsatisfactory. Table 14.3 below provides insights into the range of outcomes that resulted.

Table 13.3: Outcomes from young people making suggestions about improving their local areas (mention rates, figures in brackets indicate percentage of those making suggestions)

| <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
|---------------------------------|--------|--|--------|
| Don't know what happened | 7 (47) | Don't know what happened | 8 (57) |
| Never had a response | 3 (20) | Never had a response | 2 (14) |
| They didn't like the suggestion | 2 (13) | Ideas not possible | 2 (14) |
| Nothing happened | 2 (13) | Tidied up myself | 1 (7) |
| No money to pay for changes | 1 (6) | Received a letter saying couldn't do anything | 1 (7) |

These data reveal that, despite young people's ability and readiness to have their say about matters that affect their lives, this does not readily happen as a matter of course. Moreover, of the young people that stated they had at some time made suggestions about improving their environment, in the majority of cases these were only to friends or parents. The results in Table 14.3 further illustrate the alienation of young people in local decision making by showing that even where suggestions were made they were at best heard but not taken seriously and, at worst, not acknowledged.

“... people like politicians and stuff don't really know what we want to do ... and think we're like really stupid and a bit of a waste of time really I suppose. Think we just stay in all day watching telly. They just think 'oh he's just a little kid what does he know' ” (13 year old boy, suburban)

Comments such as this reveal the desire for young people to have their views taken into account but, at the same time, their frustration with not being taken seriously. According to the results of this study the marginalisation of young people in local decision making appears to be more the result of exclusionary structures, processes and values of local governance which deny meaningful opportunities for young people to participate in local decisions, rather than the unwillingness or inability of young people to take part. Lansdown's (1995) assertion that children are caught in a 'culture of non-participation' appears to be supported by this study. However, this statement needs qualification. The use of the term 'culture of non-participation' suggests an internalised set of beliefs and attitudes that characterises young people's orientation towards participation. This may be true for some young people, but for others it appears more likely that they are caught in a wider social culture of non-participation, despite wanting to participate themselves. Indeed non participation in local development processes appears to arise more as a result of being denied opportunities to participate than the result of entrenched personal belief systems. This assertion is corroborated by the reasons given by young people for not participating in local decision making (Table 13.4).

Table 13.4: Reasons given by young people for not making suggestions about improvements to their local area (% site sample)

| | <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| | <u>Boys</u> | <u>Girls</u> | <u>Boys</u> | <u>Girls</u> |
| No reason/don't know why | 53 | 42 | 25 | 54 |
| Don't know who to speak to | 12 | 19 | 27 | 23 |
| Not had the opportunity | 12 | 6 | 6 | 11 |
| Not too bothered | 9 | 3 | 17 | 3 |
| People won't listen | 3 | 13 | 10 | --- |
| Haven't thought about it | 3 | 10 | 4 | --- |
| Nothing would happen | 3 | --- | 2 | --- |
| Too young | 6 | --- | --- | 3 |
| Area is nice already | --- | 6 | 4 | 6 |
| Others ² | --- | --- | 6 | --- |

² These include: 'Didn't know it was my responsibility', 'Mum would say something for me', 'Never covered it at school'.

What emerges from the data in Table 13.4 are three broad sets of reasons why young people have not made suggestions about improving their local areas. First is that the whole concept of participation and having their say does not appear to have been enculturated into the mind sets of young people, such that it had never occurred to them that they could have their say or that they had simply never thought about it. This is not surprising since many adults are also not aware of possibilities for participation in local decision making and development processes. However, once young people are given the opportunity to have their say, a majority respond positively. Indeed when asked for their opinions on how they felt the interviews in this study went, 52 per cent of young people stated that they felt good having the chance to say what they felt and be listened to. As the following comments from young people taking part reveal.

“... I hope something can be changed now, but it’s nice to be able to give your views to somebody that can listen, cos most people just aren’t bothered ...”
(15 year old girl, suburban)

“It was quite good cos I got to say what I felt”
(14 year old girl, suburban)

“I managed to put a lot of things across and talk about appropriate things that really matter in Semilong”
(15 year old boy, inner city)

A second set of reasons relates to young people not being provided with the necessary capacity for participation in terms of the knowledge they need, for example of who to talk to and what their rights are. However, having the capacity to participate also depends on having the opportunity to participate. This is symptomatic of a culture of non-participation wherein young people are not expected to participate and in which officials see it as their role to act in the ‘best interests’ of children. In contrast if young people are provided with opportunities to participate in everyday practices within the community, they would be able to develop the skills of participatory citizenship. In this way community participation becomes a form of social learning.

The third set of factors underlying young people’s lack of participation relates to the apathy and cynicism of young people themselves. 14 per cent of young people in both areas who had not previously been involved in making suggestions or having their say in local development stated they were either not bothered, that people would not listen or suggested that nothing would happen in any case. Cynicism and apathy were more pronounced amongst boys than girls with 22 per cent of boys against only 6 per cent of girls stating that they had not made suggestions for one of the above three reasons. Some young people identified the apathy of others as being a stumbling block in enhancing participation amongst young people in community development in general.

"I don't think many of the kids in Semilong are really that bothered"
(15 year old girl, inner city)

"... the thing is, the kids round here don't really want to talk to adults,
they just want to go around in their gangs, they don't want to have
anything to do with adults."
(13 year old boy, inner city)

However, some young people intimated that apathy and disaffection could be mediated by encouraging more communication between young people and adults.

"It's like 'oh we're the adults,' 'we're the kids' and it's like a war thing
and not communicating together like a team" (13 year old girl, inner city)

"People need to trust young people more, ... they need to start listening
to teenagers rather than think they're all just slob"
(15 year old girl, suburban)

Despite being denied or dissuaded from meaningful opportunities to participate in local decision making, young people demonstrate a keen sense of wanting to be involved in local development processes. Table 13.5 shows that on average 75 per cent of young people in both locations stated they would like an opportunity to be involved in making improvements to their areas. In the inner city, boys expressed greater enthusiasm to contribute to local environmental improvement, whereas in the suburb girls were more enthusiastic. The inclination to be more involved in local decisions showed little variation across the age range.

Table 13.5: Proportion of young people who would like to be more involved in making improvements to their areas (per cent site sample).

| | <u>Inner city</u> | <u>Suburb</u> |
|-------|-------------------|---------------|
| Boys | 82 | 66 |
| Girls | 67 | 84 |
| Total | 75 | 73 |

Many young people demonstrate a keen sense of the benefits of their involvement in local decision making and development processes and are vociferous in arguing why they should be listened to.

“... if they just listen to a few of our ideas, and they just done ‘em, I think everybody would like it much more round here”

(12 year old boy, inner city)

“ Young people should be involved because it’s us that have to play round here”

(10 year old girl, suburban)

“ It’s important to listen to kids because kids have got their own ideas and they can have some good ideas about things to do but I mean, it could be the youngsters that change things around here and get new places up and running and things ...”

(14 year old girl, inner city).

“... it’s always adults talking for them (young people), you feel like ... can’t I just have a little say in something. They say no, no, you’re too young to have a say, and you think, I really wanted to say something about that but I can’t because adults rule the world”

(11 year old boy, suburban)

“ ... I mean we are the ones that well supposedly benefit ... and we are the ones that have got to grow up in here and ... children are the ones that are going to to use the stuff so I think they should be asked what they want”

(15 year old girl, inner city)

“They should have more of a say because children deserve a say just the same amount as adults do ... adults think they don’t need a say just because they’re just children, they’re too young to speak, but we are not, we can speak... you never know, some children could make things ... the world, a lot better.”

(10 year old boy, suburban)

One of the goals of this project has been to try and uncover ways in which young people feel they would be best facilitated to participate in local decisions. The following section identifies ways, suggested by young people in which they felt they could have more of a say in local decisions.

13.2.4 Young people’s preferences for modes of participation in local decision making

Out of a cohort of 47 boys and girls drawn from both areas who were engaged in the in-depth part of the research, all agreed that it was important for young people’s views to be accounted for in local decision making, although there was uncertainty as to how this might best be accomplished. It is not surprising that young people were not able to

suggest a preferred mode of participation since they probably have had little experience or opportunities to develop such views. Out of the total cohort 14 did not specify a preferred mode of participation, while the remaining 33 suggested a common range of approaches in both locations (Table 13.6).

Table 13.6: Young people's views of how they could be more involved in local decisions (mention rates, percentage figures shown in brackets)

| <u>Inner city</u> | | <u>Suburb</u> | |
|------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------|--------|
| Local discussion meetings | 4 (25) | Local discussion meetings | 6 (35) |
| Youth councils/committees | 4 (25) | Youth councils/committees | 3 (18) |
| Interviews/surveys | 3 (19) | Council consultation with | |
| Council consultation with | | young people | 3 (18) |
| young people | 2 (12) | Interviews/surveys | 2 (12) |
| Get involved in local groups | 2 (12) | Self initiated action (eg litter | |
| | | picking) | 2 (12) |
| Talk to the council | 1 (6) | Talk to the council | 1 (6) |

Table 13.6 shows a range of different modes through which young people felt they could participate in local decisions. There were no strong differences in preferences between boys and girls. The variety of responses suggests that there is not just one way of enhancing opportunities for young people rather a range of possibilities contingent upon individual preferences as to the extent to which different individuals may wish to be involved and in what capacity, as well as the nature of the decision that needs to be taken. Hence the two respondents who suggested young people could take more self directed action to care for their environment were not especially concerned with the objective of participating in local decision making but were passionate about caring for the environment and therefore saw their contribution in terms of guardians of nature. Other young people felt strongly about there being a youth council or committee which would permit a greater level of active participation.

Earlier in this thesis it was argued that children's behaviour may be distinguished from that of adults by virtue of their intuitive rather than rational modes of decision making. This distinction could usefully be employed to understand reasons why young people either did or did not want to participate in the structured world of adult decision making. However, this assertion lies beyond the scope of the data generated by this study. Evidence from this study does, however, suggest that it tends to be older

teenagers who are most keen to participate actively in local decision making through councils and committees. This raises questions concerning the age at which young people are provided with opportunities to be involved in local decision making and the form that involvement might take. Nevertheless all young people from the in-depth survey advocated the importance of young people having their say, with two arguing further that they should have a vote. Whereas some were quite happy to put their view across in an interview or in a questionnaire, they did not necessarily want to participate further in local decisions, but were happy for survey results to be passed on to the local council.

