

Teenage Citizenship Geographies:

Rural Spaces of Exclusion, Education and Creativity

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by
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Abstract

In September 2002 citizenship education became a compulsory element of the secondary school curriculum in England. This policy development launches new interest in the spatial politics of childhood and youth. With increased focus on teenage apathy and declining civic engagement, citizenship education centres upon creating future responsible citizens. Using questionnaire surveys, group discussions, photography, diary completion, as well as more innovative techniques such as a teenage-centred radio phone-in discussion and web-based media, this thesis focuses on a case study of 600 teenagers, aged thirteen to sixteen, living in a variety of rural communities in an area of Southern England. Within many representations of rurality, teenagers are situated between a 'natural, innocent childhood' in idyllic, close-knit communities and threatening and 'out-of place' youths. Such representations foster complex experiences of citizenship. This study, therefore, sets about examining themes of socio-spatial exclusion and political engagement. For some, the deficit of meaningful spaces of citizenship results in frustrated relations with key decision-makers. Others are engaged in their own practices of citizenship, devising creative ways in which to carve out and reconstruct everyday spaces and identities. Contributing to new geographical knowledge(s), this thesis concludes by calling for schools and (rural) communities to support and respect teenagers' own interests, needs, aspirations and current acts of citizenship in their own diverse spaces. Furthermore, it is argued that teenagers, as 'citizens-in-the-present' should be provided with the opportunity to engage meaningfully with decision-makers as an integral facet of the political mainstream.

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Introducing Rural Teenage Geographies of Citizenship

1.1 Setting the Scene

The personal premise for this thesis is one of schizophrenic images and experiences of rurality. I spent the first eighteen years of my life living in a rural village on the Isle of Wight, surrounded by thatched cottages, rolling hills and fields, woodlands and wild hedgerows. Some of my recollections fulfil 'Enid Blytonesque' narratives of long summers, spatial freedoms, building dens and so on. The hunt passed my house on Sunday mornings, and the village school and post office were significant places of news exchange and socialisation. Whilst everything appeared idyllic, I outgrew my conscripted rose-tinted glasses a decade ago. Once jealous of the apparent freedom of the 'gangs' of kids that roamed freely, I saw a new disenfranchisement as a progressive cycle of locally labelled 'yobs' and 'no-hopers' lived out their popularly idealised childhoods and youth, not happily playing in the perpetual sunlight, but destroying the village fabric, taking drugs in abandoned cottages; reconditioning the rural space they were supposed to be grateful for, under the ever watchful eye of the panopticon that is the village network and neighbourhood watch. I returned to my childhood haunts in order to discover teenagers' current experiences.

In 2000, when this research began, Matthews et al asserted, that despite the writings of Ward (1990) and Philo (1992), there:

"... is still no coherent geography of children in the countryside, especially that which draws upon their disparate lifeworlds" (p. 142).

This research sets about providing an element of coherency to the understanding of teenagers' experiences in rural areas, particularly in relation to social exclusion and citizenship, and contributes to the growing body of

research which focuses upon the neglected voices of children and young people within rural Britain (see Philo, 1992; Valentine, 1997b; Jones, 1997; Jones, 1999; Matthews et al, 2000; Tucker & Matthews, 2001). Whilst rural case studies set the scene for this thesis, many of the issues raised are by no means tied to rurality. This thesis also draws upon, and contributes to, the wider body of research associated with the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' (see Holloway & Valentine, 2000a; 2000b). Work within this field is framed by the understanding that research should be conducted *with* and not *on* children and young people, and places emphasis on regarding participants as competent social (and political) actors, deserving of study in their own right.

The rationale for this study is twofold. Firstly, by conducting research with a diverse group of teenagers living in a rural case study, many areas of which suffer multiple deprivation, I have sought to highlight the diverse encounters of social and often political exclusion teenagers face as individuals and as a collective. Rural life is perpetually portrayed in the media as the ideal place to raise a family (*The Guardian*, 2000). The difficulties many children and young people face in rural areas are often neglected or dismissed (RDC, 1998). Whilst geographers and other social scientists have begun to collate the experiences of children and young people in rural areas, in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I seek to highlight the particular challenges of those placed in the transitory period between 'childhood' and 'youth'. I believe that the idyllicism manifested in rurality creates particular difficulties for young teenagers who are often situated between representations of an 'idealised rural childhood' or a 'threatening youth'. It should, however, be remembered that whilst this thesis focuses upon rural experiences, many of the themes, findings and conclusions may be applied to other settings, such as urban areas. At the same time, the challenges associated with isolation and surveillance are, I believe, exacerbated and hidden in many rural areas. The majority of participants in this research represent a complex middle-ground notionally between childhood and adulthood, but also between childhood and youth. By emphasising teenage geographies I aim to deconstruct some of the false barriers placed between 'childhood' and 'youth', thus providing a coherent outlet for participants' voices. In an attempt to uphold the philosophies of advocacy geographers (see Philo, 1997; Matthews et al, 2000), one of the fundamental aims of this research is to promote the thoughts and views that participants have expressed.

The second motive for this research focuses on the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in secondary schools in England in September 2002 (Lawton et al, 2000; Woodward, 2002). The underlying rationale of citizenship education seeks to reduce voter-apathy, counter alienation, and provide a unifying element to the Government's policy on social exclusion (Chaudhary, 1998; Crick, 2000). This new development in education policy, I believe, provides a timely opportunity to further debate relating to teenagers' experiences as competent social and political actors (Lansdown, 1995; Matthews & Limb, 1998; Holloway & Valentine, 2000a; 2000b; Smith, 2000). Conceptually, citizenship presents the foundations for full participation in a community (Johnston et al, 2000). For children and teenagers this is a challenging and somewhat problematic term. Ideologically, the modern conceptualisation of childhood provides a framework through which children and teenagers are excluded from the 'adult' realms of socio-political participation and citizenship. A significant feature, however, of the marginalisation of children is bound to the constitutional exclusion from full citizenship for those under eighteen years in the UK (Roche, 1999). This thesis, therefore, marks the launch of compulsory citizenship education by exploring the everyday spaces of citizenship of a group of thirteen to sixteen year olds living in a number of different communities on the Isle of Wight. It is important to note that these spaces have differing temporal logics. The rhetoric of citizenship education is focused primarily on the creation of future responsible citizens, whilst other spaces, for example in their communities, have the potential to promote the role of teenagers as citizens *now* (Weller, 2003). This is not to say that these spaces of citizenship are in juxtaposition for, as this thesis will reveal, teenagers' experiences of citizenship are dynamic and have many hidden and contested geographies.

1.2 Outlining the Research Questions

The overriding aim of this research is to explore teenagers' experiences of social exclusion from spaces of citizenship within rural communities. Two key frameworks, the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' and '*New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship*' inform this research to examine the following questions:

Question One: How, and to what extent, are teenagers socially excluded from local governance in rural communities?

Question Two: Will the implementation of citizenship education influence the political actions of teenagers, allowing greater meaningful inclusion in decision-making and citizenship?

Question Three: How, and to what extent do teenagers recondition rural spaces through their own interpretations and acts of citizenship?

1.3 Chapter Synopsis

Chapter two lays the contextual building blocks of this thesis by drawing together the notions of rurality, childhood and youth in order to illustrate the parallels between, and contestations within, these concepts. I commence by examining the often contested definitions of rurality, the rural idyll, and the countryside, drawing specifically upon the ideas of ‘community’ and ‘nature’. In the second section of chapter two I outline definitions and constructions of childhood and children, drawing upon *‘New Social Studies of Childhood’* and children’s geographies. I complete this section by exploring representations of idealised rural childhoods. The final element of chapter two examines constructions of ‘youth’, and geographies of youth. I draw upon literature which demonstrates demonised images of youth to highlight the double positioning attributed to young teenagers, who I argue are problematically situated between representations of an ‘idyllic childhood’ and a ‘threatening youth’.

Chapter three takes forward key concepts outlined in chapter two and places them within a broader political framework. I commence by examining both ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’, in particular the development of the children’s rights movement, as a prerequisite for exploring the crux of this thesis, citizenship. Subsequently, I focus on the national and local levels by providing an analysis of social exclusion discourse. This concept is problematic in definition but one which nevertheless is currently high on a broad range of policy agendas. Opening up the study of ‘teenage geographies’, I investigate the social exclusion of teenagers in addition to critiquing discourses which uphold the idea of ‘teenage apathy’. To complete chapter three, I highlight several key elements of social inclusion, including

the expansion of children's participation, the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in secondary schools in England, and teenagers' own geographies of citizenship, thus setting the agenda for this research.

In chapter four I outline the theoretical and epistemological foundations for this research in order to situate new knowledges created in this thesis within a broader social and conceptual context. The crux of this study is informed by the conceptual frameworks associated with the *'New Social Studies of Childhood'* and *'New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship'*. Parallels between the two conceptual frameworks are drawn, in addition to highlighting the ethical issues apparent in conducting research with teenagers. Chapter four also outlines the rationale for adopting a case study approach and the criteria utilised in selecting the research locale. The final element of this chapter explores the multi-method approach adopted, highlighting my experiences of each method of 'experience' collection, analysis and dissemination.

In the first discussion of research findings, chapter five explores teenagers' experiences of 'frustrating spaces'; those arenas, which challenge a sense(s) of belonging and inclusion. In order to analyse the diverse encounters of participants, sense of belonging is initially examined in relation to the provision of facilities and services for teenagers. A micro-scale analysis allows the exploration of 'uncomfortable' and 'forbidden' spaces, whilst wider scale prejudices are also recognised. The second section of chapter five specifically examines participants' experiences of being listened to, and more fundamentally, being *heard* by local decision-makers, and contributes to Lister's (1997a) examination of citizenship as exclusionary. The final section of this chapter explores participants' interests within their communities by highlighting teenagers' advocacy of participation and their interest in rights. This chapter is completed with a summary of changes and improvements that participants would like to see facilitated in their locales.

Chapter six examines the transition to compulsory citizenship education by exploring teenagers' understandings and experiences of citizenship within different aspects of everyday life at school. This chapter, entitled 'educating spaces', places emphasis on the extent to which citizenship education can engage teenagers in the communities within their schools and neighbourhoods. This is achieved in three ways. Initially teenagers' attitudes

to, engagement with, and experiences of, citizenship lessons are explored. Subsequently, the actual practice of citizenship is examined through teenagers' experiences of being listened to by teaching staff and their participation in the school council. Finally, less apparent forms of citizenship are illustrated through the exploration of active citizenship and exclusion during teenagers' 'free time' at school.

Chapter seven, 'creating spaces', looks beyond formal citizenship education within school and beyond children or young people-centred political institutions, such as youth forums, to highlight the ways in which teenagers act as political agents and, indeed, citizens of their own spaces and communities. I commence by exploring geographies of hanging out within the community in private, public and commercial spaces. This is followed by a more in-depth exploration of participants' interests and their subsequent impact(s) upon social capital. An examination of the notion and examples of 'claimed spaces' is then developed. In the next section, participants' creativity and citizenship in shaping rural spaces is outlined through examples of rural revitalisation and the phenomenon of skate park developments. Finally, chapter seven explores citizenship and identity through examining teenagers' perceptions and spaces of belonging in relation to rurality; to diverse group identities; and to alternative communities, such as those on the internet.

1.4 Creating New Knowledges

Chapter eight concludes this thesis by drawing together the main findings from the research, as well as highlighting areas for future study. In this final element I outline the four key areas in which this thesis contributes to new knowledges. In brief, I believe I have contributed to the development of research which specifically focuses on the challenging and complex place that young teenagers inhabit in rural areas, between representations of an 'idealised rural childhood' and a 'threatening youth'. I have highlighted and explored the frequently neglected views of teenagers in relation to exclusion and citizenship. Responding to Little's (1999) commentary that to date a critical, theoretical examination of rural 'otherness' remains neglected, I have sought to highlight teenagers' continued frustration at not being heard by local decision-makers. Importantly, I believe, I have gathered a wealth of information concerning teenagers' complex notions of identity, which call into question the conventional subdivision of social groups utilised in much

research.

In establishing a discourse of teenage geographies I have also sought to place rural geographies at the centre of the research agenda. Adhering to Little's (1999) suggestion that rural geographers should turn their attention to deconstructing ideas relating to the rural idyll, I believe I have made a valuable contribution to demonstrating the complex power relations inherent in many rural communities. I have achieved this by highlighting teenagers' exclusion from and within spaces of citizenship but also the diverse ways in which many challenge, reconstruct and subvert the control, regulation and surveillance placed upon them. The everyday rural geographies I draw upon also have distinct networks to the wider global worlds, thus reuniting the local and global.

Citizenship education commenced in September 2002. I believe this study to be one of the first assessments of the curriculum. This thesis is not, however, an evaluation in the sense of educational studies, although I do believe it has very real policy implications, but is an exploration of the understandings and experiences of teenagers in relation to active citizenship. As later chapters reveal, the age-based status that teenagers are afforded in such lessons has significant impacts on their engagement with the subject. Furthermore, this study set out to examine the role that citizenship education could play in engaging teenagers in their local, rural communities. The inversion of this inquiry has been revealed by participants. Those already participating as active citizens were more likely to be engaged by citizenship education. This has significant implications for the challenges that the curriculum faces in involving those most disaffected, as well as highlighting the acts of citizenship in which many already participate. Indeed, many participants highlighted, often unrecognised, contributions to their communities and practices of citizenship. Following Dillabough & Arnot's (2000) call:

"It is time to change the ways in which we struggle for democracy in education - to abandon the 'lion's skin' and construct new definitions of citizenship which are based upon the needs of contemporary women" (p. 38).

I argue that a similar approach is required to enhance the status of teenagers as citizens.

The final area of new understanding to which I consider this thesis contributes is the further development of children or teenage-centred research methods. Through the implementation of innovative methods such as a phone-in discussion on local radio, I believe, I have demonstrated the potential for developing 'braver' methods, which not only gather the views of participants through their own preferred methods of communication but simultaneously disseminate and promote voices that are often neglected.

2

'Idyllic Childhood' to 'Threatening Youth': Exploring Constructions of Rurality

2.1 Introduction

The premise for this thesis, as outlined in chapter one, draws on my own personal experiences, observations and understandings of life as a teenager on the Isle of Wight. I 'grew up' surrounded by thatched cottages, rolling hills and fields, woodlands and wild hedgerows. At the same time I became increasingly aware of the tensions, conflicts and harsher realities of living in the countryside. Whilst my own experiences have intrinsically shaped this research, many participants challenged and reconstructed my own understandings of rurality and life in rural areas. I was particularly struck by one teenager's comment "*You have to grow up fast if you live here*", a notion predominantly associated with life in urban areas.

Defining distinctions and gradations between the notions of 'childhood' and 'youth' is highly problematic. There is no international definition of childhood, although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) denotes those under eighteen as children. Such a conjecture is upheld within the remit of the UK Ministry for Young People which, under the auspices of the Governmental 'Children and Young People's Unit', includes those aged nineteen and under (CYPUP, 2002). This category is further subdivided by organisations such as 'The World Association of Research Professionals', which suggests that where no national definition exists, those under the age of fourteen should be distinguished as children, and those aged fourteen to seventeen as young people (ESOMAR, 1999). This distinction is reinforced by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as UNICEF (2003). Alternatively, Wyn & White (1997) suggest that within the context of policy 'youth' is often defined as those aged thirteen to twenty-five. The majority of

participants in this research represent a complex middle-ground notionally between childhood and adulthood, but also between childhood and youth. This chapter explores the influence of different representations of 'childhood' and 'youth' on the lived experiences of those inhabiting this transitory period.

In this chapter I aim to examine, review and critique contemporary discourses surrounding both children's geographies and geographies of youth to draw parallels between these notions and conceptions of rurality. My rationale for doing so is to create a synthesis of the contextual history both within geography and across the social sciences, as well as to explore many of the issues surrounding the agency and spatial autonomy of children within the bounds of the modern conceptualisation of childhood and constructions of youth. Such an examination particularly addresses what I believe to be the neglected areas of rural childhood(s), and rural youth experiences.

I begin this chapter by exploring the multiple representations and interpretations which shape lived experiences of rurality. I commence by highlighting the influence of logical positivism and empiricism on the quantification of rurality in early rural studies before moving on to examine the importance of community. I also highlight the significance of proximity to nature and the rural idyll in shaping understandings of rurality within broader society. To complete this first section on rurality, I outline two more recent epistemological approaches to rural geography namely structuralism and postmodernism which have shifted research focus towards more people-centred rural geographies. Subsequently, I will outline definitions and constructions of childhood and children, drawing upon the geography of childhood and the growth in research centred around the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' and children's geographies. I conclude this second section by exploring representations of idealised rural childhoods. For the penultimate element of this chapter I highlight constructions of 'youth', and geographies of youth. I draw upon literature which outlines the representation of youth as threatening, to present an alternative to that of the idealised rural childhood. I conclude by introducing the marginalisation and exclusion of many children and teenagers living in rural areas as a precursor to chapter three.

2.2 Representations of Rurality

Epitomised as encompassing political, economic, sociological, and demographic notions, defining rurality is problematic. Rural studies and, indeed, rural geography has been approached from a variety of epistemological standpoints over the last century. All such approaches have had a number of influential and often conflicting impacts upon the study of rural life, as well as the interpretations of lived experiences. Whilst the dominant 'progression' has been from a logical positivist stance to more postmodern understandings, the entire range of epistemological approaches continues to shape contemporary understandings of rurality, albeit to different degrees (Phillips, 1998). This section is, therefore, concerned with determining what moulds teenagers' experiences of rural life. The first element of this chapter outlines the quantification of rurality in early rural studies. In the following two sections I highlight the significance of the notions of 'community' and 'proximity to nature' to the construction of rurality through a number of 'paradigm' shifts within rural geography (Valentine, 2001). Drawing upon these notions of 'community' and 'nature', I then examine the sustained popular representations of the rural idyll within British society. I complete this section by exploring two more recent methods of examining lived experiences with rural areas, through the activities of structural and postmodern geographers.

2.2.1 The Quantification of Rurality

Between 1900 and 1970 rural geography was dominated by both logical positivist and empiricist approaches (Phillips, 1998). Such studies, influenced by the 'quantitative revolution' in the wider social sciences, focused upon 'the material' and sought to quantify and measure rurality (Phillips, 1998). The empiricist stance drew upon population studies, for example, to determine settlement size by counting the number of people dwelling in rural areas, whilst those advocating logical positivism placed emphasis upon the quantification of population change and the influence of what were regarded as universal economic laws (Phillips, 1998). These studies focused upon settlements and landscapes but did so in a manner which neglected the experiences of rural residents and were essentially depoliticised studies (Philo, 1992). Influential work in this area included that of Haining (1982) and Cloke & Edwards (1986). Developed in the early 1980s, Cloke & Edwards

(1986) differentiated areas into degrees of rurality (figure 2.1).

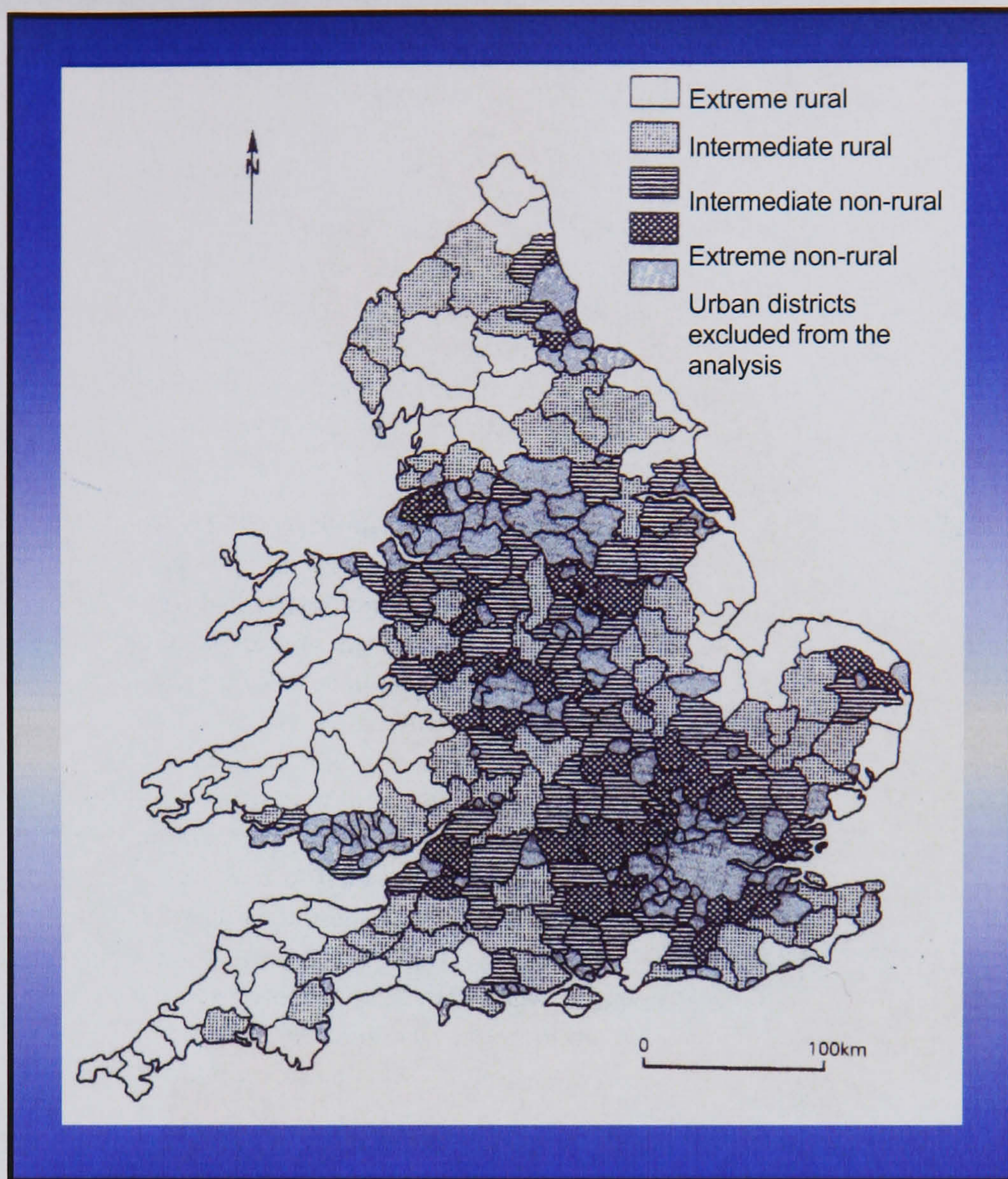


Figure 2.1 Cloke's Index of Rurality (Davis & Ridge, 1997: 3)

Contemporary rural geographers have critiqued studies based upon both empiricism and logical positivism for their over-simplistic analysis and lack of holistic exploration of rural life (Phillips, 1998). Moseley (2000), for example, outlines the difficulties in defining rurality, particularly in a period of rural modification. The compression of time and space has blurred the originally perceived distinctiveness of the countryside, whilst at the same time common indicators such as low population density, distance from urban areas and the propensity of agricultural land use remain. The indicators adopted by many logical positivists and empiricists raise a myriad of questions relating to, for example, how remote does a rural area need to be? (Moseley, 2000). Whilst many empiricists studied population change, the signifiers used in the past are inherently challenged by more contemporary complex trends such as the 'rural renaissance', which has witnessed migration, by differing groups, back to the countryside. Quintessentially, rural areas are dynamic and subject to constant changes which are difficult to quantify and describe.