Others, however, thought it important for young people to organise periodic or one-off meetings for young people to come together to discuss pertinent issues and problems and to consider options for change. For this latter group, the youth club was seen as a favourable venue for ideas to be exchanged and solutions found, or a place to which local officials could come and consult with young people and hear their views. A number of young people felt that this type of arrangement could also be used to supplement initial surveys.

“... you could do a survey perhaps for the ... like the kids asking them first what they like ... and get like a meeting and talk about it and see what people wanted to do about it.” (13 year old girl, inner city)

“... they (young people) could all meet up in a group and speak about what they think ... cause then they could get things out in the open and ... if you get a group together and they go and speak to adults and then some of the children and some of adults could speak to the council or something and they could do something about it.” (12 year old girl, inner city)

“... if they just got their (young people's) feelings across and like told everyone what they wanted or what they would be happy with and places to go, it will be alright and if the council listen to them ... I think things round here would improve.” (14 year old girl, inner city)

However there was skepticism as to whether the council would take any notice of their views or that anything would happen as a result.

“... the results could be taken to the council and show them, but they won't listen, they never listen to anyone.” (12 year old boy, inner city)

“... if we were to knock on some big council building ... with a little petition in our hands, they wouldn't take us seriously, but would more than likely just say 'go away'. You need adults or someone to do it, whether the adults would be bothered to do it or not is a different matter.” (15 year old boy, suburban)

Comments such as these reflect the feelings of alienation and disaffiliation which young people so often express. They also illustrate the inequality in citizenship status between adults and young people, in which young people's views and interests are devalued, ignored or unrecognised. Because of the lack of reliability of adult structures and established practices of local governance, some of the participants in this study advocated the need for structures which would allow young people to be more actively involved in decision making, for example, through youth councils or local committees.

"... by setting their own committee up, like a children's committee where no parents could go ... and talk, and once they've done that they can talk to the council when they've decided stuff." (10 year old boy, suburban)

"I think they should have like a young people's spokesman ... something so they'd have an idea what young people want to do." (13 year old boy, suburban)

"Well I reckon at the community centre they should have like some teenagers on the committee so they could just be there so they feel as if they're involved. Then they could just say what they wanted to say. At least they'd feel as though they're being involved in something and not shut out of the rota." (13 year old girl, inner city)

"... I mean we were asked ... what things we would like in the youth club but we weren't actually asked our opinions on how to put together a youth club. Maybe if we sort of had a council ourselves, to go with the adults and give our views on it then it might be a bit better." (15 year old girl, inner city)

For many, however, the concept of a youth council was beyond the scope of their knowledge and experiences. Nonetheless when broached with the idea of a youth council, young people tended to be enthusiastic.

"... yeah, that (a youth council) would be good, ... cos if we was allowed to discuss about this, and they actually listened to our things, ... if they would just listen for once ... that would be great." (12 year old boy, inner city)

"... the smallest opportunity you would get everyone down, just to make so there's better things to do, everyone will come down, its just that there ain't no opportunities at the moment." (15 year old boy, suburban)

These comments demonstrate that young people are on the whole eager to have their say and participate to in local decisions. Although they are not always informed about different options for participation they are able to indicate a range of preferences of how they would like to be more involved. What emerges from this study is a spectrum of views about modes of participation which can be grouped into three types.

Table 13.7: Young people's preferred modes of participation

- * Consultation: ensuring young people are consulted on local matters through interviews and surveys.
- * Local discussion groups/meetings: periodic or one-off focus group meetings, with or without involvement of local officials.
- * Youth councils and committees: paralleling adult council structures.

This basic typology provides an initial insight into how young people felt they could participate in local decisions. Further research is required to provide greater understanding of the broader social and personal issues which deter or encourage young people from participation.

13.2.5 Conclusion

The evidence from this study reveals the strength of young people's inclination towards participating in local decision making and a capacity to contribute in a variety of ways. Despite this, few young people have experience of being involved in local decisions or knowledge of how to go about having their say. Whilst some remain apathetic and cynical about the contribution they could make, others feel thwarted by the lack of opportunities to be involved. What emerges from these findings is the need not only to nurture a culture of participation for young people but to also provide meaningful and appropriate structures within which young people can participate. Changes such as this, however, depend on the attitudes of local officials to the involvement of young people, and a willingness to create new structures and processes of local governance.

13.3 Local government practices and perspectives on young people and environmental planning

13.3.1 Introduction

Young people's views and interests are seldom accounted for in local decision making with the result that local landscapes tend to reflect adult usages and values (Matthews *et al.* 1998b). The impact of environmental planning on young people's geographies can be seen in terms of the failure to account adequately for young people's interests in the planning and development of local places. Instead, economic priorities and adult interests tend to over-shadow the local environmental and community needs of young people. Where account is taken it tends to be based on adult conceptions of the child's best interest and often results in either token provision or planning decisions which impact adversely on the quality of young people's neighbourhood. In these ways young people may be considered as 'outsiders' (Matthews 1995) in the local decision making process.

This section will focus on the way in which local government practices marginalise young people's local needs in the course of environmental planning. It will provide insights into the dynamics of environmental planning as it affects children's environments in both locations. In particular, by drawing on perspectives from local officials and young people it highlights some of the structural forces which shape the environments in which young people grow up in.

The two locations under study in this project are faced with different planning dilemmas as a result of the contrasting nature of the built environments. In the inner city environmental planning concerns managing an urban form created mainly during late Victorian / early Edwardian times with different social and environmental contexts than are present today. In contrast, the suburban location is a newly established residential area, developed in the course of the last 25 years. Sections 13.3.2 and 13.3.3 will consider in turn the way in which the local development process affects young people in suburban and inner city neighbourhoods.

13.3.2 Suburban residential development, young people and environmental opportunities

Insights into the way in which young people's local needs are marginalised in local environmental planning are provided by consideration of the extent to which the developing area of East Hunsbury takes account of their needs in the course of its development. Through interviews with local officials and consideration of the Northampton Southern District plans it becomes evident that it is not just a matter of young people's local needs being neglected, rather a matter of community, recreation and social provision generally being subordinated to the Development Corporation's

(and later the Commission for New Town's) primary objective of selling off land for private residential development. The residential developments in East Hunsbury appear to be planned for their aesthetic appeal to house buyers, and the maximisation of house building per unit area, rather than with local community needs in mind. This section will highlight particular issues in the development of the Southern area with respect to young people's environmental needs.

Despite there being over 600 young people aged 10 to 15 in the suburban area in this study, there are no level playing fields and only limited provision of play equipment. The Borough Council acknowledges the National Playing Fields Association minimum requirement for playing field provision of 1.6 hectares per 1000 new population. However, in East Hunsbury this level has not been met. Three factors appear to be influencing this situation. First, that the adoption of a 'dual use' approach to community and open space facilities means that 50 per cent of community playing field allocation for public use is accounted for by existing school playing fields (Northampton Southern District 1984). In reality, whether due to a lack of cross departmental liaison or a subsequent change of policy, young people do not have legitimate right to use such facilities.

Second, the geography of East Hunsbury is recognised as a problem in the allocation of community playing field facilities.

"Most of the open spaces within the southern district are on slopes, basically because that land was unbuildable, and it wasn't going to be attractive to house building anyway, so it was left and allocated for open space"
(Local planning official)

However, as the same official went on to remark:

"Apart from the necklace of open space running through the area, which doesn't do a major amount for the area apart from dog walking, I fully accept that ... there's no kick-around space at all"

One group of sympathetic parents acknowledged the unsuitability of the available open space for young people, as this short extract from a group discussion with parents indicates:

Dad 1: It's not as if there's a couple of goal posts ...

Mum 1: But there aren't any ... goal posts ...

Dad 2: But they haven't actually got any flat areas, flat field type areas.

Mum 1: No.

Dad 2: ... it's all very nicely landscaped. Very nice walks there and they're geared up for tots but the sort of middling group I think there's, there's not an awful lot there ...

Mum 2: ... I mean it looks very nice but the practicalities of it is ... you know there's not a lot of area for them sort of round to play in. I know if they try and play football ... the ball ends up in ... the brook at the bottom of the hill.

Dad 3: Many of them (green spaces) are next ... bang next to a road. It's totally unsuitable. Couldn't possibly play football on that.

As a result of the lack of flat open spaces for sport in East Hunsbury young people frequently suggested establishing sports facilities on a disused piece of land next to a local sports centre (Plate 13.1). Instead further residential development has taken place (Plate 13.2).

"... instead of houses should use that field over there to build tennis courts and outdoor swimming pool and that..."

(11 year old boy, suburban)

"Like I said yesterday (he means 2 days ago at the last meeting) they should build something behind Danescamp to play football"

(see Plate 13.2)

(11 year old boy, suburban)

According to local planning officials, the priority of the Commission for New Towns, who took control of land left over when the Development Corporation moved out, was simply to sell off any remaining land. Despite the Borough Council recognising that East Hunsbury does not meet the standards for playing field provision and the shortage of suitable flat land for this purpose, the land adjacent to the existing leisure centre referred to above has been the site of 76 new houses in spite of strong local objection. Such developments highlight the low priority of community perspectives as well as young people's community needs in the development of new residential areas.

"... all the council is concerned about is building houses everywhere. Everywhere you turn there is new housing being built up ... they build all these houses, ... but what is there for the kids to do?"

(15 year old boy, suburb)

Plate 13.1: Open space adjacent to the local sport centre identified by young people as the most favoured place for providing outdoor sport pitches.



Plate 13.2: The same open space adjacent to the sports centre after completion of residential development.



The third factor giving rise to the lack of open space is that community recreational facilities and young people's urban place needs are de-prioritised in environmental planning. The appearance of the leisure centre in East Hunsbury, for example, came about only as 'reclamation provision' through an agreement with the Development Corporation because of a lack of early commitment to recreational provision (Interview with local planner 1/4/98). There appears to be an assumption here that the provision of a leisure centre in some way compensates for the lack of usable open space. As the results of this study have shown, however, for many young people the leisure centre facility does not necessarily satisfy their need for open space.

Perspectives from local officials concerning the environmental planning process in East Hunsbury reveals the local council as having an apparent lack of control over the way in which planning took place. Instead it emerged that, until 1985, it was the Development Corporation which decided on the way in which the new developments were undertaken, as the following quote from an urban official indicates.

".... the Development Corporation was simply an agency to help get private building up there ... they (Development Corporation) carved it up basically and most of the design principles and the amount of open space, and ... other facilities, bar housing, was really down to the judgment of the Development Corporation ... but there was clear evidence that the Development Corporation wasn't prepared to fund directly community provision itself"
(Local planning official)

The community provision that does exist has arisen through 'planning gain'. For example, the Blackymore community centre was built, not through a commitment to community provision, but as a condition by which developers were granted permission to build further private housing on sites otherwise reserved for public housing. Indeed in a report from the Northampton Borough Council (1984) it was stated that 'NDC does not intend to contribute towards the provision of any additional community halls'. The subsequent appearance of the Blackymore community centre is therefore fortuitous rather than an integral and necessary aspect of the local development plan.

What this account demonstrates is that despite guidelines for the provision of public recreational space (1.6 hectares per 1000 people for playing fields and 2.8 hectares per 1000 people for amenity open space) and an awareness of an overall lack of usable green space in East Hunsbury, the issue of inadequate usable open space provision is not being addressed. Indeed in the Northampton Local Plan, adopted Proposals (June 1997) it states that:

"Provision in accordance with the NPFA minimum requirement in the expansion areas since 1970 has successfully catered for popular sports ... The benefits of this open land being available for informal play ... should not be underestimated" (p. 100).

The aforementioned Local Plan (1997) also states that 'demand for informal activities, including children's play, cannot be quantified' (para 7.26) suggesting a certain degree of uncertainty of how to provide for informal neighbourhood opportunities for young people. Young people's local needs in environmental planning appear to be either devalued or misunderstood, based on simplistic notions of what young people need.

"I'd be saying wrong if I said yes we do fully take into account all the needs of that particular age group... Apart from policies regarding provision of children's play areas ... it (facilities for young people) doesn't get there unless we bang the table and say it should be there."
(Local planning official)

It appears that in the Development plan of this area, the provision of community facilities is undertaken purely on a tokenistic and functional basis with little sensitivity or understanding of the social or cultural dynamics of neighbourhood development or the local community and environmental needs of young people. The expectation that all young people will share the use of an allotted open green space fails to recognise issues concerning identity and territory which are important for young people. There is also an assumption that because there is a community centre that young people will benefit from it.

In the course of this study, young people have been gradually alienated from the Blackymore centre by a parish council that seemingly fails to acknowledge the needs of local young people. Despite the scope of this research the parish council in East Hunsbury are reluctant to use it as a basis for addressing some of the problems that confront young people in the area. On one occasion, whilst feeding back the results of this study to the parish council, the members appeared happier to contribute to moral panics about young people than to engage with them in order to find solutions to local problems. Indeed the subsequent erection of palisade fencing to keep young people away from the centre was justified by a member of the parish council stating that they did not have any vandalism problems any more. Vandalism, of course, cannot be condoned, but the response to the problems concerning young people and the community centre and the lack of opportunities for young people have still not been dealt with. Reactive approaches to young people such as this which seek to control and contain rather than encourage and support, further alienate young people in the community and in local decision making. The war between children and adults suggested by Ward (1978) and Philo (1997) appears to be played out in this situation.

In light of the general dearth of environmental opportunities for young people in this area, it appears that there is insufficient understanding amongst local officials of the range and diversity of young people's local recreational needs. On the basis of the evidence of this study, there appears to be an urgent need for keener sensitivity to be shown to young people's local needs and their integration into the planning process.

13.3.3 Urban redevelopment in the inner city

Whereas land use planning in the suburban area is tied in with new developments, in the inner city land use planning concerns redeveloping existing sites. As the Northampton Local Plan (1997) states:

“Within the built-up areas of the town, there will be little opportunity for new open areas. The recreational potential of school sites represents the main opportunity for improvement here”
(para 7.26)

There are however no evident plans for developments such as this in Semilong. The absence of open space in Semilong means that young people spend much of their time in street locations or using the poor quality play facilities that already exist. The built environment poses constraints for the development of recreational space provision for young people in Semilong, but there appears to be little attempt to take young people's views and interests into account when decisions are being made about how existing spaces is managed and redeveloped. The way in which young people are marginalised in the redevelopment process is exemplified by a case study from the inner area involving replacing a derelict factory building with sheltered accommodation for elderly Asians (Vignette 13.1).

Vignette 13.1 Redevelopment of the old factory (Plate 13.3)

The old factory had been disused for four years. Despite a number of hazards associated with this place, it provided a rich source of environmental opportunities for young people to escape the adult gaze, to explore and to retreat to their den (in a disused lock up garage, see Plate 8.58). Towards the end of the field work for this study the factory, together with the lock ups, were demolished in readiness for the new development. On closer investigation of the planning process which brought this development about (through an interview with a local planning official) it appeared that not only was the redevelopment process unaware of the value young people attached to this place but it was also insensitive to community views. The new development angered young people in two ways. First, because they had lost a valuable environmental resource and second because the new development was for the benefit of the elderly. Opposition from young people to this development was therefore tainted by feelings of injustice that their interests were subordinated to those of the older citizens.

Plate 13.3: Childhood domain lost through redevelopment of a derelict factory site in the inner city



The play area at ... is one of the places used by young people in ... It is however a poor quality play area, with glass, syringes and discarded bags of rubbish posing a hazard for young people. The most popular activity here is football yet there are no proper football facilities. Some young people use the play equipment, but it is of poor quality. Young people repeatedly asked if something could be done to improve the play area, yet nothing happened. The Borough Council stated that there was no money and therefore no possibility of improving the area. However, as a result of a series of local incidents in which the local press sensationalised the behaviour of young people (see Figure 13.2) the matter was brought to the attention of local councillors. Borough Council officials were then motivated to look into the problems. The first stage of the process involved consultation with local residents to capture their opinions about redeveloping the site. Below are some of the comments from local residents who opposed the possible development of the site:

... I am locally against the proposed scheme. We are, and have been for some years, subjected to the noise of the, what is laughingly called, a play area. The noise of the constant banging of baseballs against the brick wall... is something we don't need to tolerate... The best thing for this play area is for it to be demolished and...

... Rather than diverting the Play area funds it should be used to... (some of local officials could be better employed to focus more local capacity, like worrying about the welfare of people over the young things)

Given the shortage of open space in Semilong this site appeared ideal for development as an urban green space. The Borough Council's planning policy, however, is to give priority to 'bringing and renewing and improving residential uses in that area' with little emphasis placed on development of community recreational space (Interview with local planner 1/4/98). Moreover redeveloping sites such as this depend on the supply and demand of urban land and property rather than consideration of community needs. Whilst consultation is allegedly built into the redevelopment process, this is often an ineffective process due to the absence of appropriate structures for community consultation.

However, in the course of this research a consultation process was used for the purpose of redeveloping a play area in Semilong. The redevelopment of the Burleigh Road play area arose out of complaints from local residents about young people hanging around in the area. In documenting the process of consultation and development that took place, lessons can be learnt for future collaborative work around environmental improvement and community development with young people.

13.3.4 Lessons from a case study of young people's involvement in the redesign of a play area

The play area in Burleigh Road is one of the places most used by young people in Semilong. It is however a poor quality play area, with glass, syringes and discarded bags of rubbish posing a hazard for young people. The most popular activity here is football yet there are no proper football facilities. Some young people use the play equipment, but it is of poor quality. Young people repeatedly asked if something could be done to improve the play area, yet nothing happened. The Borough Council stated that there was no money and therefore no possibility of improving the area. However, as a result of a series of local incidents in which the local press scandalised the behaviour of young people (see Figure 10.2) the matter was brought to the attention of local councillors. Borough Council officials were then mobilised to look into the problems. The first stage of the process involved consultation with local residents to canvas their opinions about redeveloping the site. Below are some of the comments from local residents who opposed the possible development of the site.

"I am totally against the proposed scheme. We are, and have been for some years, subjected to the misuse of the, what is laughingly called, a play area ... The noise of the continual bang of footballs against the brick wall ... is something we should not have to tolerate ... The best thing for this play area is for it to be done away with"

"Rather than develop the Play area further it should be built on ... Surely (name of local official) could be better employed in some more useful capacity, like worrying about the old people than the young thugs."

“The elderly in this area suffer already ... from the behaviour of the youths who hang around the play area ... I believe there is a youth centre at the other end of Semilong which is responsible for bringing a drug problem into the area ... I would have thought that building some bungalows for disabled elderly people would be a worthwhile project.”

(Comments from elderly residents)

These comments illustrate some of the difficulties involved in developing a play area for young people in a high density built environment. One problem is clearly that the local environmental needs of young people collide with the needs and interests of other local people (see Chapter Ten). This play area therefore presents a planning dilemma. In view of the lack of alternative locations for outdoor play provision the possibility of moving the play area was out of the question. On balance, local consultation gave rise to a majority who were in favour of redeveloping the play area and on that basis development proceeded.

The first stage in drawing up plans for the play area involved a member of the Borough Council visiting the site and consulting with young people to establish their views on how the area could be developed. This was followed by a visit to the local youth project to gain a broader spectrum of views from young people. On the basis of young people's views initial plans were drawn up. Because the plans were drawn up by individuals who were not involved in the consultation process the interpretation of what was needed did not accurately reflect the young people's opinions. Instead what was offered was the 'standard' multi purpose set of equipment that had been installed at other sites in the town at a high cost. This was amended by making the proposed plans available to young people for comment. In so doing a more modest and cheaper set of proposals was arrived at, whilst at the same time ensuring that the needs of young people were more clearly met.

The work has since been completed (Plate 13.4). However the half size goals that have been installed are deemed by the young people to be less than satisfactory. The young people assumed that full size goals would be provided. What this shows is that unless young people are involved at every stage in the development process, there is a danger that the outcomes may not reflect what was proposed.

Despite canvassing the views of local residents and winning overall support for the redevelopment scheme, the successful completion of the work and the overall satisfaction expressed by the young people about the improvements, there are still strong objections from local residents. This suggests that even when young people are involved in the development process they may still not be able to participate fully and freely as equal citizens in everyday community life.

Plate 13.4: Fixed goals and fencing installed as part of a scheme to develop an inner city play area



Problems surrounding conflicts of interests in use of neighbourhood space compounded by generational tensions and moral panics about young people in public places mediate the outcomes of their participation in local decision making. Debates about the participation of young people must therefore go beyond the decision making process to consider wider issues concerning their participation as equal citizens in the everyday life of the community. Indeed it appears that challenging negative social attitudes towards young people is the biggest stumbling block to improving the quality of life of young people in Britain.