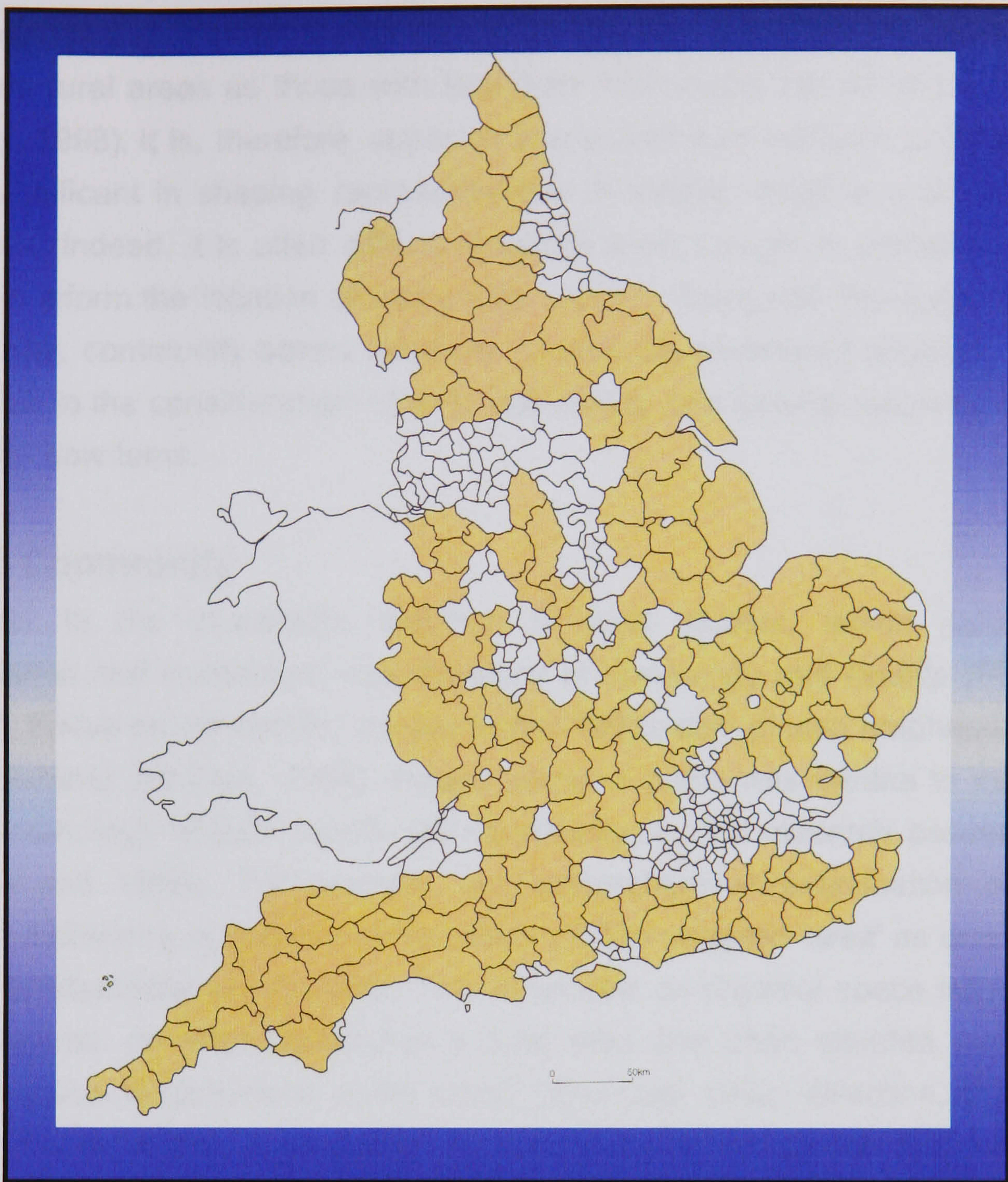


Figure 2.2 Local Authority Districts and Unitary Authorities Classified as Rural (Countryside Agency, 1999: 43)

Nevertheless, the quantitative measurement of rurality remains prevalent in some important elements of rural policy. The Countryside Agency, for example, demarcates rural areas by rural Local Authority districts and unitary authorities (Countryside Agency, 1999; 2000a). In this classification, cities and large conurbations are marked out as non-rural, thus defining the rest of the country as rural (figure 2.2). This crude demarcation fails to acknowledge the presence of large towns or the 'betweenness' of many places. The Countryside Agency does recognise the limitations in using such a generalised approach and notes that future research will focus on re-defining rural areas in terms of settlement structure, population density, land use and

land cover to provide more detail at the electoral ward level (Countryside Agency, 2000a). Further to this, the OECD focuses on population density and defines rural areas as those with less than 150 people per square kilometre (Pretty, 1998). It is, therefore, apparent that quantitative indicators of rurality are still significant in shaping representations of rurality, albeit in a problematic manner. Indeed, it is often difficult to ignore such indices in practice as they help to inform the location of many rural studies. Alongside the quantification of rurality, community-based accounts of rural life developed (Phillips, 1998) and it is to the consideration of such community and kinship studies that this chapter now turns.

2.2.2 Community

Parallel to the quantitative tradition in rural studies, which measured population and settlement, was the study of community and kinship (Phillips, 1998). Focus on community studies in the 1960s also placed emphasis upon 'the material' (Phillips, 1998). Indeed physical place was central to material understandings of both rurality and community in rural research between the 1940s and 1960s. For example, the comprehensive examination of over ninety definitions of community by Hillery (1955) revealed 'area' as one of the most fundamental constituents. This emphasis on physical space influenced discussions on what constitutes a rural area and often situated rurality in juxtaposition to definitions of the urban (Ambrose, 1992; Valentine, 2001). In these terms, rurality is presented as something which can be measured or physically defined, often in terms of 'the village' (Jones, 1973). This simplistic dualism has, however, been critiqued. Johnston et al (2000), for example, outline one alternative to this dualism; that of the rural-urban continuum which, instead, defines a spectrum of settlements. At one end of the continuum lies 'the urban' which draws upon Tonnies' (1955) notion of *Gesellschaft*, or a society of industrial populations, and impersonal relationships. At the other, sits 'the rural', or *Gemeinschaft* (Tonnies, 1955), based upon ideals such as community and kinship. It is apparent that such understandings of rurality are not far removed from those associated with empiricism. The rural-urban continuum attracted early criticism from Pahl (1966) who established the notion as simplistic and naive, noting the overlapping complexities, and blurred boundaries between 'rural' and 'urban'. Even in contemporary research, little consensus exists on the differentiation between rural and urban (Robinson, 1990) or whether one should even be

legitimised. The divisions are, however, continually upheld in contemporary discourses associated with the rural idyll. Rural space is still often seen as synonymous with 'community', in opposition to the individualism of cities.

Valentine (2001), whose work is influential in this thesis, suggests that rurality is popularly understood through two dominant concepts; community and proximity to nature. Community has been an important factor in rural studies and geography throughout a number of dominant 'paradigms'. Early structural-functionalists, for example Tonnies' (1955) work on *Gemeinschaft*, viewed rural communities to be resilient to change. Such notions of rural life are upheld today in representations of the traditional and quaint. Indeed, this emphasis on the preservation of rural livelihoods is illustrated by the recent Countryside Alliance protests (see Langton, 1999). Such romanticised conceptions situated rural communities as successful 'embodiments' of community spirit with common bonds and a territorial network of social interaction and cohesion (Johnston et al, 1996). In these terms, community was noted to encompass an enhanced sense of belonging, relating to shared thought and expression, set aside from modernism (Harper, 1989; Short, 1992; Phillips, 1998). The physical definition of community remains influential today in shaping lived experiences. For example, 'third place', or communal areas are often presented as a prerequisite for community and are frequently associated with territorial communities centred around public houses (Oldenburg, 1989; Knox, 1990). Increasingly privatised public space(s) are often treated as commodities or 'spaces for profit', fostering false belonging (Freie, 1998). According to Freie (1998) neutral, genuine space holds the possibility of interaction above aesthetics, although many would question the possibility of space being 'neutral'. Indeed, such nostalgic representations of rurality are fervently upheld in popular discourse in Britain through notions of the rural idyll. The importance of this representation of rural life will be examined later in this chapter.

Alternatively, Cater & Jones (1989) drawing upon a more Marxian analysis, suggest that the traditional rural community, often equated with the pre-modern, isolated village, was formulated through necessity and based on a rigid social hierarchy (Cater & Jones, 1989). The development of a Marxian approach to rural studies and geography in the 1980s and 1990s recognised an important politicisation of rural life which had until then been relatively

absent from debate (Phillips, 1998). These more structural notions of the development and existence of rural community continue to influence popular discourse surrounding life in rural areas. Providing a link between structuralist thought and contemporary discourse associated with postmodern rural geographies (which focus upon what people *feel* is rural), Lister (1997a) suggests that community must be seen as more than image, detached from its fundamental social and political structures (Lister, 1997a). Both understandings, associated with Marxian and postmodern discourse, whilst fundamentally different in outlook, had similar influences on the way in which contemporary rural geography developed by placing lived experiences as central to dominant research agendas. The development of both Marxian and postmodern rural geographies will be discussed further later in this chapter. In my quest to establish the connections individuals have with rurality, I believe it to be important to consider what Valentine (2001) refers to as the second popularly understood constituent of rurality, namely proximity to nature.

2.2.3 Proximity to Nature

The second component popularly associated with representations of rurality is proximity to nature (Valentine, 2001). Many common portrayals distance rural areas from the pollution of urban life by granting such places characteristics of health and purity. From its Latin derivation, 'nature' means 'birth' (Collard & Contrucci, 1988). It is a highly contentious, dynamic concept which embraces notions both sacred and destructive (Collard & Contrucci, 1988; O'Hear, 1999), not unlike ideas associated with the concepts of childhood and youth, which will be explored later in this chapter. In 'Western' terms 'nature' is considered to be 'the essence of something', 'unaltered areas', or 'the entire physical world' (Johnston et al, 2000). It is represented as both material and spiritual, and displays notions of order and disorder (Johnston et al, 2000). 'Nature' is an historically specific social construct, often dialectically opposed to the artificial (O'Hear, 1999). Much thought, for example within dominant ideologies of the environmental movement, fails to explore the artificial constructions within nature itself, believing that human actions are unnatural.

Collingwood (1960) identifies three fundamental periods of thought with regard to nature. Historically, Greek philosophy assigned 'nature' animate

qualities of rationality and intelligence. Aristotelian cosmology did not make distinctions between natural and artificial, and, instead, viewed humans and their interactions as much a part of nature as wild spaces (O'Hear, 1999). Antithetically, the dominant Renaissance notion viewed 'nature' as mechanical; a by-product of the mind. In modernity, scientific revolution and capitalism dichotomised humanity and nature (Merchant, 1991). This is reinforced by Fitzsimmons (1989), who suggests that in Europe and North America 'nature' and 'culture' experienced a schism as a result of industrialisation and urbanisation. This, arguably, brought about the compartmentalisation of 'the rural' and 'the urban' (Fitzsimmons, 1989). Parallel Cartesian dualisms rendered women (and often children) and nature in juxtaposition to men and culture. Durkheim also suggested that women were aligned closer to nature than men (Giddens, 1997). This assignment of children to the realm of nature has played an important role in shaping rural childhoods as idyllic.

For Howley & Howley (1999), 'properly rural' must be distinguished from the 'countryside', as to label wild, uninhabited spaces as rural is an oxymoron. Rurality must, therefore, include some form of human element. 'Nature' as a characteristic of rurality is also highly contested. Nevertheless, discussion later in this chapter suggests that notions of both 'community' and 'nature' are essential to representations and understandings of rurality which ultimately shape the lived experiences of those residing in rural areas. Both 'nature' and 'rurality', Johnston et al (2000) argue, are 'instruments of social power' often used for the advantage of certain social groups in society. More recent postmodern approaches to rural geography have explored the multiple meanings and cultural understandings of rurality (Phillips, 1998) rather than focusing on distinct physical attributes. Arguably one of the most dominant representations of rurality in British society is the rural idyll. I suggest that this interpretation of rural life synthesises and confuses understandings in the psyche with physical realities. It is to the consideration of the importance of the rural idyll in British society that this chapter now turns.

2.2.4 The Rural Idyll

Whilst examining shifting foci in rural geography is fundamental to understanding the differing ways in which rurality is portrayed, interpreted and studied, it is also important to explore lay representations (Philo, 1993;

Phillips, 1998). Comprising of picturesque villages, rolling, green countryside and chocolate box imagery, the common representation of rurality in Britain is based upon the nostalgic image that, in the past, life was more pure, more innocent and closer to nature, away from the dirt and congestion of the city. Rurality may be viewed as a manifestation of space which, within the context of Britain, is frequently portrayed as the rural idyll (Halfacree, 1996a). Problematically this is often equated to all that is 'British'. The idyll, as a 'spatial code', is utilised to aid perception and to understand, use and produce rural space (Lefebvre, 1991). For example, in 1997 the then Countryside Commission published a report outlining '*Public Attitudes to the Countryside*'. Overwhelmingly, the majority of participants in the study regarded the countryside as a significant part of the nation's heritage (Countryside Commission, 1997). A 'sense of freedom', tranquility and a proximity to nature were considered to be the most attractive features of such an environment, and were commonly believed to contribute to well-being and good health (Countryside Commission, 1997). As a result, many aspired to a life in the country, with 51% of inner-city residents striving for a rural life, rather than the alternatives of urban or suburban living (Countryside Commission, 1997). Such aspirations of a rural dream are consolidated in contemporary times by media sponsorship, for example, BBC television series such as '*Living the Dream*' and '*Escape to the Country*' (see Phillips et al, 2001). Central to such media broadcasts is the notion of the utopian good life, incorporating attractions for 'newcomers', which alter the socio-spatial structures of contemporary rural communities. Moreover, perception has rendered the rural as morally and aesthetically superior (Short, 1992). Consider, for example, the contested imagery in Victorian symbolism associated with a 'rustic utopia', and Arcadia, spiritually 'in touch' with god (Lowerson, 1992; Laing, 1992; Howley & Howley, 1999). Short (1992) notes the Victorian introduction of the private garden as a reconstruction of rural space. Rurality can, therefore, be seen as more than a physical location, with an inherent attachment of 'sense of place' and identity (Jones, 1973). Despite popular discourse revering the countryside as an appropriate space in which to bring up a family, evidence from such public surveys and popular discourse neither includes nor involves children or young people themselves, except through the conceptualisation of an idyllic rural childhood.



Figure 2.3 Images of Rurality (Pictures of England, 2003)

The establishment of many alternative communities in rural areas serves to illustrate the utopian ideas associated with the countryside. When many such groups relocate to rural areas, they often find their experiences do not match their preconceptions. It is not uncommon to find conflict in rural communities between long established residents and newcomers, as some newcomers try to change rural areas to satisfy their own expectations of rural life. It is important to note that different nations and cultural groups ascribe different meanings and symbolism to rural areas. These meanings are not necessarily reflections of reality for local residents but are used by, for example, the media to sell or commodify particular places (Valentine, 2001). In particular such nostalgic, natural images are marketed to sell rural space as an idyllic place to live or visit, particularly for families (figure 2.3). These representations carry important implications for the way in which the lived experiences of children and young teenagers are interpreted by others in society.

Whilst popular media has upheld the rural idyll as an accurate representation of life in rural areas, attempts have been made to dispel this myth. Moreton (2000), in a response to a Rural White Paper (2000), draws on Blythe's (1969) descriptive recollections of life in rural East Anglia. This work, although

fictional, details the lives of hidden voices in the countryside, revealing harsher realities of poverty. Moreton (2000) explores Government concerns relating to the loss or urbanisation of rural community life; the decline in traditional rural economies; the out-migration of young people; and in many areas the shift from village to commuter dormitory settlement. Simultaneously Moreton (2000) argues that this idea of rural life has greatly benefited from 'looking outward'. It is to the consideration of more outward looking approaches to rural geography that this chapter now turns.

2.2.5 Structural Understandings of Rurality

As reaction to the depoliticised rural geographies associated with quantification and community studies, many rural geographers in the 1970s and 1980s began to take a more critical approach to research (Phillips, 1998). Drawing upon Marxian discourse, this new wave of rural geography sought to examine socio-economic relations and the political economy of rural areas (Phillips, 1998). Such work included the examination of the mechanisation of agriculture, economies of scale and the development of specialised large-scale farms (Pretty, 1998). Furthermore, political-economy based research has explored the decline in farm-related employment and more widespread rural deprivation. For example, Pretty (1998) suggests that, whilst rural unemployment in the UK is below the national average, weekly earnings and GDP are often significantly lower (Countryside Agency, 1999). These studies, I argue, implicitly challenged notions of the rural idyll. The structural approach to rural geography, therefore, has been significant in reshaping interpretations of rural life.

The study of political economy in rural geography has also highlighted issues associated with population change, with many areas experiencing a redistribution demographically in favour of an older constituency (Pretty, 1998). Village gentrification, the influx of commuters and job diversification have altered the socio-spatial structure of rural environments and have fostered new social divides between 'locals' and 'newcomers' (Phillips & Williams, 1984; Humphries & Hopwood, 1999) manifested in differing consumption patterns of rural space (Cater & Jones, 1989). The rural has often been reconstructed to conform to the romantic visions of newcomers, and is now experiencing what Moseley (2000) terms, a 'rural renaissance' brought about by improved communications, both in terms of physical transport structures

and multimedia and relocation of businesses and families as a deliberate lifestyle choice. Furthermore, house price differentials in the UK have enabled families from urban and suburban areas to buy larger homes and more land in many rural areas. Drawing upon Harris (1973), this may have created new divisions along old class lines. Escape to rural areas from capitalist materialism has now been subsumed by economic restructuring (Williams, 1973; Urry, 1984). Moseley (2000) outlines two 'new' forms of rural space which often prevent long-established poorer families from accessing the housing market. The first Moseley (2000) terms 'detached suburbia' or the development of commuter villages, which lie relatively empty during the daytime. The second trend is that of 'seasonal suburbia' or the buying of second homes in the countryside by more affluent urban dwellers (Moseley, 2000). Both patterns have the potential to create social polarisation as villages become dominated by more affluent incomers.

Marxian rural researchers have also drawn attention to the decline in rural services due to economies of scale (Phillips & Williams, 1984). For example, recent policy debate has examined the closure of many rural post offices because, economically, they do not justify the Government subsidy that they currently receive. Decline in such services is most likely to affect those, principally young people and the elderly, who do not have access to personal transport (Moseley, 2000). Immobility, associated with past rural communities as beneficial in strengthening kinship, may now be seen as oppressive and exclusionary. A village shop, for example, often represents more than just a retail outlet (Pacione, 1984). The downward spiral of deprivation as businesses relocate out of the region inherently affects community interaction, social cohesion and often the prevention of isolation (Pretty, 1998; Harlow, 1999):

"One person's splendid isolation is another person's loneliness. One person's 'close knit community' is another person's world of prying, gossiping and intrusion" (Moseley, 2000: 218).

As a result, 47% of respondents in the *British Attitudes Survey 1996* believed rural life had changed for the worse, with only 12% suggesting that, in general, lifestyles had improved (Countryside Agency, 1999). Johnson (1996) highlights that not all rural community change has been detrimental, and it may be more appropriate to consider change rather than decline, as diversification decreases exclusion. In some areas interaction exists in new

forms such as Local Exchange Trading Schemes. The future of the rural community lies with sustainability, which needs to be based on co-operation not competition (Berry, 1999).

Notions of the idyll surrounding village England have also provided a smokescreen for structural inequality, marginalisation and poverty (Cloke, Milbourne & Thomas, 1994). Humphries & Hopwood (1999) provide an extensive, empirical examination of hidden, rural lives in the twentieth century, highlighting issues of child labour, lack of water and sanitation, low wages and poor working conditions, social exclusion and lost innocence thereby revealing harsher rural realities (Keith, 1989). In 1992 the then Department of the Environment believed that a quarter of rural households lived below the poverty line (Pretty, 1998). Rural deprivation includes a lack of access to amenities and a decline in services which is intensified in more isolated areas. McLoughlin (1981) notes a difference between deprived people and deprived places, whilst Cloke, Milbourne & Thomas (1994) suggest that deprivation is often masked by those who are not deprived in order to preserve the idyll, illustrating problems of stigma. This may be critiqued for its assumptions that this is a conscious process. Further work by Cloke & Little (1997) highlights rural deprivation as a manifestation of power relations in wider society. Rural poverty has, however, been neglected politically, particularly through its denial by the 1980s Government (Davis & Ridge, 1997), and through its misrepresentation by regional statistics. Rural poverty is rarely clustered, and surrounding affluence distorts marginalisation (Davis & Ridge, 1997). Whilst a more structural examination of rural life and rural change can be praised for re-politicising rural studies, it may be critiqued for failing to recognise the diversity apparent in lived experiences. It is to the consideration of postmodern or cultural geographies of rurality which recognise this diversity that this chapter now turns.

2.2.6 Postmodern Rural Geographies

Contemporary rural geography has experienced a surge of interest, which led Cloke (1997) to state:

“We are now experiencing the most exciting period of rural studies, certainly within the last 20 years” (p. 371).

This period of change in rural research has been significantly influenced by

the 'cultural turn', and cultural geographies which has shifted emphasis away from physical and material spaces (Cloke et al, 1994; Barnett, 1998; Phillips, 1998; McCormack, 2002). The 'cultural turn', Johnston et al (2000) suggest, is an 'intellectual shift' to propel the often seen as neglected notion of culture into the social sciences, thus building upon analysis using social, economic and political factors. Johnston et al (2000) note that this development has, for many researchers, moved emphasis away from exploration in terms of political economy to work which focuses upon discourse, identity and representation. This new outlook has centred thought on imaginings, experiences and symbols of rurality which cannot be quantified or delineated (Phillips, 1998). Furthermore, postmodern rural geographies are concerned with rural 'others' and groups generally excluded from discussion in rural research (see for example Halfacree, 1996a; 1996b; Cloke & Little, 1997; Valentine, 1997c; Little, 1999; Tucker & Matthews, 2001; Tucker, 2003). Such an emphasis allows the examination of fractured identities and difference (Philo, 1997a; 1997b; Phillips, 1998).

Postmodern rural geographies have been influential in redefining a 'sense of place' and community, shifting emphasis from physical place-based understandings to that focused upon imagined spaces. Many communities are still viewed as geographical entities comprising of economic, cultural and environmental elements (Entrikin, 1991; Dalby & MacKenzie, 1997). These geographical entities are not necessarily structured around traditional ideas of 'the village' but may be lifestyle-orientated communities which utilise rural space in different ways. Whilst Fowler (1991) suggests that community is a struggle or journey and not a place, it must be remembered that the arena in which that journey takes place is integral to the understanding of community. This thesis will explore sense(s) of place and belonging in order to ascertain teenagers' alternative interpretations of rural community.