If the marginalisation and stigmatisation of young people are to be challenged, young people themselves need to be supported in reflecting on the social contexts of their own conditions and be provided with the capacity to engage in social action according to their own agenda. In essence there needs to be recognition that real changes need to involve the participation of young people themselves in their own empowerment (Fleming *et al.* 1998). Many initiatives that have been undertaken under the guise of 'participation' require young people to have their say on an adult agenda. Often what happens is that young people are asked their opinions without being provided with the opportunity to reflect on their conditions or gain a wider perspective of what actions are possible. Instead of participating in adult structures for the purpose of adult agendas, young people need to be given the freedom to set their own agendas and engage in action for social change.

13.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a range of insights and perspectives on young people and environmental planning. Insights into some of the environmental concerns of young people have been revealed and their suggestions for change considered. In contrast to the assertions made by Barry (1996) about young people not being able to create change, evidence from this study reveals that young people are both able and inclined towards engaging in action to bring about environmental improvements in their communities. Two problems have emerged which restrict young people becoming more active social participants. These relate to a pervasive culture of powerlessness and non-participation amongst young people and the over-bearing power and control exerted by the state over young people, based on negative attitudes of children and youth.

Chapter Fourteen

Conclusions

This project has been conducted amidst increasing public concern and widening academic discourses about childhood, concern about young people's use of local places and children's rights and participation in local affairs. In spite of the prominence of these issues on national and local agenda, there is a lack of coherence in the way politicians, local decisions makers and service providers respond to the challenges that these issues present. Local places are important for young people, providing a forum for recreation, play, experimentation, learning, social encounters, identity development and sense of belonging. However, the views and interests of young people with respect to their local places so often remain unheard or misunderstood in local decision making. This study has contributed to the growing understanding and appreciation of the geographies of children and youth by providing a comparative investigation of the multiple realities of young people growing up in inner city and suburban locations. The project set out with five aims which are clearly stated in Chapter One.

These aims involved recognising the complex and multi-faceted nature of young people's lives as products of a dynamic interplay of personal, social and locational factors. Young people's local geographies are but one feature of this rich mosaic, defined by an array of concepts, policies, practices and preferences, out of which different childhoods emerge. The approach adopted in this study has entailed reaching out across disciplinary boundaries in an attempt to provide holistic and insightful perspectives on young people's lives through their own terms of reference. However, Davis (1998: 327) reminds us that the researcher can never really capture the authentic voice of children, instead "what a researcher can do is to take the context into account and try to make visible the different cultures and in this case try to reach children's worlds". The ethnographic and participatory approaches adopted in this study have been directed to this end and have enabled rich insights to be gained into the multiple ways young people, in different contexts, value and use local places. The study has thrown up many questions about the quality of local places for young people to grow up in, the status of children and youth in local decision making and the way in which local places are planned.

This chapter will highlight the major findings of the study with respect to the aims set out in Chapter One. Implications of the findings for policy and planning are provided together with recommendations for further research.

14.1 Conclusions from the empirical study

14.1.1 Growing up in inner city and suburban locations

This study has demonstrated that young people's experiences of growing up in inner city and suburban locations differ in five major ways.

1. Young people perceive the suburban location as a better place to live than the inner city. Whereas suburban young people identify the availability of open spaces, local facilities and the aesthetic quality of the local area, in the inner city young people commonly talked of poor environmental quality, social and environmental hazards and a dearth of environmental opportunities. In particular the inner city was noted as being more dirty and more dangerous with higher levels of crime and social threats such as bullying and stranger danger than the suburb. Traffic problems were mentioned equally by young people in both locations. These findings replicate those of previous studies which suggest local places are becoming more hazardous (Lawson and Edwards 1991; Hillman and Adams 1992; Hillman 1993; Rosenbaum 1993; Barnardos 1994; Blakely 1994; Bjorklid 1995; Levelt 1995; Valentine 1995, 1996b, 1997b).

2. In contrast to other findings (Coates and Bussard 1974; Payne and Jones 1977; Michelson and Roberts 1979; Van Vliet 1983; Van Staden 1984; Matthews 1992), young people in the inner city area enjoyed a freer environmental range than those in the suburban area. This is due to higher levels of environmental fear amongst suburban young people and more protective caretaking practices. As a result a higher proportion of suburban young people than inner city young people are likely to spend their time engaged in activities in the home.

3. Young people in the inner city identified with a clearly bounded neighbourhood with a strong sense of community and place attachment, whereas suburban young people identified a mosaic of interlinking neighbourhoods and there was a notable absence of a sense of community. Within these contexts young people in the inner city were allowed a freer environmental range than young people in the suburb. In both cases young people construct their mental maps of their neighbourhood based on their use of neighbourhood space. Most young people in the inner city were familiar with the majority of their neighbourhood, whereas in the suburb many young people were unfamiliar with other parts of their larger suburb. However, young people in the inner city were more likely to feel unaccepted in their neighbourhood than suburban young people.

4. Apart from parks, which were most frequently noted by young people in both location as being the best thing about their area, suburban young people acknowledged a wider range of social and environmental facilities for young people than was the case

in the inner city. In spite of this, suburban young people, were more likely to complain that their area was boring with not enough to do compared to young people in the inner city.

5. Despite higher levels of environmental hazards, a greater sense of stranger danger and a more limited range of facilities, young people in the inner city enjoyed a richer experience of place, than did suburban young people, largely as a result of their contingent use of local places. This finding echoes Lynch's (1977) study in which young people in poor neighbourhoods often derived rich experiences of place.

14.1.2 Multiple childhood geographies

This study has shown that there is not one, but many, childhoods characterised by diverse realities. Accordingly, young people's geographies are characterised by multiple realities according to gender, age and parental influence.

Gender dimensions in young people's geographies

1. This study suggests that differences in the geographies of boys and girls are not as clear cut as previous studies suggest (McRobbie and Garber 1976; Van Vliet 1983; Matthews 1987, 1992; Cunningham and Jones 1991; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Sebba 1994; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1995; Pearce 1996). Boys enjoy more spatial freedom than girls, although the extent to which this is so varies according to location, with both boys and girls in the inner city enjoying more freedom than those in the suburb. Both boys and girls share similar sets of place dislikes such as traffic problems and a perception that the area is boring with not much to do.

2. The inner city location was rated more highly by boys, whereas the suburban location was rated more highly by girls. Girls in both locations expressed higher levels of environmental fears than boys, which supports previous findings (Goodey 1995; Valentine 1989, 1992a). However, location also has a strong bearing with both suburban boys and girls emerging as far more fearful of their environment than inner city boys and girls. This is in spite of the greater real threat of environmental dangers and hazards in the inner city.

3. Boys and girls valued a similar range of place attributes, notably the parks, having friends around, proximity of shops and the quietness of the area. Freetime activity preferences, however, reproduce conventional gender patterns, with boys more likely to spend time playing sport and girls more likely to spend time socialising, spending time in town shopping or in indoor activities outside of the home as other studies have also found (McRobbie 1991; Nava 1992; Hendry *et al.* 1993; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1995; Pearce 1996). In contrast to previous studies which suggested that girls construct their identities around 'bedroom cultures' (McRobbie and Garber 1976), evidence here

reveals that suburban boys are more likely to express a preference for home based activities than girls, (though this was not the case in the inner city). Conversely, girls are just as likely to spend time hanging out on the street as boys, especially in the inner city. However, this study also shows that girls are less fulfilled in their use of free time than boys.

These findings reveal that traditional gender differences in the geographies of young people are still important, but at the same time are becoming more complex, opaque and contextually variable (Valentine 1996a), giving way to patterns of shared lifestyles which cut across social divides. Gender and location combine in multifarious ways according to personal preferences and social contexts of different young people. This blurring of gender differences in young people's geographical lifestyles appears to be more the case in the suburb. In contrast, in the inner city area, gender divisions are being reproduced along traditional lines. However, whereas Valentine and McKendrick (1997) identified a narrowing of gender differences in terms of parenting practices, this study demonstrates that differences are based more on the changing nature of macro-socio-cultural influences on the way young people construct their identities around cultures of material consumption, as suggested by Jones and Wallace (1992), Stewart (1992), Reimer (1995) and Furlong and Cartmel (1997).

Younger and older children's geographies

Differences in young people's geographies with respect to age are difficult to untangle from other variables such as location and gender. Age, as a determinant of young people's use of place, is also tied in with parental influences. Nonetheless a number of significant conclusions can be made.

1. 10-12 year olds are more likely to value their local places than 13-15 year olds. As young people move through teenagerhood, the immediate neighbourhood becomes increasingly less attractive and less able to satisfy young people's place needs as their horizons expand beyond the immediate neighbourhood in search of new experiences.

2. Young people are allowed to travel further when unaccompanied, at a younger age in the inner city than is the case in the suburb, with differences narrowing with age between locations as parental restrictions are relaxed. Older adolescents in the suburb enjoy a wider environmental range if parental conditions are met.

3. Young people's lifestyles change with age according to four common characteristics. First, there is a marked decrease in tendency to spend time engaged in indoor activities and an increasing demand for autonomous social space outside of the home. Second, spending time with friends and the quality of these relationships becomes more crucial for older teenagers (Cotterell 1996). Third, with age, young people are increasingly attracted to commercial places such as the cinema, the shopping mall and night clubs

(Anthony 1985; Lewis 1989; Featherstone 1991; Nava 1992; Hendry *et al.* 1993; McRobbie 1994; Lieberg 1995). Fourth, young people's interest in sports decreases as young people move through their teens. This echoes the findings of Fox (1994) who noted how young people tend to drop out of sports at the age of 12/13 years.

4. Age related transitions such as these appear consistent throughout the total cohort, however, the way in which these transitions are experienced differs between young people according to location, gender, parental influence and lifestyle preference. Age related transitions for young people in the inner city are less predictable and are hampered by lower levels of social capital. These locational variations give rise to differential geographies of social opportunities which carry implications for use of leisure time as well as for their developing sense of social identity, a hypothesis also suggested by others (Seabrook 1982; Kirk *et al.* 1991; Jones and Wallace 1992; Lash and Urry 1994). For example, suburban young people are more likely to spend time in town shopping than young people in the inner city. If, as has been suggested, consumption provides the means through which identity is constructed then it appears that suburban young people are better able to respond to such circumstances than young people from the inner city.

Parental influences on young people's geographies

As Valentine (1997a) has suggested, parents are a significant influence on young people's geographies. In both locations parents expressed a common sense of what they considered to be acceptable and unacceptable use of local places. However, suburban parents exerted tighter controls and supervision on their young people than inner city parents, with differences narrowing as young people get older. This section highlights five dimensions to parental influence on young people's geographies.

1. Young people of all ages in the inner city enjoy a greater range than in the suburb, with boys experiencing greater range than girls and an increase in range with age in both cases. However, if young people ask permission and go with friends, suburban young people of all ages enjoy a greater range than young people in the inner city. Suburban young people are allowed further if accompanied by an older brother or sister or another adult. Differences in environmental range between location are due to more protective parenting strategies amongst suburban parents. Suburban parents are more likely to insist on knowing where their siblings are and what they are doing when they are out.

2. Parents in both locations share common views of the types of places they approve and disapprove of their young people going to. Parents most favour young people going to defined places where a degree of safety is assumed, such as friend's houses, or where they can be occupied with purposeful, structured sport or recreational activities such as swimming, playing sports or the cinema. Suburban parents are more

likely to encourage their children into organised activities. This is facilitated by higher levels of wealth and car ownership. Parents least approve of young people hanging around with no specific purpose and without supervision in open public places, such as parks, play areas, street places and places outside of their neighbourhood, where parents perceive a high risk of young people becoming bored and getting into trouble. Suburban parents are less likely than inner city parents to express disapproval about specific places. This is due to the greater presence of environmental risk in the inner city.

3. Inner city parents identified a more extensive range of hazards and dangers in their area, despite suburban parents being more protective over their children. However, in both locations parents shared a similar range of concerns and worries when their children are out, particularly fear of assault, traffic danger and negative social influences from other young people, as also noted by Cahill (1990), Blakely (1994) and Valentine (1997b). For these reasons parents in both locations shared common views of the types of places young people should not be allowed to go to including pubs, the town centre and the park (alone or at night).

4. Suburban parents are more likely to place restrictions on when their young people can go out and when they are expected home. Girls in the inner city are more likely to be restricted in when they are allowed out, whereas in the suburb it is boys who are more restricted. Generally, suburban parents expect their children to be home earlier than inner city young people. In most cases young people are home by the agreed time. In those cases when young people are not home on time, it is normally for a good reason.

5. According to parental perspectives, young people in the suburb are more likely to negotiate the time they are allowed out than in the inner city. Up until the age of 14/15 years suburban young people (especially boys) are more likely to stay out later than the agreed time than is the case with inner city young people.

Taken together the evidence in this study suggests that the multiple childhood geographies of young people may be better understood in terms of different lifestyles which cut across traditional social divides and are based on the cultures young people produce themselves rather than those they inherit as ascribed social categories. Hendry *et al.* (1993) and Matthews *et al.* (1998a) have also noted the need to reinterpret and redefine young people's cultures. Matthews *et al.* (1998a) talked in terms of 'microgeographies' - "flows of meaning which are managed by small groups of people that meet on an everyday basis" (Wulff 1995b: 65), created by combinations of common personalities and contexts which provide common and unifying sets of experiences. However, unlike conventional social distinctions such as gender and age, microgeographies are not fixed, but are fluid and dynamic categories into, and out of,

which young people move at different times. As a result, this study concludes with the contention that 'microgeographies' (Matthews *et al.* 1998a) offer a more flexible and appropriate means for understanding young people's geographies than the conventional social categories of gender and age.

14.1.3 Young people as environmental agents

Contemporary theories of childhood emphasis the social agency of young people, that is to say, they acknowledge the capacity of young people to engage in cultural production in their own right. This study has contributed to this discourse by providing insights into the spatial dimensions of young people's social agency in terms of the values and meanings ascribed to different places and the way that they appropriate and adapt local landscapes for their own ends. Five key aspects of young people's views and use of local environments will be highlighted here.

1. The importance of neighbourhood environments to young people has been demonstrated through a multiplicity of ways that they value and interact with the environment. Different views and uses of local places vary within and between social groups and for individuals. Young people's geographies are not simply a product of the functional characteristics of a place, but the result of the way different young people respond to their social and environmental contexts according to contingency factors, such as parental influence, and the values, meanings and relationships that different young people have with local places. The multiple neighbourhood geographies of young people are characterised by a complex mosaic of fluid and dynamic microgeographies (Matthews *et al.* 1998a) which young people move into and out of in the course of their neighbourhood transactions.

2. In contrast to recent studies (Valentine and McKendrick 1997) which suggest that young people's geographies are characterised by a retreat indoors, evidence from this study indicates that, although time spent indoors watching TV and playing computer games is an important part of young people's use of free time, a majority state that they would rather be outside. Being outside provides young people with an opportunity to gain respite from the pressure of everyday life, where they can do what they want, be with friends and, temporarily, be in charge of their own time. Being outside thus provides young people with an opportunity for self-determination through their transactions with place.

3. Young people value and use a range of different places. Parks and street spaces are most frequently mentioned as young people's favourite types of places, corroborating the findings of Owens (1994), Woolley and Amin (1995), Pearce (1996) and Malone (1998). However, the importance of different places moves in and out of focus for different young people at different times according to what is pertinent to the young person at any one time, highlighting the temporality in childhood suggested by Ennew

(1994) and Matthews *et al.* (1998a). Seven categories of place use and experience are identified in this study. These are: places to meet friends, places to meet about and play, places for stimulation and excitement, places for adventure and exploration, places for solitude and reflection, places to be with nature, and special or sacred places. These categories of place experience illustrate the diversity of relationships that young people have with their local environment. They also demonstrate why token spaces, such as children's play grounds are, on their own, insufficient in meeting young people's local environmental needs. A critical factor in young people's use of local places is not necessarily the nature of the environment or facilities provided, but the extent to which they have the freedom to explore and use local places and the quality of those opportunities.

4. The richness in experiences that many young people derive from their environment arise as a result of the meanings they ascribe to local places and the creative use they make of whatever environments they are confronted with. Young people carve out niches from the landscape which they appropriate and adapt as places to meet, play and hang out, reaffirming earlier studies (Ward 1978; Hart 1979; Moore 1986).

14.1.4 Conflicting agendas: the spatial relations between adults and young people

This study has provided new insights into the way social constructions of children and youth are replicated in space. As a result of local places being produced as adult spaces (Valentine 1996b), young people's use of neighbourhood space takes place within structures laid down by adults and according to adult assumptions about 'appropriate behaviour'. This project has revealed different ways in which young people come into conflict with adults in the course of their neighbourhood transactions and in so doing demonstrates how childhood is constructed, contested and reproduced in space.

1. Young people are marginalised in neighbourhood space as a result of the way local places are planned by and for adults, the low priority of young people's views and interests in the local decision making process and the intolerance many adults show towards young people in neighbourhood space. In this way spatial dimensions of childhood and youth can be identified, characterised by social and geographical boundaries imposed by adults to control and contain young people. Within these structural constraints, young people search out 'third spaces' (Soja 1996) - places within and between adult spaces in which their own meanings and values can be written onto the landscape. Within these contexts young people appropriate and adapt local places as a response to the limited provision of environmental opportunities rather than an expression of defiance or disobedience.

2. Young people often come into conflict with adults as a result of their prominence on the landscape. In many cases young people are simply engaged in 'normal' activities such as hanging about, laughing, running, shouting, playing and messing around. However, these activities are frequently not tolerated by adults either because they collide with their own place interests and values or, because they are young people, their presence on the neighbourhood landscape is not tolerated. In both cases young people are seen as discrepant and therefore out of place (Sibley 1995a), transgressing social or geographical boundaries. This research has exposed a paradox about young people hanging out on the streets. One of the purposes of the structures which shape young people's lives such as the school and the family is to facilitate the development of social competence in children. However, when young people exercise their social capacity through their use of neighbourhood space they are frequently thwarted by adult responses. This paradox exemplifies the ambivalent way in which society views childhood.

3. The assumptions underlying the attitudes of many adults towards young people in neighbourhood space are codified into adult conceptions of childhood and manifest through notions of 'appropriate behaviour'. Many adult views of young people are based on negative stereotypes and moral panics about young people being out of control, running feral through the landscape and posing a threat to the moral order of public life, which adults assume the right to restore. Conflicts arise when young people's notions of appropriate behaviour clash with those of adults and escalate into a negative cycle of mutual antagonism (White *et al.* 1996; Guilliat 1997). In this way spatial constructions of childhood are actively contested on the street. However, contrary to popular adult misconceptions, young people hanging out on the streets are rarely engaged in 'rituals of resistance' or displays of defiance against adults, but tend to be more preoccupied with intra-group dynamics and questions of identity in relation to peers (Silbereisen *et al.* 1988). Conflict with adults therefore can be seen more as an occupational hazard of hanging out rather than a primary objective of young people.

4. Although many conflicts between young people and adults are based on imagined rather than actual misdemeanours, there are also cases when conflict arises as a result of young people transgressing boundaries. Young people may transgress boundaries intentionally or unintentionally in the course of their environmental transactions. If young people perceive boundaries as too limiting they are likely to simply redraw the boundaries to permit their free spatial expression. In some cases young people may purposefully transgress boundaries in search of fun and excitement through the 'thrill of transgression' (Sibley 1995a).

14.1.5 Planning local environments with and for young people

The current ethos of much of the research into children and youth is guided by the precepts of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In particular

local authorities and children's organisations are recognising the need to embrace notions of children's participation in local decision making. Evidence from young people in this study reveals that young people are well placed and positively inclined to take a more active role in the local affairs of their community. However, young people also expressed widespread frustration at having insufficient account taken of their views and interests in local decision making. The fifth aim of this study was to explore young people's perspectives with respect to their involvement in community development and environmental planning.

1. Young people in both areas shared common concerns about what they felt was lacking in their areas, emphasising in particular a lack of social and environmental opportunities. Most commonly they identified places to meet and spend time with friends without hassle from adults and proper sport and recreational facilities as lacking. For suburban young people this is in spite of the provision of a large sports centre in their area. This suggests that existing facilities are in some way failing to appeal to young people.