Despite the upsurge in rural cultural geographies, the notion of the 'cultural turn' has often gone uncritiqued (Little, 1999). Johnston et al (2000) exemplify this by questioning what the 'cultural turn' is turning away from, suggesting this may lead to the neglect of social, economic and political concerns. Moreover, it is fundamental that culture is not juxtaposed to other factors, but that cultural, social, economic, and political factors weave a complex web of circumstances impacting upon experiences and perceptions of rurality

(Johnston et al, 2000). Little (1999) presents a twofold argument concerning the exaltation of the 'cultural turn' in rural geography. Little's (1999) first argument suggests that, to date, a critical, theoretical examination of 'otherness' remains neglected, and that whilst research exploring the marginalisation of 'other(s)' has been invaluable, more work is required examining the cause of problems such as deprivation and exclusion. The second argument Little (1999) raises relates to representation. She suggests that rural geographies have, all too often, drawn upon the idea of the rural idyll in discussions of rural community. Little (1999) upholds that it is now time for rural geography to deconstruct ideas relating to the rural idyll and to progress by exploring power relations between people, groups and establishments aside from an idealised notion of rurality. This research, therefore, develops such ideas in terms of representation (of rurality), identities (of children and teenagers) and diversity (of rural life worlds). I would, however, argue that whilst Little's (1999) call to move on from studies which examine the rural idyll is legitimate, it is important to acknowledge the significance that this representation has within British society. For example, the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) estimate that three hundred people daily abandon urban life in pursuit of the rural idyll (Harlow, 1999).

Contemporary rural geographers understand 'rural' as a social construct and attempt to deconstruct the images, discourses and language used to define rurality. The most important aspect to consider is that rurality has multiple constructions and mythologies (Short, 1992). Rural areas, Mormont (1990) suggests, comprise of layers of social spaces, which have different meanings for different people. Many geographers identifying with the cultural or postmodern turn have explored the experiences and understandings of rural residents in terms of diversity and difference. The next two sections of this chapter examine the particular group of rural 'other' that this thesis seeks to explore.

2.3 The Idealisation of Rural Childhood

The following section of this chapter begins by exploring the complexities and conflicts between differing representations of childhood and children's lived experiences. This, I believe, is essential to the examination of what shapes young teenagers' lives in rural areas. I then move on to specifically examine developments in the geography of childhood, children's geographies, and the 'New Social Studies of Childhood'. Drawing upon literature from the previous section of this chapter, I conclude this section by highlighting the influence of popular discourses associated with exclusive rural childhoods on the lives of children and young teenagers.

2.3.1 Defining Childhood & Children

'The child' and 'childhood' are both problematic in definition, and whilst often considered interchangeable, are not synonymous (Qvortrup, 1992). Research on childhood has often been approached from a developmental standpoint. Much work in psychology, for example that of De Mause, has focused upon children's experiences in terms of age-based competencies. This epistemological approach maybe linked to Darwinian thought on evolution (Archard, 1993). Furthermore, work in psychoanalysis has drawn attention to important philosophical debates relating to personhood and whether knowledge is innate at birth, as upheld in the writings of Plato and Descartes, or acquired through experiences, as suggested by, for example, Piaget and Locke (Miller, 1982; Archard, 1993; Valentine, 1997). Such studies, whilst they can justifiably be accused of biological determinism, have been fundamentally important in shaping discourse surrounding concept(s) of childhood and children's capabilities and are upheld today in, for example, the structuring of schooling. This thesis, however, does not advocate the notion that childhood is a biological given and alternatively supports contemporary social research which views childhood as a social and cultural construction subject to temporal and spatial change (Frones et al, 1998). It may also be more appropriate to define childhood as an adult construction, for the use of 'social' construction implicitly excludes children from 'the social'.

Discussion on the social construction of childhood is most eminently associated with the writings of Aries (1962). Aries' thesis proposed that no

conceptualisation of childhood existed in the middle ages. Drawing such conclusions principally from the examination of medieval art, Aries (1962) suggests that childhood is not a biological given. Interpreting the paintings of the time, he argues that children were, instead, depicted as small adults (Aries, 1962). Alternatively, the representation of children in such a form may say more about the artists of that time than the absence of childhood (Lambert, 2000). Nevertheless, the conceptualisation of childhood as distinct from adulthood, Aries (1962) suggests, originated from the onset of the industrial revolution and ultimately led to the separation of the life-worlds of adults and children. Archard (1993) critiques Aries' claim by suggesting that 'the modern' has created a particular type of childhood, one which is particularly difficult to distinguish from a symbolic ideal. Furthermore, Martindale (1994) suggests that Aries' thesis lacks evidence, although what form of 'evidence' is not made apparent. Alternatively, Kennedy (1998) outlines the development of the modern 'adult', tracing a move from medieval collectivism to individualism from the late fifteenth century. Whilst Aries' thesis remains heavily critiqued, particularly in terms of its exaltation of the modern conceptualisation as an ideal, it remains highly influential in many spheres of social science.

Muller (1973) adapts the work of Aries to develop a conception based upon birth and death rates. When infant mortality is high children are considered to be less valued and 'replaceable', although this is extremely contentious and emotive. This controversial idea suggests the period at the beginning of the industrial revolution was characterised by declining infant mortality and increased child labour. Muller (1973) implicitly infers that children became of greater (economic) value at this time. By 1880, birth rates had declined and focus shifted towards the family. Children were then situated outside the workplace. The 1930s onwards, Muller (1973) suggests, witnessed the emergence of a more child-centric society and increased focus was given to children's rights. Arguably this may be more usefully defined as child-focused, as child-centric implies increased autonomy.

Despite debate which calls for the recognition of children's diverse experiences, contemporary 'Western' childhood is, however, itself dichotomised (Valentine, 1996b; Gerrard, 1999). Jenks (1996) describes the Dionysian child as a 'little devil' exhibiting inherently bad tendencies, which

require control. This half of the dualism was developed during the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, and has been upheld in much Christian doctrine alongside ideas of original sin (Jenks, 1996). In contrast the Apollonian child is seen as pure and innocent and in need of protection (Jenks, 1996). Such a dichotomy may be likened to Freud's 'civilised' and 'savage' children, the former signifying 'the child' as a voice of neurosis, whilst the latter represents the voice of desire (Kennedy, 2000). One element which links the Apollonian child and the Dionysian child is the notion of dependency. Children, bound by the concept of childhood, are therefore dependent upon, and dichotomised from, adults. This implicitly shapes their lived experiences in all domains of society.

In terms of Kantian ethics, the differential treatment of children from adults is valid (Schapiro, 1999). Indeed, Kant referred to children as 'passive citizens' and the significance of this term will be revisited in subsequent chapters. The marriage between childhood and dependency has a number of implications for children's lived experiences. Firstly, dependency provides a prerequisite for the spatial separation of the lifeworlds of children and adults, in which the former are socialised as vulnerable and incompetent (Pilcher, 1995). 'Age-patriarchy' seeks, in 'pseudo-Aristotleian' terms, to control the space, time and bodies of children (Hood-Williams, 1990). For example, in the 'West' children's days are often rigidly structured around the nursery or school. Moreover, parental protection frequently draws upon the concept of 'best interests', whereby decisions are made on behalf of the 'incompetent child' (Gittens, 1998). Although this is commonly held as integral to parental responsibility it may also, as Gittens (1998) suggests, reinforce ideas of 'the child' as private property. Plato, Aristotle and Freud believed that childhood ceased when reason becomes apparent (Kennedy, 2000). An increase in the ability to reason, therefore, allows heightened autonomy in Kantian terms (Sprod, 2000). This brings into question legislation which delineates the end of childhood to a specific age. Care must be taken to acknowledge that, whilst this view of childhood has become globalised, many children contest dependency, for example, through their actions as carers.

Epistemologically, Philo (2000) notes the variety of standpoints from which research is conducted, and whilst the categorisation of academics is highly problematic and contested (see Foucault, 1972), it is important to note the

influence predominantly of feminism and of later notions attributed to postmodernism and poststructuralism on research with children. Whilst remaining anti-essentialist, popular feminist discourse may be seen to have challenged 'half-human geography' with its neglect of women (Gregory, 1994). Subsequent to feminist research exploring gender, children's studies emerged in the 1980s and was 'tacked on' to theoretical discourse (see Hendrick, 2000). Sprod's (2000) examination of childhood, reason and autonomy highlights the dualism, as noted in earlier discussions regarding nature, constructed between reason and emotion, whereby both women and children are allied with emotion. Both reason and autonomy are seen to be characteristics which children develop en route to adulthood (Sprod, 2000). As women's studies aimed to deconstruct patriarchal theory, children's studies aimed to counter 'adultism' (Alanen, 1994). As a result, an increasingly critical approach to children's experiences has been fostered, focusing on empowerment, participation, and self-determination (James, 1990; Matthews & Limb, 1999).

Geographers working within postmodern or cultural rural geographies have begun to explore the lived experiences of those presented as 'other' (see for example Valentine, 1995; Halfacree, 1996b; Little, 1999). In a broader context, children are universally constructed as 'other'. Jordanova (1989) examines this peculiar paradoxical dialectic whereby adults separate themselves from past identity(ies) in order to define themselves as separate from children. Gittens (1998) provides an important examination of childhood and identity. Drawing on her own personal life, she reflects upon her experiences *vis-à-vis* memories and constructions from her dreams which she considers fundamental to her self-identity. Such ideas, Gittens (1998) notes, often problematically comprise of images drawn from photographs rather than from memory. Notions surrounding the construction of identity are fundamental to the understanding of 'self' and 'other'. Valentine (2000), for example, examines the narratives of identity which structure notions of childhood, highlighting the role of the school in governing the autonomy and agency of the body. The characteristics assigned to childhood *vis-à-vis* innocence neglect issues of the sexual identity of children. Valentine's (2000) empirical research also examines the identities assigned to children by other children in relation to embodiment, from which ideas surrounding 'self' and 'other' are relayed.

Parallel to feminist writings, it is important to deconstruct research which essentialises children's experiences and refers only to 'the child'. As Gittens (1998) suggests, children are not self-defined as a social group, but have a multiplicity of identities. Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers (1992) also highlight the importance of the construction of language and narrative in the definition of 'the child'. Arguably, the construction of such discourse enforces, consciously or unconsciously, some element of identity within children as a social group, upheld within the institutions of education and organised play. I argue that in the deconstruction of 'the child', it would be beneficial to draw upon Foucault-inspired work on 'truths'. Alternative truths about childhood are, however, difficult to construct in an adult-centric academy. This section has highlighted the influences an eclectic range of research has had upon developing dominant representations of childhood. The next section of this chapter places specific emphasis on the development of the geography of childhood.

2.3.2 The Geography of Childhood

Central to the consideration of both conceptualisations of childhood and the geography of childhood is the examination of 'adult' discourse surrounding the construction of children's experiences and use of public and private space. As noted previously, dominant parental concerns in the 'West' are focused upon children's incompetence. This is particularly apparent in the negotiation of public space. Valentine (1997a) suggests this is somewhat paradoxical in the current international climate where greater equality between children and adults is sought. Children are perceived as incapable of distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' people and, as a result, strategies for controlling children's use of space are developed (Valentine, 1997a). These include increased confinement to the private space of the home and garden, or commercial play spaces. Drawing on earlier work by Valentine (1995), such parental concerns are integral to the notion of 'stranger-danger'. Perpetuated by the media, popular parental fears have focussed upon decreased safety in public space in comparison to the past (Valentine, 1995; Walkerdine, 1999). As a result, and counter to statistical data, abduction is perceived as the greatest threat to children. Whilst media attention does much to fuel such notions, the strategies that parents adopt are based significantly around the ideological construction of parenting and what it is to be a good parent. This ideology is dynamic and contested over time and space. Paradoxically,

Valentine's (1996a) more recent discourse emphasises an increase in concern, within Europe and North America, over the last two decades *vis-à-vis* violence by older children in the public arena (Valentine, 1996a). This poses a challenge to the spatial hegemony of what is seen to be a 'naturally' adult domain. It is important to note that whilst much research refers to child-centrism, it is also predominantly constructed by adults, for adults. The examination of the control of children in public space is important to the exploration of young teenagers' lived experiences within this thesis. I argue that the focus on parental fears regarding children's safety has ignored the lived experiences and concerns of young teenagers who are often more independent. At the same time, within popular discourse, too much attention has been centred upon teenagers as threatening in public space. I return to this derogatory representation of teenagers later in this chapter.

Work within the geography of childhood has also placed emphasis upon play. The consideration of play is fundamental to understanding children's use of space, and in terms of developmental psychology is presented as the mechanism through which children develop physically, mentally and creatively (Klein, 1980). Work in the 1970s was most significantly associated with the environmental cognition of children. Play is now constructed by the United Nations as a right (Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). It is associated with idyllicism. Whilst being represented as worthy, it also maintains the separation of adults and children (Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). The idealisation of play is further reinforced by discourses that morally rebuke the labour of children in 'developing' countries. Contemporary research in, for example, the UK has focused on a number of play-related geographies. Valentine & McKendrick (1997), for example, examine the provision of outdoor play for children, concluding that children are spending more time indoors under adult surveillance. This parallels work by McKendrick et al (2000) who consider the increase in commercial playgrounds in the UK as integral to the commodification of children's lives, and the development of such ventures for adult-orientated purposes; to create and control children's play spaces. Furthermore, Smith & Barker (2000) place great emphasis on the contested space of out-of-school childcare by adults and children, from a children-centred position. Studies which have examined children's use of space through play-related issues have been fundamentally significant in highlighting important aspects of children's lifeworlds which shape their lived

experiences. Such a focus is not necessarily appropriate to older children and young teenagers whose activities bridge the spatial worlds of children's play and adults' leisure.

Finally, it is important to establish whether the adult definition and production of 'public' space is suitable, as societal norms dictate what is an appropriate activity. Consideration of the legitimacy of presence and activity in certain spaces is particularly important to both teenagers as a collective and to the individual lived experiences of children and teenagers in rural areas, whose activities may be subject to greater surveillance (Matthews et al, 2000). As Valentine (1996a) suggests, for many children the street is often more regulated and controlled than spaces within the home. This is perhaps most pertinently illustrated through current Government discourse on curfews for children and teenagers (Davis, 1990; Travis, 2000; Burrell, 2001; Mendick, 2002). As Qvortrup (1994) states, to warrant the spatial hegemony of adults, adults must either be considered as more important or to be acting in children's 'best interests'. It must also be questioned why children are treated as human-becomings in public space (Qvortrup, 1994).

Reflection upon work associated with the geographies of childhood and the physical spaces that children occupy (Philo, 2000) highlights a number of important considerations relating to the often conflicting representations of children in terms of their perceived abilities and status within society. Whilst this study is concerned with the experiences of young teenagers living within a number of rural communities, these representations are so dominant within society that they may ultimately impact upon the everyday lifeworlds of many children and teenagers.

2.3.3 The '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' & Children's Geographies

Despite the trend in human geography and other social sciences towards the consideration of inequalities and marginalised 'others', children have remained out of the research focus until relatively recently (James, 1990). Bunge's (1973) early recognitions of children as the largest minority group have, therefore, been largely neglected. Such oversight is particularly significant for children due to their exclusion from the academy (Matthews & Limb, 1999). One of the most prolific texts exploring contemporary children's

geographies has been compiled by Holloway & Valentine (2000a). This commences by outlining the way in which the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' deconstruct the idea of children as human becomings. The first way in which this is achieved is by identifying childhood as a social construction, both time and place specific (Holloway & Valentine, 2000a). This approach acknowledges the diversity in children's lives in terms of their societal backgrounds and the period in history in which they live out these experiences. Beyond this, the second means by which the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' challenge past conceptions is by acknowledging that children are social actors in their own right, shaping and controlling their own life worlds (Holloway & Valentine, 2000a; Morrow, 2000). This is not to say that children's agency is not controlled or limited to different extents by external factors, in much the same way as other social groups have both similar and unique controls imposed upon their lives. Fundamentally, the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' recognise and uphold the dictum that childhood is not a universal category: that 'the child' does not exist. Furthermore, whilst children as a social group may have similar experiences, their characters are unique and fractured by other factors such as gender, ethnicity and class (Holloway & Valentine, 2000a). The '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' also advocate research which acknowledges children as valuable research subjects (Morrow, 2000). The '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' constitute a significant part of the framework for this research.

One important movement towards placing children and teenagers on the research agenda has been the development of children's geographies and the geography of childhood. Ontologically, this reaction to adult-centricism inherent in research develops alternative strategies which place children at the heart of the research process. More specific geographical writings, arguably drew upon the work of Piaget (1957; 1967; 1970) and environmental psychology. Piaget and his colleagues sought to examine the influence of cognitive development upon children's conceptions of space, which later instigated the use of mental mapping by geographers in the 1970s (see Piche, 1981; Matthews, 1992). The use of developmental psychology influenced children's geographies and moved emphasis away from the geography of childhood. This focal shift has been seen to originate with an anti-academy reaction by advocacy geographers in the 1960s and 1970s fostering an applied approach encapsulated by Bunge's (1973) research on

inner-city children and poverty (Philo, 1997). Pertaining to a 'spontaneous' children's geographies (Piche, 1981), popular focus moved away from psychology to the greater recognition of children as social actors. This new focus was implicitly linked to significant works on 'otherness' (Hill & Michelson, 1981). Consequently, social geography became of vital importance.

Philo (1997a) argues that a genuine interest in social children's geographies is a recent phenomenon. It is perhaps within this context that the geography of children rests uneasily between autonomy and existence as a sub-discipline of social geography. Nevertheless, children's geographies have been noted to embrace the not unproblematic 'cultural turn' (Jones, 1999) in geography, and the development of postmodern social theory that recognises difference and diversity (Sibley, 1991). Philo's (2000) classifications of streetwise geographies, boundaries of the home, and institutional geographies of childhood have been reconstructed to incorporate social and imaginative spaces. The increase in children-centred research and the deconstruction of discourses relating to childhood are fundamental elements of contemporary children's geographies (Philo, 2000). Whilst children's geographies have gathered significant momentum in recent years, the experiences of children and young people in rural areas of Britain have been explored by few practitioners (see Valentine, 1997b; Matthews et al, 2000; Tucker & Matthews, 2001). It is to the consideration of rural children's geographies that this chapter now turns.

2.3.4 Representations of Exclusive Rural Childhoods

Essentially, the concepts of 'rurality' and 'childhood' not only exhibit parallels in their popular representation and idealisation but, synthesised, create a nationally upheld, utopian view of growing-up. The rural, or more specifically the British notion of the 'rural idyll', manifests ideas of sentimentalism in much the same way as does the conceptualisation of childhood. Ward (1990) produced one of the most eminent texts, *The Child in the Country*, in rural research with children. Ward (1990) began by highlighting the influence of authors such as Wordsworth, Rousseau and Dickens in upholding idyllic images of rural childhood. Such discourses have profoundly influenced the thinking of educationalists and moralists who, whilst constructing urban life as 'civilised for adults', place rural life as ideal for an authentic childhood

(Ward, 1990). Pure and innocent representations of childhood were, however, contested in the past. Arenas of Victorian society, for example, held poor migratory rural dwellers responsible for social problems within cities (Ward, 1990). Paradoxically, in that era of Social Darwinism others viewed those who relocated to urban areas as enterprising (Ward, 1990). Fundamentally, the key element in popular discourse was that rural children were more pure, more innocent and at the same time educationally disadvantaged compared to their urban counterparts (Ward, 1990).

Humphries & Hopwood (1999) highlight examples of descriptive narrative from the early twentieth century depicting an era of spontaneous play in a wild countryside. Early academic literature inferred children's love of play in 'natural' spaces. These spaces were seen to be defined by children. They were not created by adults and play was not understood to be constrained or limited. It was thought that children could be more imaginative in their play, creating their own spaces and games away from the adult gaze. In 1980 Marion Shoard outlined five factors contributing to the idealisation of rural areas for children's play. She described the availability of play spaces and objects; the freedom of movement; space away from the private sphere of the home; rural animals as a source of fun and interest; and adventure (Shoard, 1980). Such spaces, therefore, encompass 'the wild' and disorder of childhood, dialectically opposed to the order and structure of adulthood (Jones, 1997). Represented in literature as an organic, pure authentic childhood (Ward, 1990), and often seen through nostalgic memory, this complex relationship between childhood and nature lies, as Jones (1997) suggests, deep within (British) culture. Moreover, ideals surrounding countryside childhoods foster much of the adult construction of children's worlds:

"... a synthesis of innocence, wilderness, play, adventure, the companionship of other children, contact with nature, agricultural spaces and practices, healthiness, spatial freedom, and freedom from adult surveillance" (Jones, 1997: 162).

Rural Britain is seen to be the ideal quintessential place of childhood, an arena of innocence and purity, reflecting all that it is to be a child. These representations of rural childhood influence many parents' perceptions of the ideal environment for a 'proper' childhood (Jones, 1999). An article published in *The Guardian* (2000) detailed three mothers and their children who moved

to the country as the last bastion of Apollonian innocence; an environment in which children could be afforded greater spatial freedom to play. Although each family's experience did not always match expectation, the mere fact that the decision was made to relocate from an urban area to a rural environment illustrates the high esteem in which idyllic rural childhoods are held, thus emphasising a greater parental perception of risk to childhood in urban areas. Aforementioned media representations afford rural children a certain degree of privilege in relation to childhood than their urban counterparts, whose childhood is often perceived to be threatened by greater exposure to 'adult' knowledge.

As chapter five highlights, this is not a privilege that many children and teenagers necessarily recognise or live. Moreover, whilst the popular media reinforces perceptions of rural life as ideal for childhood, Valentine (1997b) highlights contradictions in the construction and representation of the rural idyll through the examination of parental perceptions of children's safety. Popularised fears, such as 'stranger-danger', have overspilt into rural areas. Communications, transportation and the media have brought about a time-space compression, which has merged the boundaries between global and local dangers (Valentine, 1997b). Media coverage of the murder of a child reaches the home of both rural and urban families, inciting similar moral panics. As a result of parental perceptions, and in some cases actual incidents, rural children's use of space has become restricted (Valentine, 1997b). Many children spend their time out of school in organised activities, often dependent on their parents for transport. Despite this, many parents maintain that the countryside is a safer place in which to raise children, aided by the surveillance strategies of close-knit communities (Valentine, 1997b). Valentine (1997b), therefore, highlights the complexities inherent in many representations of rurality, particularly in relation to idyllic rural childhood(s).

Bunce (1994) highlights the importance and influence of the constructions of rurality that children form in early life. In understanding children's life worlds in rural areas, it is fundamental not only to draw upon popular discourse but to recognise children's own constructions and representations of their environments (Matthews et al, 2000). McCormack (2002) provides an insightful introduction into children's conceptions of rurality. Working with children, aged between eight and ten, in both rural and urban areas of New Zealand, McCormack (2002) explores children's material and discursive

understandings of rurality in an attempt to demonstrate children's agency in relation to 'thinking', as well as 'doing'. McCormack's (2002) research reveals 'agriculture' and 'nature' as the two dominant constructions of rurality cited by participants in New Zealand. For children living in both rural and urban areas, trees, flowers, lakes, rivers and ponds were important 'icons of nature' (McCormack, 2002). Fundamentally, children's imaginings of rurality were influenced both by their actual material experiences of rurality, for example, children living on farms used their experiences of farm work to define their surroundings, whilst children from more urban areas were able to cite experiences gleaned during recreational visits (McCormack, 2002). For many children, and particularly those from urban areas, conceptions of rurality were drawn from popular media and literature, as well as narrative from their families and peers (McCormack, 2002). Parental perceptions of rurality often idealised rural life as superior and contributed to children's understandings (McCormack, 2002). Many such representations are synthesised to form multiple discourses and understandings of rurality, which are subject to spatial and temporal change as children and young people gather new experiences.

Jones (1999) uses examples of literary representation in rural Britain to suggest that the 'natural' gender of rural childhood is male. Manifesting the countryside as 'surrogate nature', and drawing on parallels of innocence between such landscapes and childhood, Jones (1999) argues that the construction of the countryside allows little space for girls to adopt a feminine identity, and therefore conform to this construction by adopting the 'quasi-male' identity, of a tomboy. The ascendance, Jones (1999) suggests, of the Apollonian child allows for such a 'category' to be accepted but only up until puberty when girls are expected to embrace feminine characteristics. De Beauvoir (1988, cited in Jones, 1999) argues that tomboyism allows girls to access the freedom that childhood requires. The freedom of boys to reconstruct gender identities is also constrained, as the adoption of feminine characteristics conflicts with wider social values. Whilst Jones (1999) recognises the apparent conflict between his own thesis and ecofeminist constructions of the women-nature link, he argues that the masculine identity of childhood is a manifestation of patriarchal dominance in society. Jones (1999) fails to acknowledge multiple genders, and does not attempt to deconstruct masculinity and femininity in terms of the labels 'boys' and 'girls'.

Whilst this section has explored issues surrounding the idealisation of rural childhood, discourses bounding rural youth are constructed in very different terms. It is to the consideration of rural youth that this chapter now turns in order fully to contextualise the schizophrenic identities placed upon participants in this research: some way between 'childhood' and 'youth'.

2.4 The Demonisation of Rural Youth

In the 1990s Harry Enfield, a contemporary British comedian, created a character, which he used in television sketch shows (see Enfield, 1997). In his first appearance, the character Kevin, had his thirteenth birthday. As the clock struck midnight Kevin transformed from a sweet, well-behaved child to a stropky and rude teenager. The final section of this chapter examines the demonisation of youth, and in the context of this research, rural youth. I begin by illustrating the complexities in defining 'youth' and 'young people'. I then proceed to explore how such constructions often conceive of young people as threatening, concluding by highlighting specifically rural issues.

2.4.1 Defining Youth & Young People

The construction and representation of 'youth' has many parallels to that of 'childhood', in that both are frequently viewed in terms of deficit; as non-adult. As Wyn & White (1997) argue, 'youth' is neither a single category nor an homogenous group within society. Nevertheless, 'youth' is still held in many fields to be a period in the life cycle of 'growing up', and is inherently represented as a biological reality (Wyn & White, 1997). In policy 'youth' is often constructed to embody those aged between thirteen and twenty-five (Wyn & White, 1997). Whilst childhood is also a period of 'growing up', 'youth' is presented as a transitory period; the final steps towards adulthood. Although biological changes do occur, these are embodied within social contexts (Wyn & White, 1997). The related concept of 'adolescence' places too much emphasis on physical bodily developments alone, neglecting the dynamics and diversity of 'youth' (Wyn & White, 1997).

The contemporary notion of 'youth' is often seen to have developed after World War Two when the transition to adulthood was marked by consumption and production (Wyn & White, 1997; Skelton & Valentine, 1998). Smith et al (2002) detail the notion of the 'neo-liberal youth'; a child who grows up to be

autonomous and competitive in the global marketplace. Wyn & White (1997) argue that ideas of 'youth' were also apparent in the late nineteenth century when young working class (often) men were seen as problematic. Furthermore, despite the linguistic absence of 'youth' in the seventeenth century, Wyn & White (1997) suggest that this cannot be equated to the non-existence of 'youth', as transitions such as marriage and leaving home still occurred. This has been critiqued for closely reflecting Karl Popper's critical rationalism, in which the principle of falsification suggests that the absence of the linguistic category 'youth' is not synonymous with the non-existence of the category. Indeed, Skelton & Valentine (1998) highlight that Aries' thesis marked out adolescence or youth as a 'breathing space' between childhood and adulthood, which began in the early eighteenth century when more wealthy 'children' were able to remain in education for longer. It is apparent, therefore, that 'youth' is an historical, social and cultural construct. This period is, Sibley (1995) suggests, one of blurred boundaries:

"... adolescents are denied access to the adult world, but they attempt to distance themselves from the world of the child. At the same time they retain some links to childhood" (Sibley, 1995: 34-5).

'Youth', in the 1970s and 1980s was examined principally in terms of subculture (Wyn & White, 1997; Watt, 1998). Wyn & White (1997) critique this analysis for universalising 'youth' into one homogenous category. Whilst there may be commonalities between many groups of young people, for example, schooling, contemporary youth experiences are manifested in a multitude of ways globally. 'Youth' experiences may also be radically different even within small localities (Wyn & White, 1997). Importantly, contemporary research, often affiliated with postmodern understandings, has sought to challenge ideas often associated with developmental psychology in order to view 'youth' as a relational problematic, and to begin to explore not only difference and diversity but also power relations within and between groups of young people. Moreover, whilst groups of young people may appear to be experiencing similar circumstances, identities may be further fragmented by, for example, gender, sexuality and ethnicity (Wyn & White, 1997). 'Youth' has also come to embrace new meanings. Patterns of consumption have commodified 'youth' or 'youthfulness' as an identity to be sought after, to be purchased. 'Youth', Wyn & White (1997) suggest, has become less about 'coming of age' and more about the symbolic meanings underlying consumption (Wyn & White, 1997: 21). For many young people, this is limited and challenged by peer

pressure and socio-economic conditions. These representations of youth are fundamentally important to examining teenagers' lived experiences. The final section of this chapter highlights dominant constructions of threatening youth and the impact that these representations are likely to have on teenagers' experiences in rural areas.

2.4.2 The Construction of Threatening Rural Youth

Media representations principally situate children as threatening in a plethora of moral panics (Williamson, 2002; Thomas, 2003). Occasionally these moral panics deflect and place children as victims (Williamson, 2002). Whilst Williamson (2002) refers only to children, I would argue that it is often more common for young people or teenagers to be portrayed as threatening or deviant. 'Youth', like childhood, is often constructed as a dualism; as vulnerable and inherently good or, and often the more dominant school of thought for 'youth', as threatening (Wyn & White, 1997). From the 1950s onwards, Wyn & White (1997) suggest, many young people acquired greater disposable income:

"Youth became a 'new category' of person, distinctive, usually male, and a potential threat to the stability of society" (p. 18).

The past two decades have witnessed a period of demonisation and negative imagery, where teenagers are either presented as 'at-risk', 'in trouble', or 'in need' (Davis & Marken, 2000; Pain, 2003). Here, the notion of deviancy is important. Becker's (1991) 1950s treatise on deviancy, which draws upon scientific understandings of the issue, purports that deviancy is a movement away from the norm, for example a statistical average, or that it is a disease (Becker, 1991). Whilst such definitions are controversial, Becker (1991) suggests that sociological understandings have, in the past, drawn upon similar ideas to determine the distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. The contemporary media often portrays 'deviant' behaviour, such as drug abuse, as the actions of the majority. Moreover, media representations provide a myriad of examples of the demonisation of youth. Interestingly, when two ten-year old boys were charged and imprisoned for the murder of two-year old James Bulger in 1993, they were often portrayed as non-children, and referred to as 'youth' in media discourse (King, 1995). Pain (2003) suggests that youth justice policies in England and Wales have contributed to the criminalisation of youth:

“Youth tends to be criminalised in public policy and primarily associated with offending, reflecting the broader positioning of youth by society and the state as feared, out of control, and in need of regulation” (Pain, 2003: 151).

For example, an Anti-Social Behaviour Order can be placed upon anyone over the age of ten (Pain, 2003). Such derogatory representations of youth and young people shape the lives of many teenagers by presenting their actions and presence in public space as threatening and ‘out-of-place’. One example of the spatial exclusion of teenagers is apparent in the growth of children or youth-free villages in the UK (Khan, 2003). Prevalent in the US, such settlements only allow those over 45 years of age to take up residence and are often represented as trouble-free spaces (Khan, 2003; for further debate see GuardianUnlimited, 2003).

The development of ‘youth culture’, defined by factors such as clothing and music, has led to discourse relating to juvenile delinquency, with young people seemingly contesting social norms and values. The rejection of a ‘neo-liberal youth’ is often equated to deviant behaviour (Smith et al, 2002). Furthermore, the inclusion of cultural studies in explorations of ‘youth’ has, importantly, recognised that young people are not passive victims but are instrumental in creating their own life-worlds, and resisting dominant cultures. As a result, many youth organisations have been developed in order to monitor and control youth, especially those who are seen to be ‘growing up’ along a different path (Wyn & White, 1997). Despite much progress in young people-centred research, little work has challenged the problematic construction and use of the term ‘youth’.

Research in geography has explicitly focused upon ‘geographies of youth or young people’ (Skelton & Valentine, 1998). Moreover, Frankenburg (1992: cited in Skelton & Valentine, 1998) argues that reference to the notion of ‘youth’ does not afford teenagers personhood in their own right. This certainly contradicts the underlying philosophies of the *‘New Social Studies of Childhood’*, and is one of the principal reasons why the participants in this research preferred to be referred to as teenagers. Indeed, in the preliminary stages of this research, I referred to participants as young people until I asked them how they would prefer to be represented. The overwhelming majority chose the term ‘teenagers’ as they believed it was less patronising than ‘young people’. I, therefore, argue for greater dialogue in terms of teenage

geographies. This, I believe, does not fall foul of Skelton & Valentine's (1998) warning that geographies of youth should not be separated from wider debate, for doing so would diminish the role many play interacting with others. I contend that this distinction is needed in order to rectify the neglect those aged thirteen to sixteen have been afforded by subsuming their experiences into children's geographies. Indeed, Aitken's (2001) *Geographies of Young People* crosses between and within childhood and youth. I believe that such an incoherent approach fails to acknowledge teenagers' experiences.

2.5 Conclusions: Exploring Rural Geographies of Teenagers

This chapter has reviewed and critiqued a myriad of literature relating to childhood, youth and rurality. It is now important to critically explore what rurality means to this thesis. As this chapter has outlined, research examining the experiences of teenagers living in rural areas is sparse and limited (Skelton & Valentine, 1998; Tucker & Matthews, 2001; Tucker, 2003). I sought, at the beginning of this research, to explore teenagers' experiences within rural areas; not to essentialise their lives but to draw attention to the challenges of rural life hinted at in other studies. The Rural Development Commission (1998), for example, acknowledges that young people living in rural areas face many similar challenges to their urban counterparts. In this thesis chapter five illustrates several key challenges which are exacerbated in many rural areas. Poor public transport renders independent mobility problematic and a lack of services and facilities neglects the diverse needs of children and teenagers (RDC, 1998; JRF, 2000b). Furthermore, many young people face greater surveillance from the 'rural panopticon' and are often provided with little opportunity to find alternative spaces. Such difficulties are often neglected or dismissed in social policy in relation to rural areas (RDC, 1998). Rurality, therefore, impacts upon teenagers lived experiences, challenging constructions of freedom associated with the rural idyll. Despite such issues, the notion of the rural idyll remains an important constructor of how rurality is defined from the 'outside'. It is an arena which children and teenagers are expected to be grateful for and is often used as an instrument of power (Johnston et al, 2000). This is also particularly important when rural childhood is marketed as idyllic in the media.

Throughout this research, rurality has shifted from a central positioning to being understood as a context or setting in which to situate participants' lives.

Participants' multiple understandings of rurality particularly challenged my own perceptions and interpretations. Indeed, some participants contested the definition of where they lived as rural, whilst others described a patchwork of rural and urban areas, thus inferring a betweenness of place. These are important facets of postmodern understandings of rurality, where what is *felt* as rural is considered, rather than the quantitative indicators frequently used to define a rural area. This provides challenges to the notion of the rural-urban divide. The lives of many participants were, therefore, not tied to the rural in any straightforward manner. Furthermore, rurality is often represented in terms of community. As chapter seven will highlight, many participants did not feel a connection with conventional understandings of community but instead discussed a sense of belonging in terms of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) or those based on lifestyle choices and identities. Nevertheless, this raised a plethora of challenging issues in terms of the legitimacy of labelling a research area as rural and critiques my (and other geographers') premise for rural research. My own assumptions and understandings of rurality were, therefore, brought into question and challenged. Nevertheless, I feel this thesis makes an important contribution in that it provided participants with a platform to define where they live and to challenge the definitions imposed from the 'outside' by, for example, policy-makers.

I feel that one of the strengths of this thesis is that many of the issues, themes and findings, outlined in subsequent chapters, may be applied to or derived from other arenas, such as urban areas. Of key importance to this thesis is that teenagers' voices in rural areas remain the neglected 'others' in children's geographies and so research which focuses upon their experiences is, I believe, justifiable whether the outcomes are similar or different to their urban or suburban counterparts. Moreover, chapter three furthers discussion on the notion that, within many rural areas, teenagers' needs and interests remain neglected because their lives are, to some extent, idealised. It is the aim of this thesis to provide a platform for teenagers' voices and to demonstrate some of the more generic challenges many teenagers face in relation to their age-based status, albeit refracted in different arenas. It is essential, therefore, that rurality is read in this thesis as a context and setting for participants' lives and experiences. Rurality is, therefore, drawn upon contingently rather than necessarily. Such consideration has important implications for the future of rural geography and wider studies of rurality

overall.

In this chapter I have outlined the complexities in defining children and young people as competent social actors within the contexts of 'childhood' and 'youth'. Moreover, I have particularly focused upon the issues and realisations of the dichotomy that 'childhood' and 'youth' creates for those living within rural areas of Britain, where children's lives are represented in popular discourse as innocent and pure, whilst growing into 'threatening youths'. Whilst geographers and other social scientists have begun to collate the experiences of children in rural areas, I seek, in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, to highlight the particular challenges posed to those placed in the transitory period between 'childhood' and 'youth'. By emphasising teenage geographies I aim to deconstruct some of the false barriers placed between 'childhood' and 'youth', thus providing a coherent outlet for participants' voices. This is not to place too great a focus on age but to respect the wishes of participants in this research, who asked to be referred to as teenagers.

The process of generating research questions highlighted the absence from the literature of two key themes. The first theme relates to dependency, independence and social agency during the transition from childhood to youth. The second theme is concerned with the construction and deconstruction of rural environments by teenagers themselves rather than those imposed upon them by, for example, the media. These topics are further developed in the following chapter and are legitimate lines of inquiry which, I believe, contribute to new knowledge(s) relating to teenage geographies. Chapter three explores power relations within rural areas, with particular reference to social exclusion and citizenship, in order to examine lived realities and perceptions of people aged thirteen to sixteen.

3

'Apathetic Denizens' to 'Educated Citizens': Examining Rights, Citizenship & Social Exclusion

3.1 Introduction

Much of the rationale for this research stems from my own observations of the exclusivity of village life. Half of my family migrated from inner-city London in the 1960s to a remote hamlet near to where I spent my childhood. I did, therefore, grow up surrounded by notions of close-knit rural community life that somehow purveyed the idea of inclusivity. The local school did indeed play an essential role in placing children at the heart of the village, with social inclusion and cohesion somewhat superficially manifested through events such as summer fetes. Again, I began to question the nature and intentions of the close-knit rural community ideal. For a previous research project I observed the proceedings of a local parish council meeting organised to develop plans for a new community centre (Weller, 2000). The rhetoric of local decision-makers appeared clear. It was to be an inclusive project, the main focus of which was to create a space for young people. Amid seemingly positive tensions reigned the 'youth as problem' discourse - *'why had only one young person turned up at the meeting when they're always complaining there's nothing to do?'* and *'what happens if they vandalise the place?'* Most significantly, there were no intentions to consult young people on any aspect of the development. This one very localised example serves to illustrate the particular strand of social exclusion this research seeks to explore.

Essentially, this chapter examines power relations globally, nationally, locally and between individuals, particularly in relation to teenage geographies of social exclusion, participation and citizenship. Power, Baggini (2002) suggests is:

“... an ability to force one’s will on others, whether or not one has the legitimate authority to do so” (p. 133).

Baggini’s definition falls foul to Sharp et al’s (2000) criticism that power is often viewed as synonymous with domination. For Allen (1997) the concept of ‘power’ may be subdivided into three categories. In the first conception, power is something held by an individual or group in relation to others around them. The second notion refers to ‘power as a resource’ and may be mobilised to achieve an end. Finally, power may be considered, often in Foucauldian terms, as a strategy or method (Allen, 1997). Furthermore, Rousseau’s (1984) treatise on inequality speaks of two forms of inequality, that established by nature and that constructed by society. The latter is referred to as moral or political inequality. Nevertheless, within the broader contextualisation of this research it is advantageous to look to Sharp et al’s (2000) notions of dominating and resisting power. Sharp et al (2000) suggest that power consists of dominating and resisting elements. These are not simple power exchanges (see also Foucault, 1977; 1979; 1980), but may be seen as complex, entangled webs of interaction comprising of forces, practices, processes and relations of power (Sharp et al, 2000).

In this chapter I proceed by contextualising key concepts from the *‘New Social Studies of Childhood’* and children’s geographies discourses within a broader political framework. I, therefore, begin by drawing upon constructions of democracy and human rights as a prerequisite for exploring citizenship. I will place particular emphasis on the development of a global children’s rights movement and the contestations and problematics in defining citizenship for those not entitled to vote. In the second section of this chapter I turn attention to the national and local levels by providing an analysis of social exclusion discourse. This concept is problematic in definition but one which, nevertheless, is currently high on a broad range of policy agendas. Subsequently, I draw upon literature which focuses on the often neglected field of social exclusion suffered by children and young people living in rural areas. Contributing to ‘teenage geographies’, I aim to investigate the idea of self or voluntary exclusion by deconstructing the essentialist idea of ‘teenage apathy’. For the final section of this chapter I will highlight several key elements of social inclusion. The first will map the expansion of children’s participation, which interrelates with developments in the children’s rights

movement. Subsequently, I will detail and analyse the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in secondary schools in England in 2002. Finally, I move on to look at social inclusion in terms of autonomous teenage geographies of citizenship, arguing the need to recognise teenagers' active citizenship in its myriad manifestations outside mainstream mechanisms, thus setting the agenda for this research.

3.2 Democracy, Rights & Citizenship

The first element of this chapter traces the origins and philosophical debate surrounding democracy in order to set the wider political context for this research. Subsequently, I draw upon human rights discourse to outline the development of the children's rights movement, highlighting both the positive outcomes of constructing a universal children's rights agenda, as well as questioning the extent to which such an agenda further segregates the lifeworlds of children and teenagers. Finally, I complete this section by exploring citizenship, in the broader sense of the term as well as through the notion of children's citizenship.

3.2.1 Defining Democracy

Quintessentially, democracy may be defined as collective decision-making (Beetham & Boyle, 1998). Viewed by Heywood (1992) not as an ideology but a system of governance, the consideration of democracy is pertinent to the discussion and construction of 'citizen(ship)' in this research. Beetham & Boyle (1998) suggest "*..popular control over collective decision-making*" and "*equality of rights in the exercise of that control*" (p. 289) as the key principles constituting democracy. Lexically, democracy stems from the synthesis of '*demos*' and '*kratos*' in ancient Greek (Heywood, 1992). The former, commonly read to mean 'the people', actually translates to 'the many' or 'the poor', whilst the latter infers 'power' (Heywood, 1992). Democracy in ancient Greece differed dramatically from the system of governance lived in, for example, contemporary Britain. Ancient Greek democracy was centred around the literal definition of democracy with 'the many' or 'the poor' in rule (Heywood, 1992). The system was based upon direct democracy where every male citizen was actively involved in meetings and referendums, and held a position in Government at some point in their lives through a rota system rather than an election (Heywood, 1992).

In contemporary society, democracy is a dynamic concept, often culturally-specific and following differing ideological paths (see Giddens, 2000a). Beetham & Boyle (1998) highlight the false dichotomy between democracy and non-democracy. Perhaps, it is then more appropriate to consider a democratic continuum, where nations live out some degree of democratic praxis. Heywood (1992) believes that contemporary notions of democracy developed from the 'popular politics' associated with political revolutions in for example, America (1776) and France (1789). By 1787 the United States constitution was seen to be the most democratic in the world, despite the franchise only extending to men (Heywood, 1992). Nineteenth-century Britain witnessed many campaigns for a more inclusive franchise, and by 1884 (Reform Act) there was a universal vote for men, with women's suffrage in 1928 (Equal Franchise Act) (Heywood, 1992). This form of democracy embraced a representative approach whereby 'the many' take part in regular elections to select a candidate who they believe best able to fulfil their political, social, economic and cultural needs and desires. Despite this, democracy in the nineteenth-century was not always viewed favourably for fear that a broad franchise would prove a threat to a (wealthy) person's liberty (Heywood, 1992). Democracy in twentieth-century Britain has become pluralistic in outlook. The extent to which 'the many' have equal access to power in a representative democracy remains questionable. 'The many' still equates to the adult population, and those elected to represent 'the many' are disproportionately middle-class, white and male (Heywood, 1992). Moreover, the notion of democracy has received opposition from those who regard 'the many' as too ignorant or uneducated (Beetham & Boyle, 1998). This position is particularly important to consider as children and teenagers are almost entirely seen in this light. Representative democracy does, however, prevent stagnation as politicians can be replaced regularly if they are not seen to be effective (Beetham & Boyle, 1998).

In Britain, as in many 'Western' societies, the system of governance is based upon liberal democracy and political pluralism, allowing citizens to select representatives from different political parties (Heywood, 1992). In order to maintain a democratic system, emphasis is placed upon ensuring that elections are fair, competitive and regular (Heywood, 1992). Liberal democracy in the 'Western' world is also based upon a pluralistic model where all individuals are believed to have access to political institutions to one

extent or another through, for example, trade unions or pressure groups (Heywood, 1992). The degree to which political institutions are truly accessible to all also remains questionable.