2. Many young people demonstrated an intimate knowledge of their neighbourhood environment and an ability to prioritise changes that they considered important. In particular they identified improvements to the general quality of the local environment - such as cleaning up the area, making the streets safer and curbing traffic flows - and improvements to the quality and availability of social and environmental provision - such as providing more places to meet, improving youth club provision, better sport and recreational provision and providing a wider range of activities including creative and artistic activities. The priorities identified by young people point to a need to consider ways of providing new forms of local provision for young people which involve a place to meet and socialise with friends on a daily basis, which provide food and drinks, sports and recreational activities, which act as an information point about events and activities and a venue through which young people may be consulted or become aware of opportunities for involvement in local community initiatives.

3. In spite of their ability to identify changes to their local area, less than a fifth of all young people had previously made suggestions or been consulted about improvements to their local area. These were mainly to friends, parents or youth workers and in most cases the outcomes were considered unsatisfactory. At best young people were told that their ideas were not possible and, at worst, never had a response. Cases such as these tend to dissuade young people from any further involvement in local decision making and exacerbate a feeling that their views are not worthwhile. The reasons given by young people for not making any suggestions about improvements to their local areas involved not knowing who to speak to, never thought about it, apathy and cynicism about whether their view would be taken seriously. These findings provide evidence to corroborate Lansdown's (1995) assertion that young people are caught in a culture of

non-participation with respect to local decision making.

4. Despite being denied meaningful opportunities to become involved in local decision making and community development processes, on average three quarters of the young people across both locations demonstrated a keen sense of wanting to be more actively involved in making improvements to their local area. One of the goals of this project has been to explore young people's preferences for ways of enhancing their participation in local affairs. This was in many cases difficult since they were drawing on limited experience of this type of activity. Nonetheless three modes of participation were identified in the form of ensuring young people were consulted through interviews and surveys, involvement in local discussion groups or meetings around specific issues and youth councils and committees which could parallel adult structures.

14.2 Implications for policy and planning

Reflections on the major findings of this study suggest a number of recommendations for policy and planning. In this section five broad areas for policy consideration are identified.

14.2.1 Young people's use of local places

Local places are important for young people, however, local environmental planning often does not take adequate account of in local decision making. Many of the places young people value are hidden to the adult eye (Grabow and Silkind 1976). Local environmental provision for young people is often characterised by token play spaces which hold only limited value for young people. Young people need free open space to explore and enjoy, however, such spaces appear to be diminishing. The way in which young people value and use local places needs to be taken into account in local planning. This is best achieved through the involvement of young people themselves.

14.2.2 Social and environmental provision for young people

Many young people complained about being bored with not much to do in their local areas. Boredom appears to emerge from dissatisfaction with a limited and token range of local facilities. Young people identified five dimensions to problems with local provision which require attention.

1. *Lack of places to meet* - Young people most frequently mentioned a lack of places to meet and spend time with friends. Youth clubs are traditionally seen as providing a social venue for young people, however, these have limited appeal for many young people. Reasons young people gave for not attending youth clubs were: lack of information about youth facilities, lack of appeal, perceived ineligibility and dislike of other members. Young people also complained about youth clubs only being open on

one night per week. Suggestions young people provided for social venues tended to involve having somewhere they could go and just sit and chat with friends without hassle from adults, where they could meet new people, listen to music, play games or sports, buy food and drinks and find out about what's going on in the area. Young people also valued the opportunity to be taken on trips away from the local area. These findings could usefully inform a review of current youth service provision.

2. *Lack of places for sport* - Young people readily complained about the shortage of both casual neighbourhood sports facilities and organised club activities. Open green spaces are often lacking and where they are present are often inadequate due to a lack of proper equipment, conflict from local residents, blighted by broken glass, litter and dog excrement or, are dangerously sited. Investment in proper sports facilities at a neighbourhood level could prove to be a proactive way of addressing problems of boredom amongst young people.

3. *Lack of variety and inappropriate provision* - In many cases young people perceived local facilities, such as children's playgrounds, as inappropriate to their needs. There is, in particular, a perceived lack of social and environmental opportunities for older teenagers as the neighbourhood becomes increasingly less able to satisfy their need for new experiences. There is a need to consider possibilities of expanding the range of social opportunities for teenagers, beyond the remit of the youth club.

4. *Inaccessibility of commercial facilities* - Many commercial facilities, such as sports centres or cinemas, are inaccessible for young people either because of the cost and availability of transport to get there or the prohibitively high costs of using the facilities. This is especially the case with developments located on the edge of town. Decisions about the location of facilities such as these could usefully include statements about the impact on young people.

14.2.3 Environmental quality, urban hazards, social dangers and conflict with adults

Young people identified a range of urban hazards which posed a threat in the course of their daily transactions with place. Many hazards that affect young people are not such a problem for adults (Matthews *et al.* 1998b). Resources need to be directed towards ensuring environments are safe for young people. Traffic was the most frequently mentioned danger in both inner city and suburban areas. During the research one boy was killed from a traffic accident. In the inner city area the problem was mainly due to cars taking short cuts through the area. In the suburb the main traffic problems focused on the main through routes through the area. Many young people suggested a need for traffic calming.

A second set of hazards identified by young people concerned the extent of litter, broken glass, used syringes, discarded condoms, dog excrement and household refuse, especially in parks, play areas and alleyways. This was more of a problem in the inner city, although suburban young people frequently complained of open green spaces being used and fouled by dogs.

In both areas fear of strangers and fear of attack were the most frequently mentioned environmental fears for all respondents. In the inner city, in particular, the presence of strangers, drunks, drug takers and kerb crawlers posed a constant threat. Girls were especially vulnerable in this respect.

Many young people reported experience of having been bullied in their neighbourhood. Bullying blights young people's experience of place and undermines young people's confidence in their use of specific places. In a majority of cases bullying was perpetrated by older teenagers who controlled neighbourhood streets. Young people tended to feel that people bullied because they were bored. This could be an issue which youth outreach work could target.

Some of the tensions between young people and adults arise through inadequate or inappropriate local provision for young people (see section 14.2.2). In other cases conflicts occur as a result of 'planning dilemmas' where children's play areas are located adjacent to sheltered housing for the elderly. In cases such as this the needs of younger and older citizens appear incompatible. In order to minimise clashes between different place users, young people need to be consulted or involved in local decision making along with other local residents in order to properly account for their views and interests.

14.2.4 Involving young people in local decision making and environmental planning

Many young people expressed a sense of frustration about not having their views and interests taken sufficient account of in local decision making. Young people demonstrated their capacity to evaluate their environments and prioritise changes. A large majority also expressed keenness to become more involved in making improvements in their neighbourhood. In a majority of cases young people lacked knowledge of how to go about making suggestions or becoming more involved in community development or, felt that there was no point in making their views known on the basis that they wouldn't be taken seriously. However, when provided with the opportunity to have their say, most young people were positive and enthusiastic about giving their opinions. Establishing a range of different structures for young people to become more involved in local developments could improve the effectiveness of local decision making, help to integrate young people into their communities and provide

opportunities for young people to develop the skills of citizenship.

14.3 Suggestions for future research

This project has uncovered a number of issues concerning young people which are worthy of further research.

Despite the vast and rapidly growing literature on childhood and youth there is still comparatively little understanding and acknowledgement of the importance of public places for young people and of the social and environmental transactions which transpire in different contexts. Further research could usefully focus on what motivates young people's choice of place transactions and the influence of parents and home background on the way young people spend their time. There is also still relatively little known about what young people's conceptions of an enriching environment are and therefore what changes need to take place to provide such conditions. This study has pointed to the value of 'lifestyles' as an important variable influencing the multiple geographies of young people. There is a need for further research which explores young people's 'microgeographies' and considers the complex and multifaceted nature of young people's transactions with place.

In the context of the increasing emphasis placed on young people and social exclusion further research is needed which explores young people's perspectives on exclusion and inclusion within local communities and which provide the opportunity to develop strategies to enhance the participation of young people in local decision making and the everyday life of communities. In particular there is a need for action research projects which encourage the mobilisation of young people as researchers, to evaluate and change their social and environmental conditions, and which provide insights into the factors which exclude young people and how they may be overcome. There also needs to be more critically reflexive action research studies which challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions of local officials about young people, their needs, values and attitudes; but which also bring together young people and officials to explode popular myths and misconceptions and explore the nature of and extent to which the construction of alternative policy scenarios may be possible. Such approaches would not only give rise to more effective policy making and levels of service provision but also encourage the development of new models of local governance in which young people can actively be involved.

Appendix One

Semi-structured questionnaire interview schedule used with young people

I am interested in finding out how young people feel about growing up in Northampton, what they do and where they go in their spare time and the things they like and dislike about their neighbourhood. I am also interested in what changes young people would like to see in their local areas.

All results will be treated as confidential and the answers will only be seen by me.

I am also interested in the views of parents. Could I possibly trouble you to complete this short questionnaire whilst I am interviewing your son/daughter. (Or perhaps I could leave it with you and return tomorrow to collect it).

Date completed:..... Site:.....

A) ABOUT YOU

1. a) Age?..... b) MALE or FEMALE
2. Address:
3. What are your favourite T.V. programmes?.....
4. How long have you lived here?.....
5. Please could you tell me how many people live in this house with you?.....
6. a) Do you have a garden? YES..... NO.....
b) If YES, would you say it is: SMALL..... MEDIUM..... LARGE..... N/A.....

B) ABOUT YOUR LOCAL AREA

7. a) On the map over leaf please draw a line round whatever you would call your local area .
b) Please explain your reasons for drawing the boundary here.....
.....
8. How much do you like living in this area?
VERY MUCH..... LIKE IT..... IT'S O.K..... DISLIKE IT..... HATE IT
9. What do you most like / dislike about living in this area?
Most like.....
Most dislike.....



Kingshorpe

Spencer

St. James

Kingshorpe

Race Course
Recreation Ground

Police Office

Football Ground

Factory

Works

Kingshorpe Park C.

Tennis Courts

Playing Field

Works

Allotment Gardens

Playing Field

Industrial Estate

Playing Field

Works

Club House

School

Playing Field

Police Office

Hospital

Works

Works

10. a) Apart from your house do you have a special place you go to in your free time?

YES.....

NO..... (To Qu.11)

b) If YES, where?.....

c) Why is it special?.....

11. Where do you go if you want to be on your own outside of your home?

.....

12. Are there any places in your local area where you feel that you are not accepted?

.....

13. How would you rate the local area generally as a place for young people to grow up in? (Ring a number on the scale below).

V.good 5 4 3 2 1 V.bad

14. What do you think are the good things about the local area for young people?

.....

.....

.....

15. What do you think are the bad things about the local area for young people?

.....

.....

.....

C) ABOUT HOW YOU GENERALLY SPEND YOUR FREE TIME

16. How do you most like to spend your free time? (Prompt for what and where).

.....

.....

.....

17. Could you tell me please about the 3 places you most often go to meet friends, what you do there and at what times.

Where do you go to?

What do you do there?

Between what times?

Place 1:

Place 2:

Place 3:

(Get interviewee to mark on map exact location if necessary).

18. Are there any places you go to on your own in your free time?

.....

19. a) What do you normally do **after school** (from when you leave school until you go to bed)?

| What do you do? | Where do you go? | With whom? | At what times? | How often (/wk)? |
|-----------------|------------------|------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | | | / wk |
| | | | | / wk |
| | | | | / wk |
| | | | | / wk |
| | | | | / wk |
| | | | | / wk |

b) How many hours of your free time would you say you normally spend outside of your home each school day?

Summer: av. / day total / wk

Winter: av. / day total / wk

20. a) (i) What do you normally do on a typical day during **school holidays**?

| What do you do? | Where do you go? | With whom? | At what times? | How often (/wk)? |
|-----------------|------------------|------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | | | / wk |
| | | | | / wk |
| | | | | / wk |
| | | | | / wk |
| | | | | / wk |
| | | | | / wk |

(ii) Are there any special things you do in the school holidays (e.g. for just one day or one week)?

| What do you do? | Where do you go? | With whom? | At what times? | How often (/hol)? |
|-----------------|------------------|------------|----------------|-------------------|
| | | | | / hol |
| | | | | / hol |
| | | | | / hol |
| | | | | / hol |

b) How many hours of your free time would you say you normally spend outside of your home on average per week during the school holidays?

..... av. / wk

21. What do you normally do **at the weekend**?

a) On **Saturday**:

| (i) | What do you do? | Where do you go? | With whom? | At what times? | How often(/mth)? |
|-----|-----------------|------------------|------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | | | | / mth |
| | | | | | / mth |
| | | | | | / mth |
| | | | | | / mth |
| | | | | | / mth |

(ii) Total hours spent outside the home on Saturday:

Summer?.....

Winter?.....

b) On **Sunday**:

| (i) | What do you do? | Where do you go? | With whom? | At what times? | How often(/mth)? |
|-----|-----------------|------------------|------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | | | | / mth |
| | | | | | / mth |
| | | | | | / mth |
| | | | | | / mth |
| | | | | | / mth |

(ii) Total hours spent outside the home on Sunday:

Summer?.....

Winter?.....

22. Which of the outdoor free time activities that you normally do in summer do you not do in winter?

1. 2.

3. 4.

23. What do you especially like about being outdoors in this area?

.....
.....
.....

24. What do you especially dislike about being outdoors in this area?

.....
.....
.....

25. Answer the following questions using this scale: Always Sometimes Never

a) Do your parents know where you are when you are out?

b) Do they know what you are doing when you are out?

c) Do you need their permission when you go out?

d) On what occasions do you not need their permission?

.....

26. How far from your home are you normally allowed to go:

(i) with your parent's permission

(ii) without your parent's permission

a) on your own

..... ..

b) with friends

..... ..

27. a) Does anyone in your household put restrictions on when you can go out?

YES..... NO..... If YES, who?.....

b) What are the restrictions?.....

28. At what time do your parents normally expect you back home by when you go out in your free time:

a) after school?.....

b) at weekends?.....

c) during school holidays?.....

29. Tick how these times were decided. Your own decision..... (To Qu.31)

Parent's decision..... Negotiation between yourself and your parent(s).....

Other (please specify).....

30. a) Do you think these are fair times to be expected home by? YES..... NO.....

b) If NO, what do you think is a fair time to be expected home when you go out in your free time:

(i) after school?..... (ii) at weekends?..... (iii) during school holidays?.....

31. a) Do you ever stay out after these agreed times?

1. Often..... 2. Sometimes..... 3. Never..... (to 32).

b) If 1 or 2, for what reasons do you stay out later?.....

.....

c) What happens if you stay out later?.....

32. Have you ever gone somewhere different to where you told your parents you were going?

YES..... NO.....

For example:

33. Which forms of transport do you usually use when you go out in your free time?

Walk..... Bus..... Parent's car..... Bicycle.....

Skateboard/Roller blades..... Other (specify).....

34. On what occasions do you most often go out of your local area during your free time?

1. 2. 3.

Purpose of trip?

Where do you go?.....

With whom?

How do you get there?

35.a) How much money do you receive each week from your parents?.....

b) Do your parents pay for you to do any activities on top of this amount? YES..... NO.....

If YES, how much per week do they spend on extra activities?.....

.....

36. Do you earn any money from doing a job? YES..... NO.....

If YES, what do you do and how much do you earn?

.....

D) ABOUT THE PLACES YOU GO TO IN YOUR FREE TIME

37. What places do your parents not allow you to go to? Why is that?:

Places Reasons

1.

2.

3.

38. Are there any places that you are not allowed to go on your own but are allowed to go if an adult is with you?

Place 1 Place 2

Where?

Purpose of visit?

With whom?

Reason they go with you?

39. Are there any particular places outside of your home **you don't like going to** ?

Places

Reasons why

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

40. **What** are you most afraid of when you are outside of your home?

.....

.....

.....

41. Which particular **places** are you most **afraid** of going to and why?

Places?

Why?

.....

.....

.....

42. Is there anything in your local area which you think is **dangerous** or hazardous?

What is the danger?

Where?

.....

.....

.....

43. Which of the following are you afraid of when you are outdoors in your local area?

TRAFFIC DANGER..... GETTING ATTACKED..... OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE.....

STRANGERS..... ANIMALS (dogs, snakes, etc.)..... DRUGS.....

GETTING LOST..... RIVERS OR LAKES..... HAVING AN ACCIDENT.....

OTHERS (specify).....

44. Could you give me an example of a place outdoors which is always safe to spend your free time?

.....

45. Do you feel you are able to go where ever you want in your free time? YES..... NO.....

If NO, what stops you going where you want?.....

46. Have you ever been hassled when you've been out in your local area?

YES..... NO.....

If YES, please could you tell me:

| Where you were? | What you were doing? | Who was hassling you & how? | At what time? |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |

E) ABOUT WHAT YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME

47. Do you belong to any clubs or societies? YES..... NO.....

If YES, which clubs and societies do you belong to?

| | Name | Where? | How often? | | How do you get there? |
|----|-------|--------|------------|---------|-----------------------|
| | | | per wk | per mth | |
| 1. | | | | | |
| 2. | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | |
| 5. | | | | | |

48. Are there any free time activities you would like to do but are unable to do for any reason?

| Activity | Reasons why not? |
|----------|------------------|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |

49. Do you ever go to a youth club? YES..... NO.....

If NO, why not?

50. How important do you think it is for a youth centre to operate in your area? (Please ring a number on the scale below).

Very important 5 4 3 2 1 Very unimportant

51. How important do you think it is for a youth centre to provide the following opportunities. (Please ring a number on the scale below).

| | Important | | | Not important | |
|---|-----------|---|---|---------------|---|
| i) Sports and games | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| ii) Advice and information for young people | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| iii) Music/jukebox | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| iv) Discos and raves | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| v) Space to meet and talk with other young people | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| vi) Organised trips outside of the centre | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| vii) Cafe and sandwich bar | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| viii) Young people involved in running it | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| ix) Adults present | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| x) Others (specify): 1. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

52. Apart from when you go out for a particular reason (such as playing sports or going to clubs) do you ever just hang out with your friends outdoors?

| Where? | At what times? | Doing what? | How often? (/wk) |
|--------|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

53. Tick whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|-------|----------|
| a) I usually find plenty of enjoyable things to do in my spare time | | |
| b) I prefer to go out if I can | | |
| c) Anything is better than staying in at home, even if there's nowhere particular to go | | |
| d) I often hang around with my friends and do nothing in particular..... | | |
| e) I am often bored and don't know what to do in my spare time | | |
| f) I would like to do more of a variety of different things | | |

54. When are you most happy?.....

F) ABOUT CHANGES TO YOUR LOCAL AREA

55. Name up to 3 free time opportunities or facilities for young people (10-15 year olds) you think are lacking in your local area?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

56. If you could do anything at all, what changes would you make to the local environment generally to improve it for young people?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

57. a) Have you ever made suggestions to anyone about improving opportunities for young people in your local area?

YES..... NO.....

b) If YES, who did you talk to, what was it about and what was their response?

.....

c) If NO, what are the reasons you haven't spoken to anyone?

.....

d) Would you like the opportunity to make some suggestions about changes to the local area for young people?

YES..... NO.....

58. If you could live anywhere would you choose to stay in this area? YES..... NO.....

If NO, where would you most like to live and why?

.....

59. Which of these groups would you classify yourself as?

BLACK BRITISH.....

WHITE BRITISH.....

ASIAN BRITISH.....

OTHER (specify).....

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

I am looking for some volunteers to take part in further research activities involving showing me what they do and where they go in their free time, to help me make a short video and take some photographs of the places they go to and to take part in a group interview. Would you like to take part in a further survey involving your friends.

Contact phone number:

Signature of consent from parent:

Do you know of any other young people between 10 & 15 years who may be willing to be interviewed?

Appendix Two

Self-completed questionnaire for parental views of young peoples use of local places

This questionnaire is part of a project investigating how young people (aged 10-15) make use of their local area in their free time. I am interested in finding out your opinions about what your son/daughter (aged 10-15) does in their spare time and where they go and whether you feel any changes could be made to local places in order to better cater for the needs of young people. All information will be treated as confidential and will be seen only by myself. Results from this questionnaire will be used together with the outcomes from discussion groups with parents and young people and written up as a final report; a copy of which will be available for consultation at Nene College. Findings from the research will also be made available to relevant County and Borough Council Departments.

Please answer all questions as fully as possible without consultation with your son or daughter.