Heywood (1992) outlines 'people's democracy', 'third world [sic] democracy', and 'radical democracy' as alternatives to that associated with Liberalism. After the 1917 revolution in Russia a Marxist-Leninist construction of democracy was developed, based around the idea of a 'people's democracy' or social democracy (Heywood, 1992). This approach critiqued liberal democracy, arguing that democratic principles were not compatible with a society where class inequalities and bourgeoisie dominance existed. The abolition of the class system was seen to be the only means of achieving a true democracy (Heywood, 1992). Social democracy in Russia was founded on a single (communist) party system where individuals were entitled to their own opinions but ultimately followed a democratic centralist ideal, backing their party (Heywood, 1992). As a further alternative, 'third world democracy' is also seen almost as a reaction to liberal democracy and colonialism. 'Third world democracy', not totally unlike social democracy, is based upon a ruling party system used to counter tribal conflict and forge a sense of nationhood after the destructive legacy of colonialism (Heywood, 1992). Negative aspects of this system include the potential for a single party to be corrupt (Heywood, 1992). Finally, Heywood (1992) suggests that, as a concept, radical democracy, developed from the 1960s onwards as a result of increased focus on participation, as an alternative. Drawing parallels from ancient Greek democracy, this approach centres upon 'grass roots democracy' carried out by pressure groups and political activists (Heywood, 1992; Beetham & Boyle, 1998). Furthermore, increased attention on the processes of globalisation and regionalisation highlight the significance of cosmopolitan democracy, which displaces democracy tied to the nation-state and instead draws upon a local-global nexus (Beck, 2000; Held & McGrew, 2000; McGrew, 2000). Whilst liberal democracy provides a crucial context for this research, ideas surrounding radical and cosmopolitan democracy will prove to be important considerations. It is to the examination of human rights and, in particular, children's rights that this chapter now turns in order to begin to explore the position of children's and young people's civil and political rights in relation to wider political systems.

3.2.2 Human Rights & the Children's Rights Movement

Originating from Roman jurisprudence, a 'right', Audi (1996) suggests, is an advantageous position afforded to an individual by the moral code of a society. A right may either be positive, for example the right to free speech or negative, for instance immunity from torture (Audi, 1996). A right may be either passive or active. For example, an active right might include the right to self-defence (Audi, 1996). A right may also be absolute, in that it applies whatever the consequences, or it may be *prima facie*, only applying if the consequences are not greater than the right itself (Audi, 1996). In citizenship discourse, discussed later in this chapter, the notion of 'rights' is seen to infer a relationship with 'duties' or 'responsibilities' (Audi, 1996). Furthermore, rights are inherently bound to status; for example, civil rights are those afforded to citizens (Audi, 1996), and children's rights are those afforded to children. Human rights are problematic in definition, encompassing civil, economic, political, cultural and social aspects (Taylor, 2000). They are frequently perceived to be synonymous with natural rights or entitlements received at birth, and are used to provide a universal standard by which societies are monitored (Audi, 1996; Baggin, 2002). John Locke, in his 'social contract theory' wrote of the natural rights of citizens to 'life, liberty and property' (Heywood, 1992). The concept of natural rights is highly contested and many view the existence of rights as socially constructed (Baggin, 2002). Historically, the greatest movement towards a global human rights precedent was the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10th 1948 (Steadman, 1998). Consisting of thirty Articles, the Declaration outlined the standards, freedoms and rights every human should be entitled to in order to live a just and dignified life, free from prejudice, discrimination, exploitation and torture. The promotion of this landmark proclamation was to principally be through schools and other educational institutions (Steadman, 1998).

Integral to the universalisation of human rights has been the development over the last one hundred years of children-specific rights (PDHRE, 2000). Whilst discussions in chapter two highlighted the difficulties in defining children, young people and teenagers, the human rights discourse classifies those under the age of eighteen as children. Early foundations of the children's rights movement were formulated through the first Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1923 (Muscroft, 1999). Drafted by Eglantyne Jebb,

the Declaration was based upon the belief that child protection was the responsibility of the whole community, not just the family (Muscroft, 1999). Post Second World War emphasis on human rights in general helped foster debate regarding the production of children-specific rights (Muscroft, 1999). It was not, however, until 1959 that the United Nations accepted an amended draft of Eglantyne Jebb's recommendations. Regrettably, this was only to be used as a guide rather than legislation to which Governments could be held accountable (Muscroft, 1999). Children's rights, however, have often been seen to conflict with those of adults in, for example, value systems associated with 'Victorian' child-rearing (Alexander, 1995; Muscroft, 1999). These upheld the teaching of morals and responsibility, the perpetuation of which is best illustrated in the contemporary debate surrounding smacking, which raises issues not only of protection but civil rights (Lansdown, 1994).

In the late 1960s children's rights were predominantly centred upon a 'child liberation' standpoint (Hendrick, 1997). This thesis identified links between the subordination of women and the oppression of children, and outlined the need for children's rights to self-determination to be recognised (Hendrick, 1997). Notions of vulnerability and protectionism are significant to the development of child-specific rights (Euronet, 2000). Alongside the 'child liberation' discourse, the paternalistic or 'caretaker thesis' emerged, which also acknowledged the marginalisation of children (Hendrick, 1997). This approach encapsulated adult protectionist thought and perpetuated the deficit model of childhood (Taylor, 2000). The caretaker thesis is often critiqued for being more aspirational than substantive, and still maintains the assumptions surrounding the nature of the 'best interests' of the child (Hendrick, 1997; O'Brien et al, 2000).

After the 'International Year of the Child' in 1979 the children's rights movement developed greater prominence, and throughout the Cold War years Non-Governmental Organisations played a key role in conceiving the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Muscroft, 1999). The adoption of the UNCRC was seen as a mechanism to counter the vulnerable status of children and to recognise state responsibility for parental abuse (Lansdown, 1994), and has been ratified by all but two countries, the USA and Somalia. By 1990 it had become an important part of International Law (Muscroft, 1999). Throughout the 1990s, emphasis on the protection of

children's rights increased, particularly in relation to issues such as trafficking and child labour (Muscroft, 1999). Moreover, children and teenager's participation through mechanisms such as youth councils and forums became a much advocated means of involvement in decision-making (Muscroft, 1999).

The UNCRC consists of fifty-four Articles which relate to four key principles covering the right to survival and development; respect for a child's best interests; freedom of expression; and anti-discrimination measures (Muscroft, 1999). In sum, as Muscroft (1999) suggests:

“Children are seen as full human beings, rights-holders who can play an active part in the enjoyment of their rights. They are not - as they have often been presented in the past - mere dependants, the property of their parents. They are not only people who become fully human when they become adults. They are in need of protection but also have strengths. Every child is seen as important, no matter what its abilities, origin or gender. Their views and opinions are significant” (p. 16).

The implementation of the UNCRC has been both sporadic and problematic for it exists within a framework of wider political difficulties and changes. The 1990s were marked by the end of the Cold War and the dominance of global free-market capitalism (Muscroft, 1999). Such economic shifts have increased inequalities within and between nations, impacting greatly upon the lives of many children. Globally, well over half of those living in poverty are children, many millions of whom do not live to see their fifth birthday, or are forced to work in exploitative conditions or who lack access to education, sanitation or food (Muscroft, 1999). The UNCRC has been integral to raising awareness of children's needs in a multitude of environments, thereby ensuring that many children are treated with dignity, and that children's voices are placed on policy agendas (Muscroft, 1999). The period prior to and during the development of the UNCRC has witnessed both an increase in and the growth of organisations working on behalf of children's rights and countering abuse, as well as children-led movements (Muscroft, 1999).

Both Conservative and Labour Governments in the UK have constructed complicated and often contradictory responses to children's rights and the UNCRC. Positive reactions have included numerous developments such as the abolition of corporal punishment in schools and children's homes in 1986; the development of a national children's telephone helpline, Childline,

in 1986; the establishment of the Children's Rights Development Unit in 1992 (Hendrick, 1997); the 'Children & Young People's Unit' in 2000 (CYPU, 2001; Klaushofer, 2002; DfES, 2003a); the Government Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' in 2003 (DfES, 2003b); and the appointment of a Minister for Children in 2003 (BBC, 2003a). Adversely, policy decisions such as the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 have given local authorities the power to impose curfews on children under the age of ten and little has been done to outlaw corporal punishment by parents (Muscroft, 1999). These issues raise questions regarding the UK's commitment to children's rights. Furthermore, the debate surrounding the rights of children is thrown into disarray by determining what constitutes a child. The UNCRC states that children are those under the age of eighteen unless an individual nation has a younger franchise (Muscroft, 1999). Nevertheless, many children and teenagers have actively challenged notions of childhood in both positive and negative ways. The Gillick case in 1983 saw a mother lose her battle against the legal system to prohibit the medical profession from prescribing contraceptives to children under sixteen without parental consent (BBC, 2003b, Valentine, 1999). By 1984 the Gillick Judgement was established which stated that:

"... in the absence of an express statutory rule, all parental authority 'yields to the child's right to make his[sic] own decisions when he reaches a sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind on the matter requiring decision" (Keele, 2003, webpage).

Furthermore, there have been an increase in 'moral panics' relating to childhood. A prime example of this is the Bulger Case in 1993 where two boys of ten were imprisoned for the murder of toddler James Bulger.

Whilst the UNCRC has been significant in creating a children's rights dialogue amongst national Governments and organisations such as NGOs, the extent to which it has been promoted and received by adults and children is both questionable and difficult to measure. This thesis, in its explorations of citizenship, therefore aims to identify teenagers' self-awareness of their rights. Furthermore, although child-specific rights may have the potential for the empowerment of children and young people, it must be questioned whether such an approach could ultimately result in the reinforcement of the adult-child dichotomy, constructing children as vulnerable and assigning childhood as a right itself (Taylor, 2000). The development of such rights, by

the adult world, may ultimately seek to maintain children as 'other', much like a denizen or occupant of a community who is only admitted certain rights.

3.2.3 Defining Citizenship

Citizenship has come to the fore in contemporary society (Cockburn, 1998; Crace, 2000), and has been decoupled from its traditional links with property ownership to encompass political, civil and social aspects (Roche, 1999). Marshall's (1950), eminent work subdivided citizenship into: civil citizenship or freedom of speech and thought; political citizenship or the right to participate; and social citizenship or the right to welfare. The three distinctions were seen by Marshall (1950) to have developed historically, commencing with the evolution of civil citizenship brought about by, for example, the Poor Laws between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Subsequently, the nineteenth-century extension of the franchise bore political citizenship (Isin & Wood, 1999). Social citizenship was not seen to have arisen until the emergence of, for example, twentieth-century trade unionism (Isin & Wood, 1999). Furthermore, Isin and Wood (1999) provide a comprehensive review of Marshall's definition, and whilst they acknowledge the significant contribution he made to citizenship studies, they critique, from a postmodern epistemological standpoint, his definition for its emphasis upon rights and not struggles. Specifically within the context of this research, it is important to note that during the 'evolution of citizenship' public schooling became compulsory in order to create an educated workforce to sustain capitalism, and to foster future 'responsible citizens' (Isin & Wood, 1999).

Whilst citizenship was subdivided by Marshall into three distinct evolutions, Lister (1997a) views the concept from a more feminist gaze. She regards inclusion and exclusion as the two constituent elements of citizenship. Lister (1997a) suggests that the inclusivity of citizenship is most commonly associated with traditional literature, whilst many contemporary writers have begun to explore the exclusion from, and exclusion within, citizenship. The particular exploration of the exclusivity of citizenship is of utmost relevance to this research. In a call for an international approach to feminist citizenship theory and practice, Lister (1997a) suggests the inclusion/exclusion differential should be viewed as a continuum rather than a dichotomy, as different groups and individuals within society have access to differing levels of meaningful participation. Furthermore, Lister (1997a) notes that

contemporary understandings of citizenship have progressed from consideration of inclusion and exclusion bounded by the state towards a more holistic approach to both intra-state citizenship and non-residential citizenship. A multi-layered approach to citizenship therefore emerges, encompassing the multiple identities and allegiances individual actors have within society. This echoes the aforementioned discussion by Held & McGrew (2000) concerning cosmopolitan democracy. In an era of emphasis on globalisation, the importance of the UNCRC to children's rights and perhaps to, children and teenagers' citizenship becomes apparent. As Lister (1997a) acknowledges, a global citizenship requires the global institutions to allow it to function. This thesis, therefore, moves away from more conventional political theories of citizenship associated with, for example, Marshall to more social and cultural understandings decoupled from the nation-state.

Brown (1997) furthers Lister's (1997a) analysis by examining new functions of citizenship for progressive politics. Brown (1997) principally examines the shift toward new spaces of citizenship with particular reference to the city. More fundamentally, Brown (1997) assesses contemporary definitions of citizenship, deconstructing conventional understandings into discourses associated with liberalism and communitarianism. The former, Brown (1997) surmises, encompasses the relationship between the state and the individual whereby:

"... politics are defined as actions the individual takes to get the things s/he wants from the state or other citizens, while mitigating the state's interference in this pursuit of happiness" (p.6).

In liberalism, the individual is in pursuit of her/his idea of 'the good', and sparse emphasis is placed upon community. This conflicts with communitarian ideals of citizenship which advocate participation and hold moral standings at a communal level rather than the individual (Brown, 1997). Poststructural political thought, in Brown's (1997) understanding, has made an important contribution to citizenship studies and has many implications for the re-examination of the human subject. In particular, such reconstructions have rejected and critiqued the exclusive nature of the 'liberal citizen' and the static identity inherent within it (Brown, 1997). This is of importance in the consideration of children and teenagers' citizenship, as liberal politics has denied the influence of political citizenship within the home and family. As Brown (1997) notes, whilst a poststructural theory of radical democracy takes

on board notions relating to communitarianism, it also critiques the focus on a single societal moral code. Furthermore, Brown (1997) argues that radical citizenship should be agonistic and antagonistic. Such a radical notion of citizenship, therefore, allows for differentials in conceptions of 'the good', and diverse identities and allegiances. Citizenship may, therefore, be deconstructed along differing lines. Whilst Lister (1997a) and Brown's (1997) examinations in relation to inclusivity, exclusivity and radical citizenship will be drawn upon in later chapters, Marshall's (1950) early works also have a significant bearing upon the development of citizenship education. As a prerequisite to the examination of citizenship in schools, children's citizenship will now be explored.

3.2.4 Children, Teenagers & Citizenship

Conceptually, citizenship presents the foundations for full participation in a community (Johnston et al, 2000). For children and teenagers, this is a challenging and somewhat problematic term. Ideologically, the modern conceptualisation of childhood provides a framework through which children and teenagers are excluded from the 'adult' realms of socio-political participation and citizenship. A significant feature, however, of the marginalisation of children is bound to the constitutional exclusion from full citizenship for those under eighteen years in the UK (Roche, 1999). At the European level, citizenship is synonymous with 'citizen as worker' (Euronet, 2000). Within the dominant 'Western' conceptualisation of childhood, children are confined to the private world of play (Roche, 1999) outside the sphere of full-time paid work. Children and young teenagers are, therefore, constructed out of society and denied personhood (Ennew, 1994). Concurrently, global movements such as the UNCRC go some way to provide children and teenagers with a degree of participation. Sangha (2001) suggests that the UNCRC is indeed compatible with Marshall's (1950) definition of citizenship. To reinforce this Muscroft (1999) notes one of the principal ideas of the UNCRC:

“Children are seen as active members of their local communities and national societies. They contribute their labour to a variety of work and care responsibilities inside and outside the home. They play an important part in cultural and leisure activities in and out of school. They are interested in what is going on around them, especially that which affects them directly. If encouraged they become active and involved citizens” (p.17).

Within this context, Lister's (1997a) notions of the inclusivity and exclusivity of citizenship may be more appropriate to consider. The spaces afforded to children and teenagers to participate as citizens within their local communities is a key facet of this research.

The right to citizenship has often been explored in terms of competency. Indeed, Marshall (1965) professed that children were not developed enough to be trusted. As discussed in chapter two, biological age has often been identified with action and competency (Valentine, 2000), creating a false dichotomy between adulthood and childhood. Within late-modernity, Cockburn (2000) suggests, children's autonomy and citizenship has been eroded. Focusing on the seventeenth and eighteenth-century clearance of street children, reformists removed children's level of agency by placing them in the private domain. Furthermore, in a quest to save lost childhoods, reformists encouraged migration to the countryside (Cockburn, 2000). Amidst middle class ideals of childhood arose the 'best interests' of the child discourse, whereby decisions were made on behalf of the 'incompetent child' (Gittens, 1998). Children became citizens-in-the-making through compulsory education, thus denied access to the spaces of modern citizenship (Cockburn, 2000).

More contemporary discourse has shifted focus away from age-based competency to that centred on individual abilities. Moreover, greater recognition of children and teenagers' responsibilities has the potential to enhance their status (Mayall, 2002). Whilst competency based upon age is not necessarily realistic, there are recognisable differences between the thought processes of toddlers and young teenagers. The European Union (EU), whilst recognising that children are most likely to be affected by long-term policy and need to become responsible citizens, maintains the notion of the child as dependent *vis-à-vis* legislation (Euronet, 2000). As a result, the EU provides no formal mechanism for citizenship (Euronet, 2000). Furthermore, children's 'best interests' are not central to EU law or policy and are frequently overridden by economic priorities (Euronet, 2000). Whilst the nature of the 'best interests' of children and teenagers lies precariously in contested definitions, the ad-hoc basis of this non-emphasis on children and teenagers illustrates the extent to which the implementation of children's rights is based merely on good intentions (Frones et al, 1999).

Acknowledging such issues, Cockburn (1998) calls for citizenship that respects difference and includes all children, placing them as integral members of society, rather than as apprentices. This requires a societal shift from rights-based rhetoric towards recognition, not only of children and teenager's competencies, but of the interdependence of all groups within society, particularly in relation to citizenship (Cockburn, 1998; Roche, 1999). Without such empowerment, children and teenagers are confined to exercise power through the '*symbolic politics of protest*' (Roche, 1999) and so risk labels of 'deviant youth'. Analysis of children and teenagers' citizenship must, therefore, transcend ideas relating to passive bearers of rights and move towards an understanding based upon the abilities of children and teenagers to (re)shape environments (Helve & Wallace, 2001). One such move is the discourse which recognises the role of children in consumerism and increased emphasis on the citizen as a 'responsible consumer' (Wyn & White, 1997; Valentine, 2000). This research, therefore, counters the lack of recognition of teenagers' active engagement as citizens, whilst acknowledging the exclusions many face from socio-political participation. It is to the consideration of social exclusion that this chapter now turns.

3.3 Social Exclusion

The next section of this chapter expands upon themes drawn out in chapter two relating to the social positioning of children and teenagers as 'other'. I begin by assessing the construction and representation of social exclusion, a term high on many policy agendas despite being somewhat ambiguous. I examine the way in which such a concept is used in relation to the lives of children and teenagers, and for the second element of this section I explore such a notion within the context of rural Britain. For this I specifically emphasise socio-spatial factors contributing to children and teenagers' social exclusion. I complete this section by deconstructing common representations of teenage apathy.

3.3.1 Defining Social Exclusion

Primarily associated with social relations, social exclusion has, within the last decade, partially ousted the use of terminology associated with 'poverty', to formulate a wider theoretical framework encompassing alienation from political, social and cultural involvement in society, in addition to material

deprivation (Duffy, 1995; Walker & Walker, 1997). Poverty remains, however, integral to social exclusion as both a component and a consequence (Walker, 1995). The multidimensional notion of social exclusion, although problematic in definition (Sibley, 1998), may be considered as the impediment of an individual or collective from the civil, political and social rights of citizenship (Walker & Walker, 1997). Derived from French Republican discourse, '*Les exclus*', were discriminated against and excluded from citizenship, in a country which strongly emphasised citizenship and state membership (Pierson, 2002). Such marginalised groups included people with disabilities and asylum seekers. Diametrically opposed to social solidarity, both Levitas (1998) and Williams (1998) highlight three discourses associated with social exclusion. The first, the Redistributionist Discourse (RED), focuses on the structures which lead to inequality and poverty, and advocate the redistribution of society's wealth using taxes and benefits (Levitas, 1998). The second, the Moral Underclass Discourse (MUD), centres upon the delinquency of individuals or groups by, for example, equating low income neighbourhoods with vulnerability to criminal behaviour. In this discourse emphasis is placed upon self-exclusion, creating an underclass separated from social institutions (Levitas, 1998; Byrne, 1999). Finally, the Social Integrationist Discourse (SID) emphasises the importance of paid work and access to the labour market in promoting inclusion and social cohesion. The integrationist approach views social exclusion as a product of social, cultural and economic change, and sets an agenda for inclusion back into society (Williams, 1998). It is apparent that each of Levitas' (1998) discourses of social exclusion fails to provide a suitable framework for discussing teenagers' experiences due to her focus on paid employment.

Pierson (2002) outlines some of the most significant components or processes which drive social exclusion. Implicitly related to Levitas' (1998) Redistributionist Discourse, Pierson (2002) suggests poverty and low income as the first key instigators. Those with greater incomes are more able to overcome exclusion. The second component is access to job markets and paid employment. Those with low skills bases often face particular difficulties in accessing the job market. Responding to Levitas' (1998) Social Integrationist Discourse, New Labour Government policy has developed 'New Deals' to help young people, people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed and lone parents back into work. Having a job, however, does

not necessarily equate to social inclusion (Pierson, 2002). The third factor highlighted by Pierson (2002) relates to the concept of 'network poverty'. This refers to the limitations placed on individuals or groups to access the social networks and support needed to enable participation in community life (Pierson, 2002). Such networks include those for 'getting by', for example informal childcare provision by friends and neighbours, and those for 'getting ahead', or progressing in education or employment (Pierson, 2002). This emphasis on the value of social networks is central to the notion of social capital. This thesis draws upon some of the discourses associated with social capital to highlight the importance of 'sense of belonging', trust and community engagement in countering social exclusion (see Bourdieu, 1986; Gamarnikow & Green, 2000; Putnam, 2000; Morrow, 2001; Bruegel & Weller, forthcoming). The fourth element of social exclusion that Pierson (2002) highlights is the effect of the local area or neighbourhood, thereby demonstrating the importance of place. Poverty and exclusion interact in particular locations rendering the escape from negative impacts of neighbourhood, such as poor schooling, impossible (Pierson, 2002). The social fabric and connections between people, organisations, and local commercial and civic activity all contribute to social exclusion. The final component that Pierson (2002) describes is exclusion from a wide range of services including electricity, care for the elderly, transport, and health care. Further indicators of social exclusion can include homelessness, social assistance, a lack of political participation and social contact, education and housing (Walker & Walker, 1997). Manifested in exclusionary spaces, indicators of social exclusion may be compounded into the denial of citizenship (Sibley, 1998). Whilst individual agency may be noted, it is fundamental to consider unequal power relations, and the use of the 'purification of space', against nonconformist behaviour, particularly in association with the discrimination against 'others' (Sibley, 1998).

Indicators of both poverty and social exclusion have been critiqued for their reliance upon quantitative indices which focus on material possessions in relation to quality of life (Hague et al, 1999). Further criticisms of the concept have been outlined by Judge (1995), who referred to social exclusion as a limited conceptual tool. Judge's (1995) rationale for this criticism stems from the ill-defined boundaries separating those 'within' and 'without', where 'inclusion' is equated with utopian ideals of the 'good life'. Judge (1995)

further discussion by providing an in-depth examination of the metaphor of social exclusion, questioning the assumption that all individuals desire inclusion. Moreover, Marxian discourse, for example, employs the notion of false consciousness, where individuals may be excluded without necessarily defining themselves so. Complications inherent in the notion of social exclusion are further heightened when the concept is considered as culturally defined (Lister, 1998). In these terms social exclusion is constructed in opposition to the aspects of social inclusion that are considered most important. Within 'Western society', an emphasis on the importance of employment as a prerequisite for social inclusion automatically excludes children and young teenagers. Lister (1998) builds on this argument by calling for a definition of social exclusion which moves beyond employment. The consideration of social exclusion, therefore, needs to recognise issues of illiberalism and authoritarianism in dictating the kind of life that a citizen should lead. It may, therefore, be appropriate to consider *social exclusions*, and to note that individuals may be concurrently included and excluded from/within different circumstances (Judge, 1995). Despite the difficulties in defining social exclusion, spatial inclusion has emerged at the fore of European policy (Berghman, 1995). Perceptions of exclusion at the European level have revealed an increase in public awareness of issues surrounding stigmatisation, intolerance and lack of community solidarity (Rigaux, 1994). Geographical polarisation is a fundamental problem for Britain, and whilst the current Government aims to tackle social exclusion in the pre-school years, social exclusion must also be seen at the global level (Rigaux, 1994; Inman, 1999).

The views of children and teenagers have not traditionally been high on the policy agenda (Hendrick, 1997). Policies have often been based on the perceived needs or interests of families, and not expressly the interests of children and teenagers themselves (Muscroft, 1999; Valentine, 1999). It was hoped that either the benefits of family-based policies would trickle down to children or that they would meet their future needs as adults (Muscroft, 1999). Children-centred charities have, however, focused attention on the social exclusion of children and teenagers. Research by, for example, '*Learning through Landscapes*' revealed the behavioural problems brought about by poor play facilities. Children were found to equate poor play provision to a lack of respect for their societal role and status (Russell, 2000; Cassidy, 2003).

Furthermore, the '*Include Me In!*' conference', 2000, highlighted the lack of recognition of the importance of play in social inclusion policy (Chown, 2000). Research in psychology has also demonstrated the importance of play in developing children's social awareness and participation (Chown, 2000). The effects of social exclusion on teenagers is sparsely acknowledged and much emphasis is placed upon future implications principally during adulthood.

Despite recognition of both the exclusion of children and teenagers from academic discourse, and the exclusive nature of the modern conceptualisation of childhood, little work to date directly focuses on the social exclusion of children and teenagers (Ridge, 2002). One study, by Bentley et al (1999), provides a comprehensive review of consultation work relating to young people's views on Government policy and practice. Principally drawing attention to the contradictions inherent in the paradox that policy makers are recognising youth poverty and exclusion but consistently neglecting their voices, Bentley et al (1999) focus on the lives and experiences of one hundred and fifty young people in an attempt to draw upon, and learn from, their expertise. 'Youth' was found to be significant to the identity of the young people but also indicative of exclusion itself. Fundamentally, the importance of acknowledging the diversity of the lives of young people was particularly highlighted in relation to issues surrounding 'the youth problem', discussed in chapter two. This is reinforced by Harvey's (1999) examination of the implications of social exclusion on youth work. Excluded young people are seen as failures to the system rather than victims of it. The dependency of childhood is perpetuated by both exclusion from the benefits system and the assumption that those aged sixteen to twenty-one are able to depend upon their families. As Harvey (1999) suggests, marginalisation during youth not only creates problems in the present but has manifold implications for social exclusion in adulthood. Many of the young people in Bentley et al's (1999) consultation felt alienated from mainstream politics and experienced discrimination due to their position outside of adult society (Bentley et al, 1999). Somewhat paradoxically, the step to adulthood was not necessarily seen as empowering. Bentley et al (1999) surmise that this notion stems from a restriction of the perceived freedoms of childhood. Therefore, whilst adulthood can allow social inclusion through admission to some institutions, the 'progression' to adulthood curtails entry to the institution of childhood, and so childlike notions of irresponsibility and dependency are left behind. Bentley

et al (1999) conclude by recognising the importance of education, particularly relating to citizenship in preparing young people for the 'adult world'. What Bentley et al (1999) perhaps fail to acknowledge is the need to consider issues relating to children and teenagers *now*, and to find ways to target those who are falling outside of institutions such as education and who are perhaps experiencing extreme social exclusion. This thesis focuses explicitly on the experiences of teenagers living within a region of rural Britain. It is to the consideration of the neglect of teenagers in rural areas that this chapter now turns.

3.3.2 Neglected Rural 'Others'

In an examination of *'Landscape and Citizenship 1918-39'*, Matless (1995) examines the role of rurality in forging a specifically English idea of citizenship relating to issues of conservation, and also moral, spiritual and physical health. Furthermore, specifically in relation to children and teenagers, the emergence of the Scout and Guide movement and youth hosteling brought about specific ideas relating to citizenship. For the Guide and Scout movement, citizenship came about through outdoor education. Matless (1995) particularly highlights the 'Gilcraft' scouting magazine, 1930, which outlines the progression of a boy to citizenship through *'interest in the countryside'*, *'highways'*, *'man [sic] and his work'*, and *'things of the past'*. Such images of 'rurality' and 'childhood' are, therefore, very much bound to conceptualisations of children and teenagers' development and citizenship. For many teenagers in rural Britain, social exclusion remains an issue predominantly associated with the urban. As Cameron (2000) reinforces:

"Ask most people about social exclusion and they will not think of green fields, beautiful countryside and pretty villages" (p. 7).

Davis & Ridge (1997) explore the experiences of children living on a low income, focusing particularly on opportunities for play, school activities, friendships, transport, social spaces and relationships with adults. Davis & Ridge (1997) found that, whilst similarities existed between the encounters of children living in both urban and rural areas, those living in the latter faced a distinct set of circumstances imposed upon them. Some children benefited from many aspects of rural life, whilst others suffered from a lack of transport, and more general service facilities (Davis & Ridge, 1997; Halliday, 1997; Watkins, 1998). This was particularly significant for both older children and

those living in low income households. The findings from Davis & Ridge's (1997) study are of relevance to this research, which, as chapter four details, focuses upon the experiences of teenagers living in a relatively poor area of South East England.

James (1990) surmises that the idea of children and teenagers roaming freely in the countryside actually has little evidence to support it. Much rural space has been fenced off as private space by landowners. Many children and teenagers suffer from a lack of social space or encounter conflicts of interest with adults over the function and use of many arenas (Davis & Ridge, 1997). Small communities create environments for the surveillance of teenagers in public spaces. Furthermore, a lack of public transport ensures that there is little chance for finding social spaces outside their communities. As a result, few find space for anonymity. Children and teenagers' actions are subject to disapproval by the local panopticon and many children feel powerless to incite change (Davis & Ridge, 1997). This is highlighted by JRF's (2000a) study, which examined the social exclusion of young people principally in relation to employment. Moreover, Bentley et al's (1999) work on young people's views on politics, social exclusion and Government policy highlighted disenfranchised young people, with their concerns perpetuated by rural isolation. Recent findings by the Countryside Agency (2001) also highlight the need for policies which recognise the distinct spatial manifestation of social exclusion in rural Britain. This is often hidden by dispersed geographies of isolation and perpetually shrouded by the myth of the rural idyll (Countryside Agency, 2000b).

Many teenagers do not want to utilise traditional rural spaces such as woods and ditches, but instead use marginalised spaces, outside phone boxes and bus shelters (Matthews et al, 2000). Many children and teenagers carve out their own social spaces in their communities, as Jones (2000) illustrates:

“Children have a remarkable capacity for responding to shifting, unexpected, often fleeting opportunities for expression. This means that adult structuring of children's play opportunities should not over-prescribe or anticipate what children may do” (p. 42).

Concurrently, many children and teenagers are using technological innovations to communicate with the wider world and overcome the isolation of living in rural areas (Valentine & Holloway, 2001). Through email and chat

rooms, young people shape ideas about their environments. The kind of time-space convergence that the internet has brought about is often seen to bring places closer together. This, therefore, has the potential to reduce isolation. Valentine & Holloway (2001) draw upon the idea of 'extensibility' to illustrate how isolation in physical spaces can be overcome through technology. Many children use the internet to communicate both with local friends and peers further afield as a form of negotiating social relations and managing their lives (Valentine & Holloway, 2001). Such adaptations and strategies have some degree of influence and creativity over the spatial pressures with which children and teenagers are faced in many rural areas. Many such issues, however, may also be prevalent in urban areas. For participants in this research, carving out spaces and making decisions over rural environments must be considered within the popular discourse of teenage apathy.

3.3.3 Teenage Apathy

In 2002 the Children's and Young People's Unit (CYPU) conducted research exploring '*Young People and Politics*' with sixty participants, aged fourteen to nineteen (CYPU, 2002). The essential aim of the project was to elucidate political apathy, or indifference, amongst young people, particularly in electoral politics. Evidence for such disengagement was drawn from low voter turnout figures amongst those aged eighteen to twenty-four in the last General Election in 2001 (CYPU, 2002). Indeed, not only were the youngest quartile of the franchise least likely to vote, but turnout has been in sharp decline in the UK amongst this group over the past 100 years, not unlike in other parts of Europe (Jowell & Park, 1998; CYPU, 2002). It is questionable, however, whether low voter turnout is necessarily synonymous with political disaffection. Two foundations for teenage apathy are outlined by CYPU (2002). The first suggests that the level of political engagement is dependent on an individual's stage in the life cycle. In this scenario, voters are less likely to be apathetic when they have a stake in society as, for example, taxpayers (CYPU, 2002). Such a proposal verifies the idea that disengagement relates to a lack of place or stake in society. The second foundation for teenage apathy relates to the idea that the current generation of young people are different from past generations, in some way inherently more apathetic than their predecessors, and that such apathy would not change with age (CYPU, 2002). Indeed, it is apparent that generations experience different economic, political and social changes within their societies, and it is perhaps because of such global,

national and even local transformations that what is meant by 'political' needs to be challenged. Furthermore, whilst Putnam (2000) upholds the notion of generational difference in civic engagement, his analysis suggests that, within the US, the current generation of young people are perhaps more involved than their parents. Arguably, many young people now engage in areas such as the politics of consumerism (Stuart, 2000; Valentine, 2000). Whilst CYPUP (2002) acknowledge that many young people engage in alternative forms of political activity, these are referred to as 'non-traditional' and include petitioning, campaigning and protest, often at the local level. Historically, those who are marginalised within society find that such actions are their only successful means of participation. Local action is often a response to the manifestations of national policies within individual communities (CYPUP, 2002). This thesis, therefore, aims to highlight the value and importance of different forms of political engagement open to teenagers not old enough to vote.

Furthermore, the CYPUP (2002) wished to explore the extent to which political and media bodies meaningfully engage and communicate with young people, and whether young people are provided with sufficient information to make informed choices. Politicians were frequently perceived as white, wealthy, patronising, older males (CYPUP, 2002). Furthermore, there was a general lack of understanding regarding the function and workings of political institutions (CYPUP, 2002). Many young people felt that not only did politicians solely engage with people who were old enough to vote, but that political rhetoric, especially broadcast through the media, only focused upon the negative aspects of youth and the actions of a minority, including issues such as drug abuse (CYPUP, 2002). As a result of the consultation, a '*young person's agenda for democracy*' was formulated, which outlined the need for politicians to take on board, without assumptions or prejudices, the opinions of those not yet old enough to vote; to communicate using accessible language; and to respect that young people are not an homogenous group (CYPUP, 2002). Recommendations for the Government included providing information, particularly through citizenship education, and increasing the franchise by lowering the age of voting (CYPUP, 2002). The consultation also highlighted areas in which the ever influential media could contribute to political engagement using, for example, television programmes, such as soap operas, to raise important issues. Whilst this section has outlined the

problems in defining social exclusion, the neglect of children and teenagers' experiences of social exclusion remains apparent. Little research to date has explored such issues specifically within a rural context. This thesis, therefore, aims to contribute to new understandings of teenagers' experiences of social exclusion. Prior to achieving this outcome, it is vital that the antithesis of social exclusion is explored.

3.4 Social Inclusion

The final section of this chapter focuses upon social inclusion through a global, national and local approach. I begin by charting the expansion of children's participation aided by key developments such as the UNCRC. Essentially, I will critically examine the extent to which the expansion of participatory mechanisms has contributed to the social inclusion of teenagers. I then move on to look specifically at the introduction in 2002 of compulsory citizenship education for secondary school students in England, outlining the underlying motives and rationale for the curriculum. The extent to which citizenship education will foster social inclusion and encourage participation is an essential element of my research. I close this chapter by highlighting the active citizenship carried out by many children and teenagers, arguing that these actions, often unconventional and frequently disregarded, are fundamentally important in reshaping rural communities.

3.4.1 The Expansion of Children & Teenagers' Participation

Article 12 of the UNCRC stresses the fundamental need for children's opinions to be considered:

"Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (United Nations, 1990).

Despite the ethos of the UNCRC, there was initial reluctance by many professionals to acknowledge the value of consulting those too young to vote (Muscroft, 1999). Nevertheless, many countries have created proactive, coordinated methods of participation for children and teenagers. 'Association Nationale des Conseils d'Enfants et de Jeunes' in France, for example, aims to develop participation at an early age through town councils (Jodry, 1997).

More broadly, current debates include the introduction of a European Union Youth Policy (CYPU, 2002). In the UK, the Children and Young People's Unit has a Youth Advisory Forum (CYPU, 2002). Government policies such as 'Sure Start' and 'Connexions' have begun to acknowledge that social exclusion affects children and teenagers (see Inman, 1999; The Literacy Trust, 2001; Connexions, 2002; SEU, 2002; Sure Start, 2002; Countryside Agency, 2003c), although 'Sure Start' also explicitly supports the parents of young children. Furthermore, numerous youth councils, forums and parliaments have also emerged in order to allow children and teenagers to participate in some contexts (Matthews & Limb, 1998; Wainwright, 2001). Horelli (1998) illustrates children's participation in planning 'child-friendly' environments, drawing on examples from Finland, Switzerland and France, and he concludes by calling for a redefinition of agency in the context of increased children's participation. Alanen (1997) upholds that children should be viewed as:

"... agents of their own lives in a new paradigm of socialisation"
(p.251).

Arguably, this 'paradigm' has led to a distinct set of political institutions outside of the adult realm and arguably superficial. Children are merely afforded the status of 'taking part' (Hart, 1992; Hart, 1997; Wellard et al, 1997), as full participation is frequently regarded as a threat to adult autonomy. Ideological barriers exist in relation to how 'childhood' and 'youth' are characterised as incompetent and irresponsible (Lansdown, 1995). Participation, therefore, remains constructed as an 'adult' activity, carried out in 'adult' institutions, and perhaps, more fundamentally, seldom results in any real action (Oakley, 1994). Teenagers' participation, however, remains regarded as beneficial to children, teenagers, parents and wider society, allowing expression, mutual respect, conflict resolution and the improvement of democratic procedures (Miller, 1996).

3.4.2 Citizenship Education

"I believe that citizenship, like anything else, has to be learned. Young people do not become good citizens by accident more than they become good nurses or good engineers or good bus drivers or computer scientists. My concern [is] whether we offer enough encouragement to our young people to learn how to be good citizens"
(Commission on Citizenship, 1990).

From September 2002, citizenship education became compulsory for children and teenagers in secondary education in England (Lawton et al, 2000; Woodward, 2002). This new wave of teaching democracy is seen as a distinct shift from the civics education of the 1960s and 1970s to that based upon discussion and participation (Kingston, 2002; Wolchover, 2002). The underlying rationale of citizenship education seeks to reduce voter apathy, counter alienation, and provide a unifying element to the Government's policy on social exclusion (Bright & Dodd, 1998; Crick, 2000). It is fundamental to note the influence of Marshallian notions of citizenship on the structures and teachings of contemporary citizenship education (Wragg, 2002). Whilst Marshallian citizenship excludes children and young teenagers from civic and political citizenship, children, Marshall (1965) believed, are encompassed into the social element of citizenship through rights to education and social services (Cockburn, 1998). This, however, denies children's role economically and socially (Jones & Wallace, 1992; Cockburn, 1998).

Historically, citizenship education has had a number of different foci. Duffy (1996), for example, details the philosophy of Lord Leverhulme, an industrialist, who insisted on compulsory citizenship lessons for his workers as an integral part of moral education. In the post-Victorian period English civics and citizenship education was developed (Edwards & Fogelman, 1991). During the 1930s and 1940s such education was widely upheld, and focused primarily on world citizenship in the 1940s. By the 1950s and 1960s, citizenship education had become relegated and was seen as a topic for the less-able pupil (Edwards & Fogelman, 1991).

During the late-1980s, research on the feasibility of a proposed policy relating to voluntary community service was undertaken in order to engage teenagers with the then less familiar term, 'citizenship' (Richardson, 1990). Whilst in the feasibility study participants' opinions relating to what it means to be a citizen were diverse, there was much consensus on the need for citizenship education in schools, especially in the final two years of compulsory education (Richardson, 1990). Van Gunsteren (1998) upholds a developmental model of childhood, suggesting the age at which citizenship education is introduced is crucial in order to allow children time to have a childhood. Van Gunsteren's (1998) Neo-Republican stance argues that for a meaningful voice citizens must have an ordered system in which their voices

may be listened to. I would argue that children and teenagers need to be afforded the space to participate as citizens within their schools at all ages. This idea is explored further in chapter six. Furthermore, many of the young people in Bentley et al's (1999) consultation felt alienated from mainstream politics and experienced discrimination due to their position outside adult society, highlighting the importance of education, particularly relating to citizenship in preparing young people for the 'adult world' (Bentley et al, 1999). These studies demonstrate some of the motivations for introducing citizenship to the curriculum. Citizenship education has not, however, been introduced without controversy. Brighouse (1998), for example, provides an extensive examination of civic education and liberal legitimacy suggesting that such education must involve critical analysis in order to uphold citizen autonomy.

Wider changes in education policy have also been influential in shaping citizenship education. The British education system has undergone dramatic changes since the 1944 Education Act, which universalised secondary schooling by placing individual children into either grammar, technical or secondary modern schools based upon aptitude. In 1968 comprehensive schools were introduced. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s education entered a period of 'controlled progressivism' drawing upon developmental psychology to foster what was seen as a more children-centred approach (Daniel & Ivatts, 1998). The New Right introduced the concept of 'the market' into education and parental choice was central. Up until the Education Act of 1988, which sought to standardise learning through the National Curriculum, local authorities had the central role in, for example, developing comprehensive schooling. Since 1997, however, the role of central Government has significantly increased in, for example, determining how children spend their time on numeracy, literacy and homework (Hill, 2000). This, alongside the concept of citizenship itself, emphasises power struggles between and within this local-central Government partnership, in addition to education committees and governing bodies (Hill, 2000). Furthermore, individual head teachers have a degree of power over school operations, which in some cases is shared with teaching staff (Hill, 2000). The extent to which teachers are able to participate in decision-making has obvious implications for teenagers' opportunities to contribute. The underlying philosophy of the education system coupled with the ethos of individual

schools directly impacts upon the approach and methods used in teaching citizenship, and more fundamentally the way in which teenagers experience ideas of the modern conceptualisation of childhood.

In the final report of the *'Advisory Group on Citizenship'* the fundamental aim of citizenship education was highlighted as 'active citizenship', and much focus was placed upon the importance of community involvement in strengthening the outcomes of such education (QCA, 1998; Chisholm, 2001). Under the auspices of Personal, Social and Health Education, citizenship education encompasses three elements: social and moral responsibility, community involvement, and political literacy (Crick, 2000). The Citizenship Foundation (2000) outlines that, in practice, citizenship education can be approached from two levels. The first involves education relating to issues in fairness, democracy and identity, in addition to debates concerning moral dilemmas, whilst a broader approach to issues, such as sustainable development, globalisation, poverty and human rights, is given to the second focus concerning global citizenship (The Citizenship Foundation, 2000). Lessons in citizenship are unique in that schools will have some flexibility over subject matter and time-tabling (Kerr et al, 2003). The multiplicity of definitions of citizenship are open to interpretation by individual schools (Morrell, 1991) and, thus, children's learning experiences could vary widely. Young people involved in the CYPU (2002) consultation were concerned that the benefits of citizenship education would not be consistent in different schools, and that lessons should reflect practical applications within a broad political framework. Despite this 'informal' approach, citizenship education is predominantly founded upon the notion of active involvement (CYPU, 2002). In order to promote further citizenship education, investigations have been made into introducing curricula into further education for those aged sixteen to nineteen (DfEE, 2000; CYPU, 2002).

Duffy (1996) provides a critique of citizenship education's focus on creating 'good citizens' by questioning the ambiguities inherent in what it is to be a 'good citizen', and what one must do and accept to be a 'good citizen'. The Commission on Citizenship's (1990) consultative research with young adults revealed that, for many, citizenship encompassed feelings of belonging resulting from either national identity or conforming to laws and entitlement to rights. Such complexities relating to citizenship are by no means

contemporary. Duffy (1996), for example, places particular emphasis on Aristotelian notions surrounding lack of agreement on definitions of citizenship. This, Duffy (1996) suggests, is particularly prominent in Britain today during a period of globalisation and devolution. Moreover, Duffy (1996) critically analyses elements constituting citizenship education, suggesting that the current focus on duties contradicts Marshallian notions of rights and citizenship. Fundamentally, Duffy (1996) warns that citizenship education cannot compensate for more structural inequalities, and that for such education to be 'affective' the world outside of educational institutions needs to provide spaces for children's (and teenager's) citizenship. Hart (1992), however, argues that education on democracy is fundamental, but suggests that participation cannot be taught as an abstraction but only through praxis, critiquing the former practice for being autocratic (Alderson, 2000b). Whilst I am concerned in this thesis with bringing new knowledges about citizenship education to the fore, I also wish to shed new light on the ways in which teenagers are already actively engaged as citizens.

3.4.3 Carving Out Spaces of Citizenship

March 2003 witnessed what I believe to be the beginning of a new social movement. Globally, several million people took to the streets in protest against military action in Iraq. What was both unique and significant about several of these campaigns was that they were organised and implemented by, and for, children and teenagers of compulsory school age. Abandoning their classrooms, but often not their school uniforms, children and teenagers from many cultural backgrounds joined in solidarity with their counterparts across the world (figure 3.1), challenging the notion of teenage apathy (Bedell, 2003). These teenage-led anti-war groups mobilised their cause by text message and email (Morris, 2003). Campaigners gathered in diverse places from rural Cornwall to Parliament Square in London, often disregarding the conventional rules of protest by sitting in the streets, symbolically chanting '*this is what democracy looks like*' (Walker, 2003). The events were hugely controversial, with educational authorities and schools, siding with their duty of care to parents, threatening participants with punishments associated with truancy. As childhood is principally upheld as a time of education and development (Holloway & Valentine, 2000a), it is perhaps not surprising that many felt school was the more appropriate place for children and teenagers to learn politics. Such reactions, however, appear paradoxical six months after

the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in England, which is founded around the notion of *active* citizenship. Phipps (2003) suggests that these protests signal the emergence of a '*new kind of political protester*', whose voice has, for so long, been neglected particularly beyond the realms of the classroom. Not unlike their contemporary counterparts, pupils in 1911 took part in solidarity strikes at a time of industrial difficulty (Phipps, 2003). The nature of these causes not only reinforces Roche's (1999) aforementioned '*symbolic politics of protest*', but suggests a willing and viable involvement in affairs commonly deemed part of the adult world (Phipps, 2003).