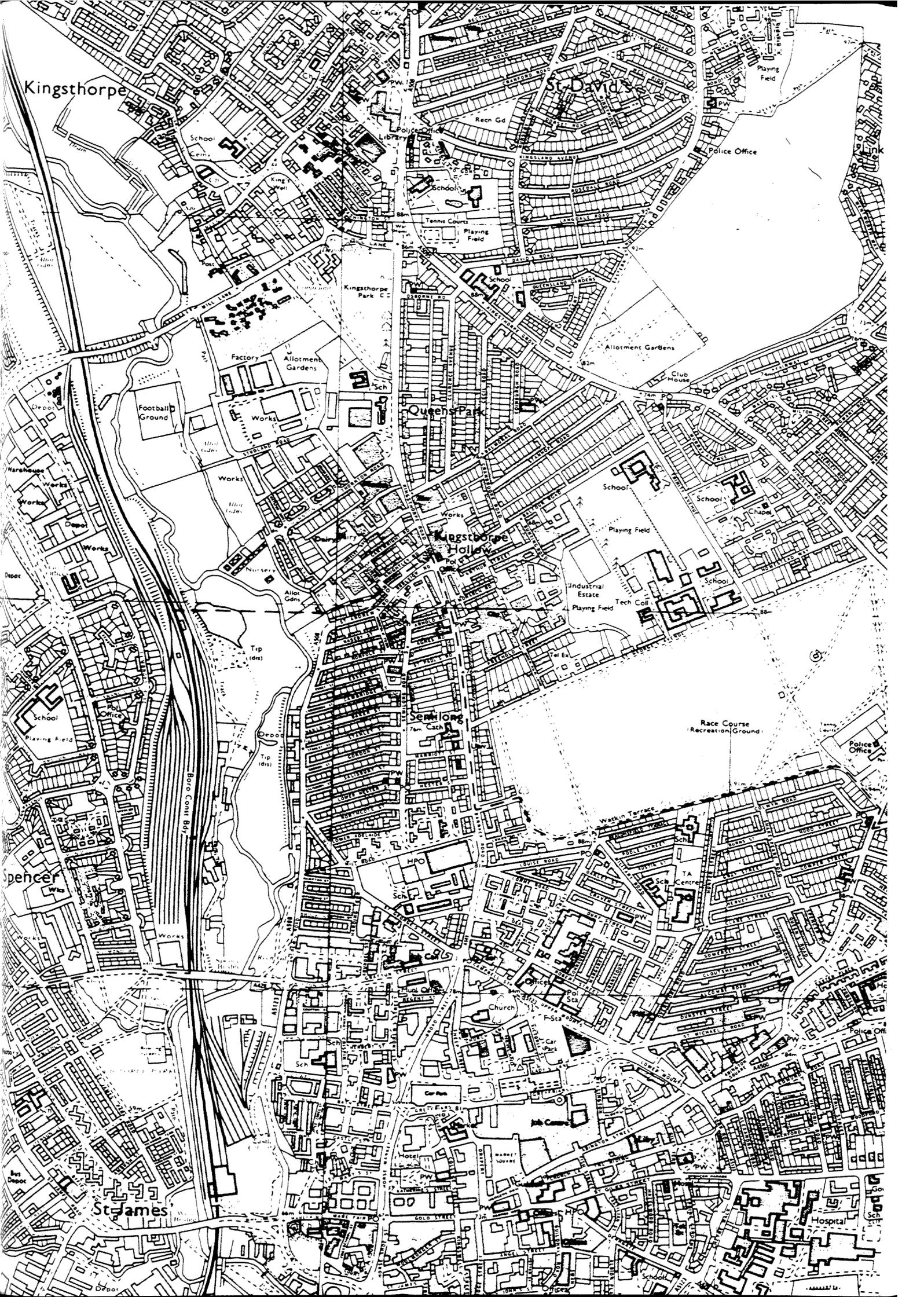
Date questionnaire completed:

A) ABOUT YOU

1. Are you MALE or FEMALE
2. Which age group are you in? 26-35..... 36-45..... 46-55..... 56-65..... over 65.....
3. Address:
4. How long have you lived here?.....
5. Is your home: Owner occupied..... Privately rented..... Council rented.....
6. a) On the map over leaf please draw a line round what you would call your local area.
b) Please explain your reasons for drawing the boundary here.....
.....
7. How would you rate the local area generally as a place for young people to grow up in? (Ring a number on the scale below).

V.good 5 4 3 2 1 V.bad

8. What do you think are the good things about the local area for young people?
.....
.....
.....
9. What do you think are the bad things about the local area for young people?
.....
.....
.....



Kingsthorpe

St. David's

Queen's Park

Kingsthorpe Hollow

St. James

Spencer

St. James

Football Ground

Factory

Kingsthorpe Park C.

Allotment Gardens

Police Office

Industrial Estate

Race Course Recreation Ground

Hospital

Warehouse

Works

Works

School

School

Door

Tip (ids)

Tip (ids)

Playing Field

School

Playing Field

Works

HPO

Church

Walkin Terrace

Sch

Bus Depot

MARKET SQUARE

Police Off

B) ABOUT YOUR SON / DAUGHTER'S FREE TIME HABITS (Answer only for the son/daughter who has been interviewed).

State age and sex of son/daughter concerned: AGE..... SEX.....

10. Please could you tell me how your son/daughter normally spends his/her free time?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. Are there any restrictions on when your son/daughter is allowed out? If so, what?

.....

.....

.....

12. Please tick the appropriate answer to the following questions using the scale provided:

| | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|---|--------|-----------|-------|
| a) Do you know where your son/daughter is when he/she is out? | | | |
| b) Do you know what he/she is doing when he/she is out ? | | | |
| c) Does he/she need your permission when he/she goes out? | | | |
| d) On what occasions does he/she <u>not</u> need your permission? | | | |

.....

.....

13. How far from your home do you normally allow your son/daughter to go:

(i) with your permission

(ii) without your permission

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|
| a) <u>unaccompanied</u> | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| b) <u>with friends</u> | | |
| | | |
| | | |

14. Thinking of up to 3 occasions you allow your son/daughter to go out of your local area during their free time please complete the following:-

| | 1. | 2. | 3. |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Purpose of trip? | | | |
| Destination? | | | |
| Who do they go with? | | | |
| How do they get there? | | | |

15. What worries you most about your son/daughter when they are out?

.....

.....

.....

16. State what time you expect your son/daughter back home by when they go out in their free time:

- a) after school?.....
- b) at weekends?.....
- c) during school holidays?.....

17. Tick how these times were decided? Son/daughter's decision.....

Parental decision..... Negotiation between parent(s) and son/daughter.....

Other (please specify).....

18. Are there any occasions when he/she is allowed to stay out later than this time?

YES..... NO.....

If YES, please give an example:

19. How often does your son/daughter arrive home after the agreed time?

Often..... Sometimes..... Never.....

20. How much pocket money/allowance does your son/daughter receive from you each week?

.....

21. Do you pay for any of your son/daughter's free time activities on top of this amount?

YES..... NO.....

If YES, how much per week do you spend on his/her activities ?.....

C) ABOUT THE PLACES YOUR SON / DAUGHTER GOES

22. In the space below please answer the following questions:

a) Name up to 3 places where your son/daughter most often spends his/her free time outside the home with friends?

b) What does he/she do in these places?

c) What time of day does he/she normally go there?

a) Where?

b) What he/she does there?

c) At what time?

Place 1:

Place 2:

Place 3:

23. What places do you most approve of your son/daughter going to in their free time and why?

Places

Reasons

.....
.....
.....

24. What places do you least approve of your son/daughter going to and why?:

Places

Reasons

.....
.....
.....

25. Is there anything in the local area which you think is a danger or a hazard to your son/daughter?
(Give up to 3 examples).

What is the danger?

Where is the danger?

.....
.....
.....

26. Name up to 3 places you do not allow your son/daughter to go giving reasons for your decision:

Places

Reasons

1.

2.

3.

27. Give an example of a free time activity your son/daughter does which you feel he/she needs escorting to, saying where it is, why they need escorting and how often this occurs.

Activity?.....Where?.....

Why you go with them?.....

How many times:per week?per month?per year? (Use one category only).

28. Which place do you consider to be the safest place for your son/daughter to spend their free time

D) ABOUT WHAT YOUR SON / DAUGHTER DOES IN HIS / HER FREE TIME

29. a) Are you satisfied with the way your son/daughter spends his/her free time? (Please tick one of the categories below).

Always..... Sometimes..... Never.....

b) Give an example of what you consider to be a satisfactory way he/she uses his/her free time:

c) Give an example of what you consider to be an unsatisfactory way he/she uses his/her free time:

d) How would you prefer your son/daughter to be spending their time?

30. How important do you think it is for a youth centre to operate in your area? (Please ring a number on the scale below).

Very important 5 4 3 2 1 Very unimportant

31. How important do you think it is for a youth centre to provide the following opportunities. (Please ring a number on the scale below).

| | Important | | | | Not important |
|---|-----------|---|---|---|---------------|
| i) Sports and games | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| ii) Advice and information for young people | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| iii) Music/jukebox | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| iv) Discos and raves | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| v) Space to meet and talk with other young people | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| vi) Organised trips outside of the centre | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| vii) Cafe and sandwich bar | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Important

Not important

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| viii) Young people involved in running it | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| ix) Adults present | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| x) Others (specify): 1. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

32. Are there any activities that your son/daughter is unable to do for any reason? (Give up to 3 examples stating the reason in each case).

Activities?

Reasons why not?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

E) ABOUT CHANGES TO YOUR LOCAL AREA

33. What free time opportunities or facilities for young people (10-15 year olds) do you think are lacking in your local area?

.....

.....

.....

34. What changes would you make to the local environment generally to improve it for young people?

.....

.....

.....

35. a) Have you ever made suggestions to anyone about improving the local area for young people?

YES..... NO.....

b) If YES, who did you talk to, what was it about and what was their response?

.....

c) If NO, why haven't you spoken to anyone?

.....

36. Occupations of adults in household.....

.....

37. Which group would you say you belong to?

BLACK BRITISH.....

WHITE BRITISH.....

ASIAN BRITISH.....

OTHER (specify).....

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

If you are concerned about how young people spend their free time and would like the opportunity to put forward your point of view, perhaps you would like to help us further by taking part in a group interview with fellow parents? If so please write your name clearly in the space below.

Yes I would like to take part in a group interview

My name is:.....

Contact address or phone number:.....

.....

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