This research ultimately draws upon the ways in which citizenship education may encourage teenagers to engage in their rural communities. In order to consider this in terms of social inclusion, it is important to note that the form this inclusion takes may not always be conventional. Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad outlines the conflicts between how spaces are represented. Lefebvre described two of these differences as 'representations of space' as seen by, for example, the academy and 'representational space' as lived and felt by participants (Merrifield, 2000). One such manner relates to teenagers' identities and their subsequent actions as citizens. Haydon (2002) describes the subdivisions or tribes formed by groups of young people. Belonging to such a group has a significant impact not only on image, but also on much deeper identities such as attitude to life (Haydon, 2002). Groups or gangs are predominantly seen as an urban phenomenon, thus neglecting teenagers' identities in rural areas. 'Grungers', 'Townies', 'Goths' and 'Sk8er's', to name but a few, are geographically eclectic and form around a multitude of activities and identities in different locales. This research aims to acknowledge the importance of belonging or being excluded from these groupings, particularly in relation to their influence on acts of citizenship or exclusion.

3.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I have synthesised the notions of democracy, citizenship and social exclusion in order to provide a context for the consideration of teenager's socio-spatial experiences of exclusion and citizenship within rural environments. What is most apparent is that whilst attention has begun to focus on fostering children and teenagers' participation, this is often within the context of specifically children-centred processes, such as youth forums.

Although such attention is fundamentally important, debate must be (re)centred upon broader issues of exclusion from citizenship and belonging in order to acknowledge the frustrations felt by teenagers at their lack of participatory opportunities, and also conversely the actions that teenagers take to reshape their communities. I believe the consideration of these issues is no more timely than at the launch of compulsory citizenship education in England. Furthermore, it is important to note that this thesis draws upon more cultural and social understandings of citizenship whilst retaining the importance of conventional political theories in shaping citizenship education. I, therefore, carry forward these areas for discussion to create new knowledges regarding teenagers' lived experiences in rural areas, embracing their more radical understandings and practices of citizenship.



Figure 3.1 Anti-War Protests by Children and Teenagers (Morris, 2003: 9)

4

Researching Teenage Geographies: Adopting a Multi-Method Approach

4.1 Introduction

It is undeniable that my experiences of 'growing-up' in my research locale have both inspired and shaped this thesis. This is not to say that my own subsequent experiences living in a world-city have not distorted and reconstructed both my imaginings and memories of rural life for teenagers (see Philo, 2003). It has, at times, been challenging to grasp that it was a decade ago that I was the same age as participants in this research, and that life within the case study area and school has undergone many transformations. I, therefore, constantly found myself torn between feeling an insider, in terms of my past experiences, and an outsider because of my subsequent life. Concurrently, my complex positionality was thrown further into turmoil when attempting to label my epistemological positionality. As a researcher I have drawn upon a myriad of conceptualisations and knowledges, specifically postmodernism and feminism, as well as my left-wing political stance. This is not to say that my ontological perspective at any time comprised of conflicting standpoints, but rather I drew upon an eclectic mix of complementary ontological elements (see Mason, 1996). Moreover, it has been my concern that teenagers are meaningfully placed at the heart of the research process and its subsequent outcomes.

This chapter begins by detailing the theoretical and epistemological background for this research in order to situate new knowledges created in this thesis within a broader social and conceptual context. Two key discourses; the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' and '*New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship*' will be highlighted as the most significant influences on this research. I then outline the rationale for adopting a case study approach, the criteria utilised in generating the research locale, as well as the descriptive context for the chosen rural area. The final element of this

chapter explores in-depth the multi-method approach adopted, highlighting my experiences of each method of 'data' collection, analysis and dissemination.

4.2 Conceptual & Epistemological Background

Whilst this research has drawn upon and been influenced by an eclectic group of disciplines and conceptual backgrounds, two key understandings have remained prominent. The first is the 'New Social Studies of Childhood', and more specifically the emergence of children's geographies. The second grounding for this thesis is 'New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship'. The influences of both discourses will be fully explored in the next section of this chapter. It is also important to note the influence of 'advocacy geography' on this project. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, advocacy geographers attempted to redefine academic conventions by providing participants with the opportunity to set research agendas (Philo, 1997a). Advocacy is also influential in more contemporary work by children's geographers. Matthews et al (2000), for example, call researchers to become the link between children and policy-makers. I strongly uphold the principles of advocacy geographers and value the need to produce socially-relevant research.

4.2.1 The 'New Social Studies of Childhood' & Teenage Geographies

It is important to begin by noting that, whilst this section examines the influence of the 'New Social Studies of Childhood' and children's geographies, these conceptualisations, by definition, sit rather uncomfortably within my research in terms of the definition of participants. Participants, on the whole, wished to be referred to as teenagers rather than children or young people. At the same time such a group of participants is constructed within the societal framework of childhood by, for example, the UNCRC. I believe that this imposition of identity has, to some extent, been further prescribed by 'children's geographies'. This research, whilst drawing upon the eminent work of contemporary research with children, argues for inquiry which acknowledges participants' self-definition. This thesis, on the wishes of participants, develops a discourse of teenage geographies.

As Holloway & Valentine (2000a) recognise, critical mass in geographical

research with children and young people has been reached over the last decade. Such knowledges have ultimately been influenced by, and have contributed to the *'New Social Studies of Childhood'*. As outlined in chapter two, the *'New Social Studies of Childhood'* presented a new and propitious notion of children as competent social actors (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; Holloway & Valentine, 2000b). Accompanying this ideological shift in the way in which children and teenagers are represented in research is the move towards developing methods which reflect and value the competency of children and teenagers. Parallels may be drawn, for example, between children or teenage-centred methodologies, and one of the key principles of the UNCRC. Article 13 states:

"The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice" (United Nations, 1990).

Both the UNCRC and many children's geographers have held central the need to deconstruct perceptions and stereotypes upheld in popular discourse by the modern conceptualisation of childhood, and to make children and teenagers more 'visible', particularly in relation to policy. As Muscroft (1999) suggests, there has been a move away from family-oriented policy, to that which considers children (and teenagers) in their own right. Furthermore, the children's rights movement has encouraged participation in decision-making. The extent to which this has been meaningfully achieved varies tremendously between projects and organisations. Levels of children and teenagers' participation may be likened to rungs on a ladder (Hart, 1992; Alderson, 2000a). On the lower rungs are tokenistic references to shared work. Around the middle levels of the ladder children participate by sharing decisions with adults, whilst at the summit research projects are directed by children and teenagers themselves.

4.2.2 Teenage-Centred Research

One of the most significant practical applications of the *'New Social Studies of Childhood'* was the shift, in the mid-1990s, from adult to children-centred research (Valentine, 1999; Christensen & James, 2000; JRF, 2000c). This research practice recognises the diverse ways in which children and young people communicate (Thomas & O'Kane, 1999; Barker & Weller, 2003a;

2003b). Such methods expand upon written and oral methods, to incorporate children's diverse skills through, for example, drawing, photography, stories or song (Alderson, 1995). It is beneficial to reflect upon the impact that involving women in research had upon understanding gender issues, in order to realise fully the importance of interpreting the lifeworlds of teenagers through 'employing' young people as researchers (Alderson, 2000c; Jones, 2003). At the same time, it is fundamental to recognise the unique position teenagers hold within the research process, as well as in wider society. Children-centred or, in the case of this thesis, teenage-centred research aims to redress the imbalance in researcher-researched power relations by including and encouraging teenagers to be active researchers. Advocates of such research methods aim to challenge the notion of the participant as a research object, and, as Young & Barrett (2001) call for, seek to ensure greater active participation. Whilst the methodological issues inherent in teenage-centred research reflect many of those apparent in the wider social sciences, the unique position that children and teenagers hold within society creates further issues for consideration (Mauthner, 1997). I have, therefore, sought influence from the field of participatory research (see, for example, Park, 1999; Taylor, 1999; Krimerman, 2001) which, until recently, was principally carried out with adults in low literacy rate countries as an alternative form of communication (O'Kane, 2000). Contemporary research with children and teenagers develops upon the ideals of such participatory research, where researchers and participants are active data collectors or, as Alderson (2000c) terms, '*co-producers of data*'. Examples of other contemporary research in children's geographies have shown this tends to encompass the use of diaries, photographs, drawings, interviews and discussions, and is fundamental to the ethos of both researcher positionality and the nature of the project itself. As Barker & Weller (2003b) note:

"Whilst striving for the 'idealism' of children-centred research, researchers must be 'realists' in their reflexive evaluation of children-centred methods in practice" (p. 37).

Moreover, children or teenage-centred research is based upon more than innovation in technique. As Pretty et al (1995) state:

"... participation does not simply imply the mechanical application of a 'technique' or method, but is instead part of a process of dialogue, action, analysis and change" (p. 54).

The effectiveness of children or teenage-centred methods relies as much

upon the researcher as a successful facilitator, as upon the actual techniques implemented (O’Kane, 2000). Researchers need actively to engage with participants in order to attempt to redress power imbalances, and to build rapport, trust, confidence and respect (Scott, 2000). As part of the ongoing process of inclusion in research decision-making, researchers must reflect upon their own positionality in order to ensure that research tasks are meaningfully participant-centred, rather than a tokenistic view of what the researcher perceives ought to be an appropriate method.

O’Kane (2000) suggests that participatory methods are more transparent and less invasive than conventional ethnographies, allowing participants to take an active role within the research process. Such techniques disregard age as synonymous with children or teenagers’ abilities and instead aim to be inclusive of all participants (Solberg, 1996). Such methods thus reject developmental models of childhood or adolescence fostered by, for example, Freud and Piaget (Holland, 2001). Furthermore, providing teenagers with the means to control the research situation has the potential to increase the confidence of participants and goes some way to rectify unequal power relations (Sapkota & Sharma, 1996). Participation of this nature simultaneously constructs teenagers as both ‘insiders’ in the lifeworlds of teenagers as a social group and ‘outsiders’ as researchers. Just as researchers adopt a reflexive approach to the research process, so teenagers as ‘*co-producers of data*’ need to contemplate the implications of their own positionalities (Warren, 2000). It is questionable whether such participants need to be trained in data collection techniques (Warren, 2000).

In order meaningfully to include teenagers in the research process I developed two practices of negotiation, based upon reciprocal dialogue. In the first practice, two research consultants, Holly (aged 13) and Calum (aged 16), advised me on the structure, layout, content, wording of information sheets and the implementation of each method, in addition to offering general research ideas and approaches (figure 4.1). Holly and Calum’s input was particularly significant in the construction of appropriate and accessible language, upon which many teenagers place great importance (Oakley, 2000; Scott, 2000). Such a contribution provided me with invaluable information and pre-pilot consultation and, whilst Holly and Calum are my stepchildren, I felt that they gave honest, critical responses to my inquiries. Furthermore, I was

often able to reciprocate the help they had given me by responding to requests for advice on school-related issues, thus developing an exchange of expertise.

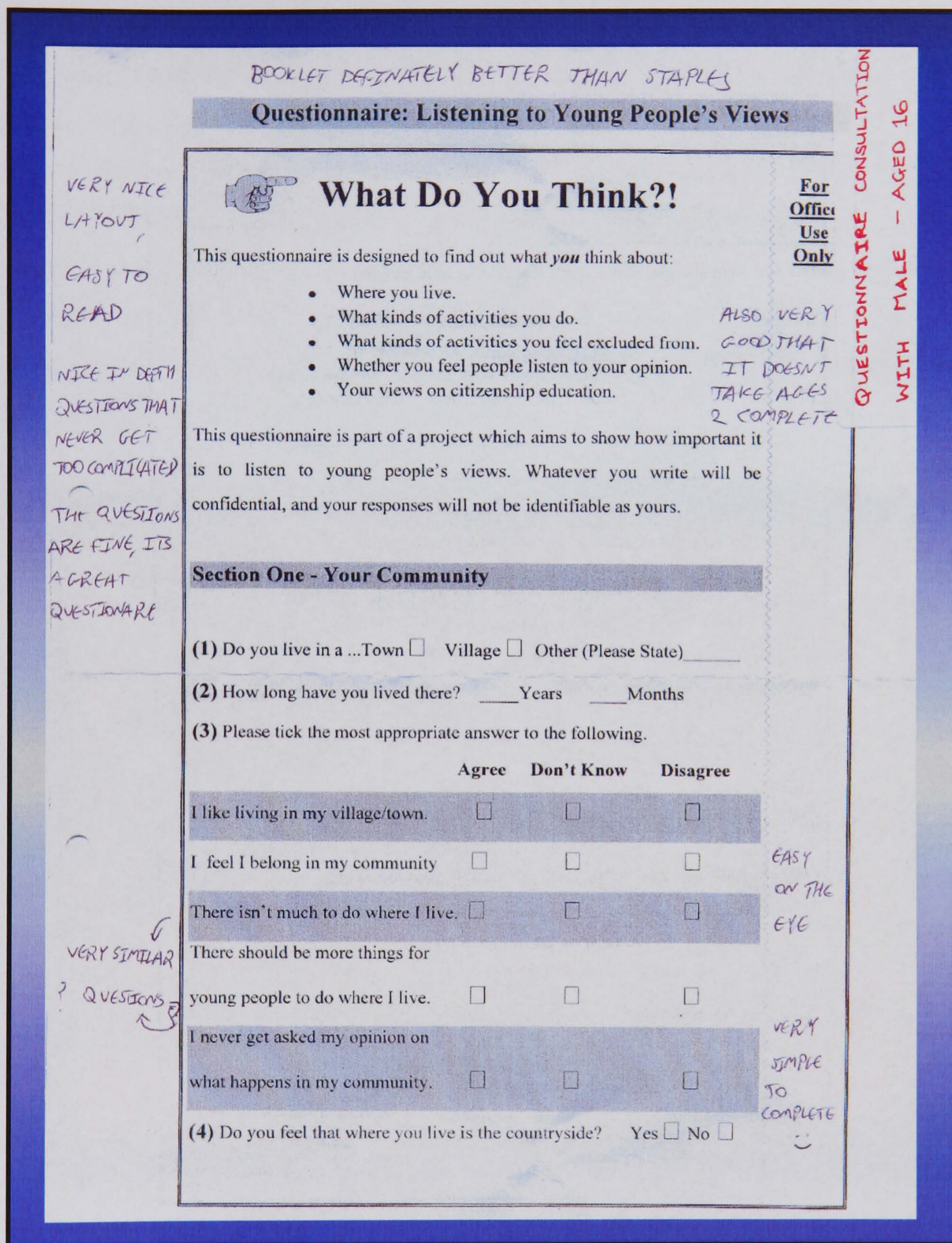


Figure 4.1 Practices of Negotiation

During the second set of negotiations I worked directly with participants in the case study area, through pre-pilot trials of each technique. For example, respondents were asked to complete a short feedback sheet to comment on the design of the questionnaire, and to devise the most appropriate methods for illustrating their experiences. This second consultation approach

encompassed a larger and more diverse group of respondents, enabling me to evaluate each technique more thoroughly. Whilst this two-stranded consultation approach did not satisfy the idealistic notion of providing participants with the opportunity to define the research agenda, it did make important steps towards a more realistic compromise (Barker & Weller, 2003b). Moreover, the extent to which researchers are able to gain funding for research, the agenda of which will be defined by participants, is severely limited. Unlike piloting a method and receiving feedback, I believe that this approach allowed teenagers, both advisors and participants, actively to construct questions and language, and to participate in the design and implementation of each method. Moving beyond piloting allows the assumptions of the researcher to be more fully challenged, transferring the process to one of reciprocal dialogue.

Why have you been asked to choose a pretend name to write in your diary?

- It is important that researchers write about the projects they have been doing. This is so that other people can try to understand the opinions & experiences of the people involved in the project.
- Often researchers include the actual words of the people who have filled in diaries or taken part in interviews. Sometimes people involved in the research do not want to be identified & so they choose a pretend name.

Example: Jim Davies and Tess Ridge did some research with young people living in the countryside. This is an example of an extract from their project.

"There is nothing here for us to do so we have to pay to go places...Sometimes dad gets annoyed about having to take me in the car so we end up walking."

(Jane, aged 13)

↖

Pretend name

↗

Real age

- If you are quite happy for people to know what you have said/written then please feel free to use your real name but please think carefully about whether you want people to read your words both now and in the future.

Figure 4.2 Choosing 'Pretend' Names

As part of a teenage-centred approach I believed it was important not to assign pseudonyms that reflected my own prejudices, for example, based on traditional ethnic or geographically-based names. Participants involved in the more in-depth methods were free to choose their own pseudonyms, and did so in the early stages of the process. Many selected nicknames, internet chat room identities or names based upon their favourite bands, thus reflecting their own identities. Later in the research process I enquired whether they

were still happy to use the pseudonyms previously chosen. Having become more involved in the research, several asked if, instead, they could use their real names as they felt it would add greater validity to the research. I illustrated the use of quotations by showing participants journal articles detailing other research with children and teenagers (figure 4.2). As a result just under half of the teenagers involved chose to use full or abbreviated versions of their real first names (Barker & Weller, 2003b). Ultimately, I believe that the teenagers who chose to use their real names did understand the implications of doing so. To disregard their requests would not have fostered a research process which held central the empowerment of participants.

4.2.3 ‘New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship’

The second framework influencing this thesis draws upon work associated with ‘*New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship*’. Lister (1997a; 1997b) combines Marshall’s (1950) definition of citizenship, which, as chapter three outlined, consists of both rights and duties in a system of social and legal rules, and also citizenship through the perspective of liberal rights and civic republicanism. Lister (1997b) suggests that this synthesis considers citizenship both in terms of status and practice:

“To be a citizen, in a sociological sense, means to enjoy the rights necessary for agency and social and political participation. To act as a citizen involves fulfilling the potential of the status. Those who do not fill the potential do not cease to be citizens” (pp. 35-36).

Furthermore, in considering Marshall’s (1950) examination of citizenship in terms of rights and duties, Lister (1997b) argues the importance of social rights in ensuring that those less powerful in society have access to both civil and political rights and autonomy as “*agents of their own lives*” (p. 35). For this research an important link can be established between ‘*New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship*’ and the ‘*New Social Studies of Childhood*’ as both discourses infer that children and teenagers should be viewed in this manner.

In order to analyse the concept of human agency in relation to women’s citizenship, Lister (1997b) explores women’s exclusion from full citizenship. The exclusionary and inclusionary aspects of citizenship, outlined in chapter three, define both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. Furthermore, Foster (1997) outlines a feminist critique of citizenship (education) suggesting that, in its

current form, the concept is a patriarchal construct. In these terms the assignment of women to the private sphere renders their true access to formal (public) civic institutions problematic (Foster, 1997; Dillabough & Arnot, 2000). Again, important lessons can be drawn from both Lister's (1997b) analysis and Foster's (1997) critique, transposed onto the examination of teenagers' exclusion from citizenship. At the same time it must be remembered that, within the geographical context of this research, (adult) women have rights to formal spaces of citizenship through political institutions such as elections, which are not extended to those under the age of eighteen. Definitions of citizenship also vary between feminists (Lister, 1997a). For those on the political Left, Lister (1997b) argues, 'rights' have often been detrimental to the most socially excluded groups within a liberal democracy. Many on the political Left focus attention on more active elements of citizenship (see Gould, 1988). Moreover, of importance to young teenagers is the exclusion that the duties side of citizenship confers. Duties are often understood by the political Right in terms of contribution to paid employment (Lister, 1997b). Fundamentally, Lister (1997b) questions how a balance between rights and duties can be fostered for those less powerful in society. She suggests that the synthesis of social rights and political participation is important in addition to understanding the diverse needs of different social groups within society. In these terms 'rights' need to be dynamic (Lister, 1997b).

Active citizenship, highlighted in chapter three as an important element of the new citizenship curriculum, is also central to '*New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship*'. Whilst being concerned with individual and community participation, active citizenship must also be understood in terms of struggle. I uphold Lister's (1997b) suggestion that such participation, especially amongst marginalised groups, can be "*oppositional and disruptive*" (p. 33). It is, therefore, questionable what is meant in the citizenship curriculum by 'helpful involvement'. Moreover, as chapters five, six and seven will illustrate:

"It is the local rather than the national which provides the arena for many citizenship struggles of this kind" (p. 33).

In these terms citizenship is seen on a continuum between the local and global, rather than tied to the nation-state (Lister, 1997a).

In a broader context, popular feminist discourse has challenged the neglect of women within geography. Academic feminism in the 1970s emphasised the inherent bias in the social sciences (Alanen, 1994). Subsequently, and mirroring much feminist research, children's studies emerged in the 1980s and was 'tacked on' to theoretical discourse. As women's studies aimed to deconstruct patriarchal theory, children's studies aimed to counter 'adultism' (Alanen, 1994). Such epistemological influence has resulted in an increasingly critical approach to children's experiences, focusing on empowerment, participation, and self-determination (James, 1990; Matthews & Limb, 1999). It is, therefore, apparent that ideals associated with '*New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship*' are applicable to the consideration of teenagers' citizenship.

Feminist discourse has also contributed to the methodological framework of this thesis through the emphasis placed on reflexivity (see England, 1994; Rose, 1997; Maxey, 1999). Reflexivity refers to:

"... the self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher" (England, 1994: 82).

Furthermore, the highly contested 'cultural turn' in geography has drawn greatly upon work relating to hermeneutics. Such an approach places emphasis upon meaning and interpretation, as well as acknowledging the positionality that the researcher brings to the project (Hoggart et al, 2002). In this sense, whilst objectivity is rejected, the meanings and interpretations that a researcher 'creates' are held as valid. Moreover, Hoggart et al (2002) highlight that the hermeneutical stance values research as a two way dialogue, where participants also make their own interpretations of their lives. This exchange is referred to as the double hermeneutic (Hoggart et al, 2002). In this thesis I aim to provide a reflexive account of teenagers' experiences, which acknowledges the influence of my own 'intimate geographies of childhood' (Philo, 2000). This account will be framed by discourses surrounding the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' and '*New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship*'. The following section of this chapter outlines the key ethical issues for consideration in research with teenagers.

4.3 Ethical Issues

Ethics, Proctor (1998) suggests, encompasses a 'systematic intellectual reflection on morality' (p. 9), and may be subdivided into the well documented areas of theoretical or applied ethics. Morality in these terms refers to normative ideas such as 'good and bad', or 'right and wrong'. Such notions have, in Western society, been divided in moral theory between 'the right' and 'the good'. Although geographers have begun to explore, for example, moral geographies, this has been restricted to sub-disciplinary reflection, with little interaction between research areas. Proctor's (1998) quest is to bind together these separate arenas to provide a more holistic examination of moral philosophy in geography. This, he envisages, may well be achieved by drawing upon the rejection of positivist thought in the 1970s and 1980s, where relevancy and critical reflection became paramount. The subsequent section of this chapter examines the ethical issues specific to conducting research with teenagers.

Research with teenagers requires specific ethical consideration distinct from that afforded to many adult participants (see Mahon, Clarke & Craig, 1996; Greig & Taylor, 1999). The construction of childhood as a period of innocence and dependency calls for research which is sensitive to the consideration of power (Matthews, 2001). For example, within many contexts adult researchers are more experienced, physically larger and have frequently been seen to hold greater status over their younger participants (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Valentine, 1999). Reflexive research recognises the limitations inherent in attempting to nullify power imbalances between researcher and participant (Holmes, 1998). Little work has, however, been carried out on the powerlessness of or constrictions placed upon researchers working within certain institutions (see Morris-Roberts, 2001), or the fear I felt walking into a classroom of thirteen year olds for the first time in ten years. I tried to map the power relations in my own research and found them to be endless and complex.

4.3.1 Research in Schools

As research is often conducted within an institutional setting, for example, the school, decisions relating to 'where', 'when' and 'how' are often the subject of

debate with adult gatekeepers (Valentine, 1999). Access to research within schools involves an often time-consuming process of negotiations with gatekeepers, including education authorities, school governors, teachers and parents, all prior to engaging children and teenagers in the research project (Barker & Weller, 2003a). As a result, the research agenda may be redefined by gatekeepers at the school as part of a reciprocal knowledge exchange. My own personal networks enabled a great deal of access to the school in this research (Weller, 2004). As a former pupil, I shared sets of negotiations with teachers who both knew and, I believe, trusted me. Indeed, security clearance, under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, was never requested by the school, although I did gain written clearance to allay any parent's potential concerns.

The spaces occupied by teenagers within school are highly structured, controlled and disciplined (Holloway & Valentine, 2000b). This is, James, Jenks & Prout (1998) suggest, centred around both the formal curriculum of the timetable and the informal curriculum of, for example, gendered socialisation. Power relations within a school significantly influence the way in which a researcher relates to both children or teenagers and teaching staff. For example, Holmes (1998) suggests that the way in which teachers and pupils address one another reveals much about adult power and hegemony. For children or teenage-centred researchers, this school culture creates challenges which restrict the deconstruction of power imbalances:

"I had a problem collecting Tommey and Matt from class. I tried to explain to the teacher why I needed them and she was fine to begin with, but as things got a bit manic with her class arriving she changed her mind and said she needed them. She then changed it again saying they'd have to make time up after school" (Research Diary, p. 74, 4th July 2002).

At the same time, Holloway & Valentine (2000b) outline the complex, layered spaces and cultures which alter with time. Members of a school are not simply subordinate in their acceptance of such control, but often develop strategic practices to overcome restrictions imposed upon their use of space (Holloway & Valentine, 2000b).

I often found myself struggling to fit in with two opposing groups within the school, both of whom ultimately controlled access. On the one hand, I had to maintain access to the school by demonstrating that my work was of enough

value to warrant participants missing lessons (Weller, 2004). Concurrently, I had to quash any possibilities that I was a teacher-like figure in order to gain access to participants' thoughts and experiences (Weller, 2004). One simple example of this was the challenge of remaining neutral when teenagers tried to engage me in gossip relating to teaching staff. Moreover, central to these, often opposing, power struggles between students and teachers is the importance of gaining teenagers' informed consent.

4.3.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent is a significant consideration in research with children and teenagers (Alderson, 1995). Competency, particularly that of younger children, is often brought into question in relation to consent. Care must be taken by the researcher to ensure, as Lindsay (2000) notes, that each participant understands the long and short-term implications of the project. Informed consent needs to be meaningful to all parties involved and should be continuously sought throughout the research process (Homan, 1991; Lindsay, 2000). This will, in part, help to ensure understanding by all ages. As Lindsay (2000) also notes, children's competency is often underestimated.

The importance of observing protocol in relation to seeking permission, whether this be in terms of access to 'the field' or to participants, is also significant (Robson, 1993; Matthews, Limb & Taylor, 1998). Within the context of this research, permission was sought through the Local Education Authority and the school. The school also sought parental permission. Such layers of consent highlight the problems inherent in attempting to adopt teenage-centred research which values participants' own agency. Children or teenage-centred research also places great emphasis on participant involvement in the research process. It is, therefore, important that teenagers consent to the research themselves and are not coerced by adult gatekeepers. As Holmes (1998) notes, children are rarely asked whether they consent to participating. Ultimately, it is likely that an adult will have power over consent. As Alderson (1999) notes, there arises the problematic issue of a parent's refusal to consent even if the teenager wishes to participate. A careful and thorough explanation of the importance of the research goes a long way to curb any parental concerns.

Informed consent was gained throughout the research process by a series of measures. Information sheets, as well as verbal explanations, were given

regarding the nature of the whole research project and the commitment and implications of being involved in each research method (Appendix A). Participants gave written consent for each method and were encouraged carefully to consider participation in each phase, and not to succumb to pressure from peers or teachers:

“I also had one example of peer influence when giving the boys their consent forms. Bob Stevens asked what he should tick and Loki told him just to tick them all. I told him it was up to him” (Research Diary, pp. 69-70, 3rd July 2002).

It is important to note that this research comprises of data from a self-selected group of teenagers. This approach may, therefore, exclude the least confident teenagers and allow more dominant participants to pursue their own agendas. Nevertheless, many of those who were offered the opportunity to participate did so through at least one research method. Participants also gave written consent regarding the use of different findings, for example, discussion transcripts or photographs, for dissemination. A journal article illustrating the dissemination of other research with children and teenagers was used to highlight potential implications of consenting. Two boys actively chose not to allow part of their research to be used. Such moves, I believe, were fundamentally important within a school where the assent of teachers can potentially overpower participants' choice to consent (Valentine, 1999; David, Edwards & Alldred, 2001).

4.3.3 Confidentiality & Privacy

Ensuring confidentiality is fundamentally important in all research but may be particularly challenging in research with children and teenagers. As chapter two highlighted, children and many young teenagers are constructed as dependent and vulnerable. Parents or teachers may place pressure on a participant to divulge the contents of an interview (France et al, 2000; Barker & Weller, 2003a), or participants may be anxious over divulging experiences or opinions that they fear may result in reprimands from teachers. One key technique utilised to ensure confidentiality was to ask participants to choose a pseudonym. Whilst this exercise was valuable when disseminating to the 'wider world', teachers within the school did make attempts to identify participants through other characteristics, for example, ethnicity.

The anonymity of participants was monitored throughout the process (Kitchin

& Tate, 2000), although this was sometimes challenging:

“I left at the end of the school day and was approached in the playground by four teachers who wanted to know how I’d got on. I was really pleased that they were so interested but it was difficult to chat, as many of the teenagers involved were standing nearby. I didn’t want them to feel I was breaking promises of confidentiality” (Research Diary, p. 60, 2nd July 2002).

Full consideration was given to the implications and potential impacts on the participants throughout the research process, both practically and methodologically, to ensure that potential costs, such as the reinforcements of prejudice, stress and harm were minimised. This required the examination of the 'inner meaning of research' (Alderson, 1995) and the acknowledgement of power relations and motives. Moreover, I do not believe it is ethical to guarantee confidentiality to participants without discussing the disclosure of child protection issues (see Matthews, Limb & Taylor, 1998). I therefore explained in the interview preamble that if I believed a participant was at risk, we would have to discuss ways in which to disclose this to a third party who may be able to help.

Parallel to confidentiality is the issue of privacy. Privacy requires a challenging compromise between maintaining confidentiality and protecting both participant and researcher from the risk of accusation or actual harm. The location of an interview, whilst crucial to this balance, is often predetermined by, for example, teachers or parents. As Holmes (1998) suggests, research within a school is often subject to disruption. I encountered one such example of this and, although seemingly easy to rectify, the disruption had a lasting effect upon the progress of our discussion:

“We got interrupted at one point as some boys who had been sent out of class were sitting against the door and they opened it. They did apologise and I asked Bob if he still felt comfortable or whether he wanted me to say something to them. He said he was fine but I couldn’t help feeling he’d clammed up a little after this” (Research Diary, pp. 73-74, 4th July 2002).

The ethical issues outlined in this section reveal much about the power relations inherent in conducting research within a school. The principles I, as a researcher, have adopted from the conceptual frameworks embracing this research were often challenged and fractured by other actors in the research process. The next element of this chapter moves on to describe and justify the case study chosen to situate this research.

4.4 Research Setting: A Rural Case Study

Inherently, research is conducted within many spatial arenas. These may be subdivided into 'spaces of research', in which data is collected, 'researched spaces' or the multilayered spaces which are under study, and 'spaces of dissemination' which relate to the representation of findings (Barker & Weller, 2003a). The following section of this chapter is concerned with outlining the rationale behind adopting a case study approach and highlighting the criteria used to select a suitable study area. I also contextualise the physical location of this thesis by providing a descriptive account of the area, whilst detailing my own 'intimate geographies'.

4.4.1 Defining a Case Study Area

A case study approach was selected in line with the epistemological underpinnings of this research in order to examine the diverse experiences of a group of teenagers living broadly within the same geographical area, but at the same time experiencing life in their surroundings in a number of ways. It is important to recognise that, whilst this research has been undertaken within one case study area, this locale may be described and interpreted into numerous differing micro-case studies, reflecting the diverse experiences of the participants involved. As Yin (1989) suggests, a case study approach is suited to the exploration of life experiences in a holistic manner. This research is not, therefore, essentialist in outlook and does not seek to make generalisations about the lives of teenagers in all rural areas, but rather draws upon a host of methods to explore what Yin (1989) refers to as 'real life' (p. 23).

Bailey et al (1999) argue that validity should not be synonymous with large scale statistical studies, but should instead be centred upon rigorous research practices. This thesis is, therefore, informed by the notion that there is no one universal truth (see Williams & May, 1996). Nevertheless, I do attempt to address Holloway and Valentine's (2000b) call to reunite local and global approaches to research with children and teenagers through, for example, the examination of both local and global notions of citizenship.

The selection of a viable case study involved the filtering-out of areas which

did not satisfy the criteria essential to fulfilling the aims of the research questions. Firstly, the case study area had to be rural. It secondly had to exhibit key indicators of social exclusion, and finally had to contain schools which were ready to commence citizenship education classes, and were keen to accommodate such a research project. Whilst acknowledging the complexities in defining a rural area, as discussed in chapter two, I deemed the classification of rural Local Authorities and Unitary Authorities, devised by the Countryside Agency (2003b) as an appropriate starting point from which to commence. This was then mapped alongside the second criteria. Further data from the Countryside Agency (2001) (for example, figures 4.4 & 4.5) was utilised to identify the most deprived rural areas within England. As a result the following eleven areas were highlighted as potential case study settings: Cornwall, County Durham, Dorset, East Cumbria, East Suffolk, Isle of Wight, Lincolnshire, North Norfolk, North Northumberland, North Yorkshire, and South Kent.

Fundamental to the achievement of both in-depth and longitudinal research is prolonged access to the field. In order to determine a suitable case study area, a sample of ten schools in each of the eleven potential areas were contacted. The location of each school was cartographically cross-checked to examine its rural positioning, in order to exclude institutions located in medium to large urban areas within a predominantly rural environment. This was particularly important to allow the examination of more rural-specific issues of isolation and restricted access. Interested schools were assessed with regard to transport accessibility, as I do not have access to a car, and the extent to which individual schools could accommodate a variety of research methods. Several schools in Suffolk and the Isle of Wight were keen for me to carry out research in their school, despite not being ready to start citizenship education immediately. Some schools' responses were positive, whilst others were extremely enthusiastic. Of the latter, two schools were highlighted. One on the Isle of Wight, my former high school, and the other in Cornwall. Time and financial constraints would not have permitted long term study within the school in Cornwall. Evidently, Medina High School on the Isle of Wight was chosen as the arena in which to undertake the majority of my fieldwork. I believe that my positionality as a former pupil of the school and resident of the Island also provides a positive justification for selecting this case study area. The level of access offered by the school as a result of my

connections was more than can normally be accommodated within a busy school curriculum. As a former pupil, the opportunity also provided me with a unique position in that I was able to communicate with staff, several familiar to myself, and to relate, to some extent, to the experiences of participants, both in terms of 'growing-up' on the Island and being a former member of the school. Researching the familiar can also present a number of problems. For example, rather than viewing me as a pseudo-insider, teenage participants may have been reluctant to disclose their experiences for fear I would divulge confidences to teaching staff with whom I had pre-existing relationships (see Weller, 2004).

4.4.2 Describing the Case Study Area

The resultant case study area was constructed on two levels. On the first level, the Isle of Wight provided the setting for the exploration of a myriad of rural experiences, epitomising the diversity of rural life.



Figure 4.3 Locating the Isle of Wight within Europe (iwight, 2003a)

Located off of the South coast of England (figure 4.3), the Island covers an area of 380.21 square kilometres (Hollis, 1995). Currently, the Island has a population of 132,731, of which children and teenagers under sixteen constitute 18.2% (ONS, 2003). The Island is famed for its beautiful landscapes and picturesque villages, which receive 2.5 million visitors every year (Islandbreaks, 2003). Outwardly, the Island manifests a microcosm of all that is the quintessential English rural idyll - a safe haven for children to 'grow-up' in.

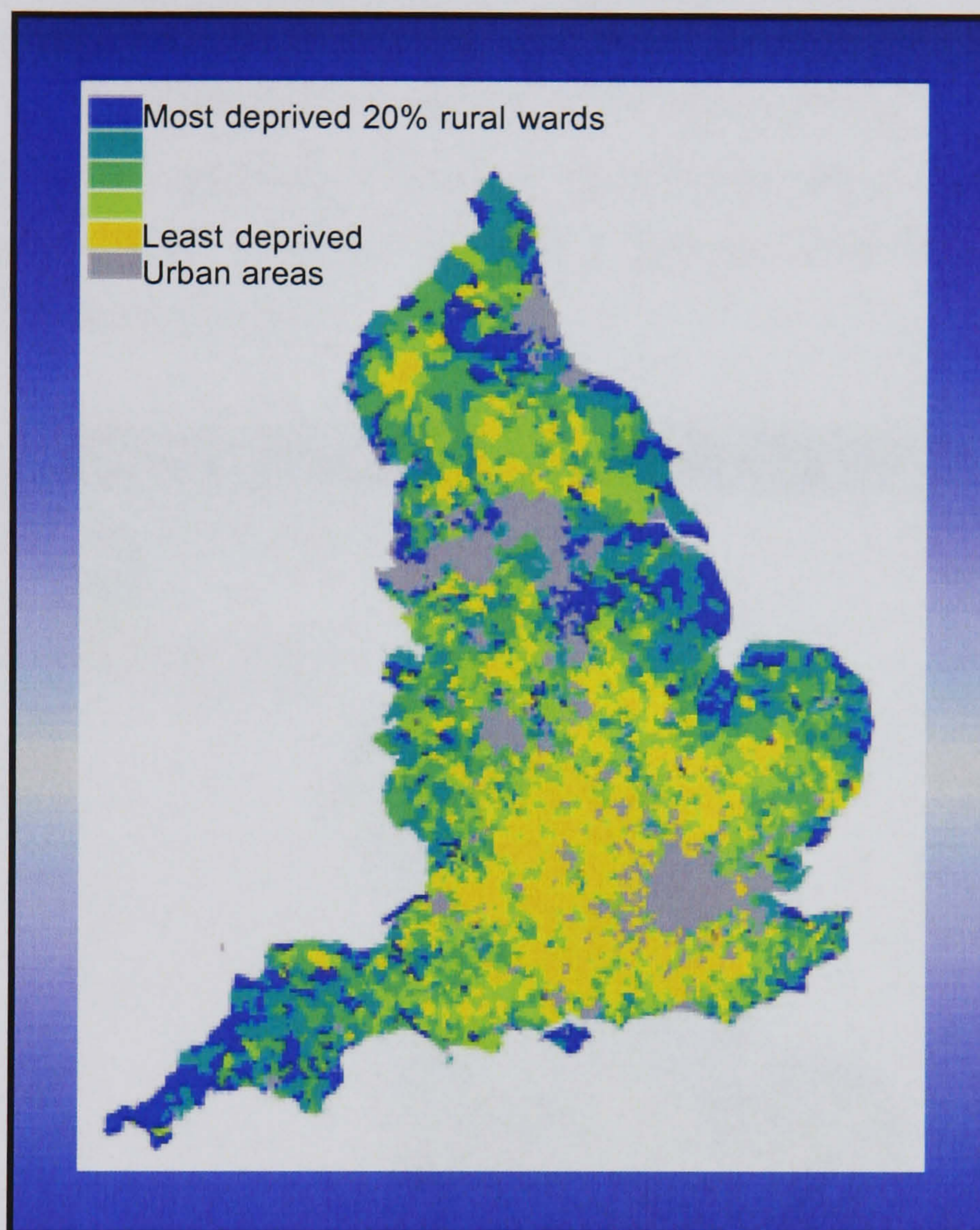


Figure 4.4 Employment Domain 2000 (Countryside Agency, 2003a)

It comes as a surprise to many with whom I have spoken along my research travels that all is not so rosy. Indeed, whilst there are pockets of affluence, much of the Island is classified as a 'Rural Priority Area' suffering socio-economic problems (Countryside Agency, 2000a). Many areas suffer multiple deprivation. Of the 48 electoral wards on the Island, 21 were ranked in the top 20% of the most deprived areas in England (ONS, 2000). Two wards, one of which is located close to the case study school, are classified amongst the top 10% of the most deprived areas in England (ONS, 2000). These figures are reinforced by the Countryside Agency (2000c), who suggested that the Isle

of Wight featured as one of the top ten most deprived rural districts in England in 2000. The *'Isle of Wight Social Inclusion Strategy 2001-2005'* suggests several reasons for the high levels of deprivation in some areas of the Island. One key influence is the limited economic base centred upon seasonal tourism. As figure 4.4 illustrates, the Island is one of the most employment deprived within the country. The Countryside Agency (2003b) highlights the Isle of Wight as one of the three counties in England with the lowest national average earnings (figure 4.5). Moreover, the *'Isle of Wight Social Inclusion Strategy 2001-2005'* suggests that 6% of Island residents live in homes which are regarded as 'unfit for human habitation' (iwight, 2002). The Isle of Wight, as a rural county, is justifiably a suitable case study area in which to explore teenagers' experiences of social exclusion and the manifest ways in which they challenge disadvantage.

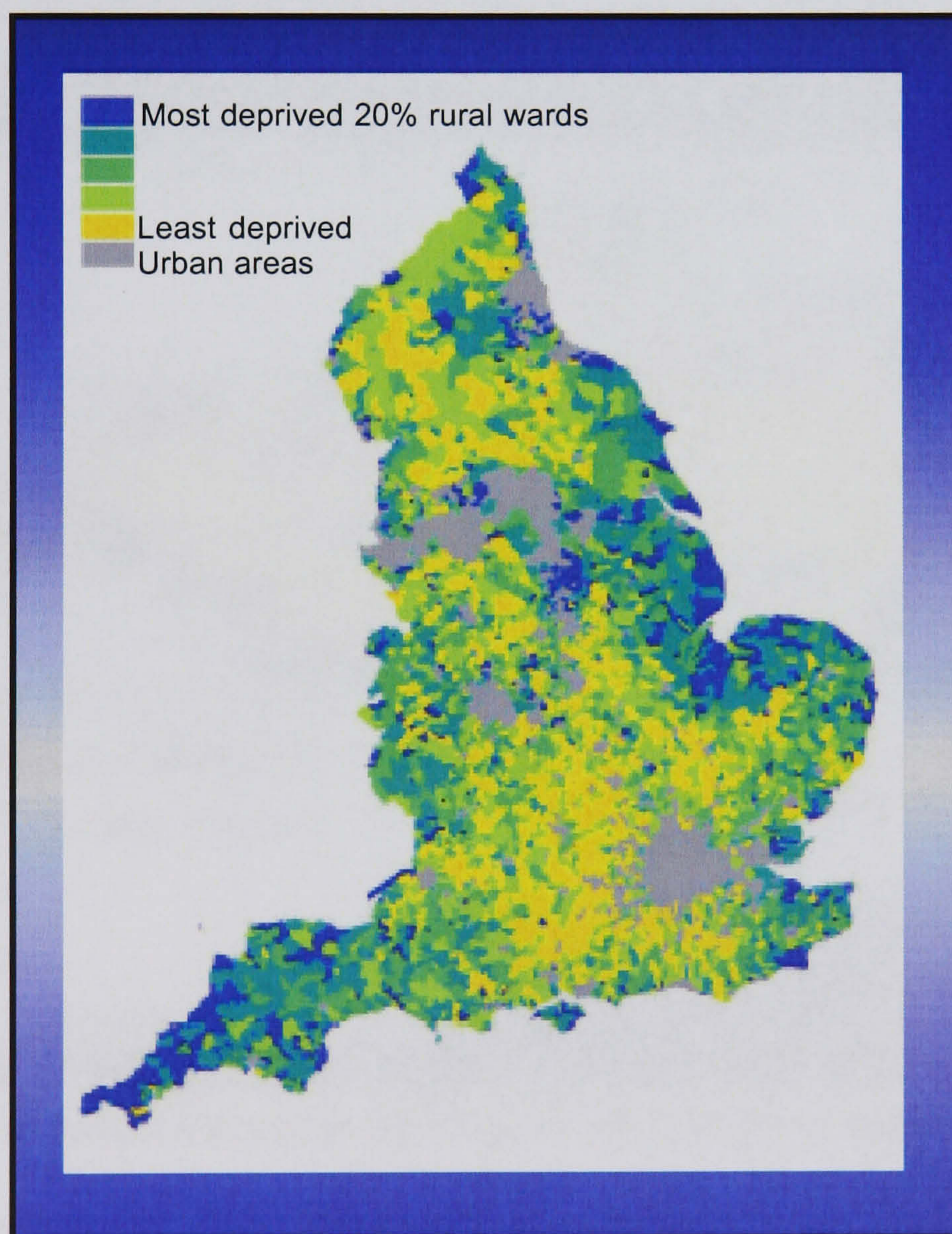


Figure 4.5 Income Domain 2000 (Countryside Agency, 2003a)

The second level of the case study refers to the school in which the majority of participants were recruited and the locale for the analysis of citizenship education. My former high school was keen to allow long-term research to be

undertaken, and was prepared to accommodate a wide variety of research methods. Medina High School is a co-educational comprehensive for teenagers aged thirteen to eighteen. Of the 1021 students, 882 are of compulsory school age. Few (0.6%) members of the school are from ethnic minority backgrounds and only two pupils speak English as an additional language (OFSTED, 2003b). The school is located in the centre of the Island, on the outskirts of the principal town, Newport (figure 4.6). Teenagers attending the school are geographically dispersed, and travel from as far as the South and West coasts of the Island. Many of these areas are amongst the most economically deprived wards in the South-East of England:

“The social and economic backgrounds of students are very varied as some come from comparatively affluent areas but some from pockets of considerable deprivation. The percentage of students eligible for free schools meals is above average” (OFSTED, 2003b).

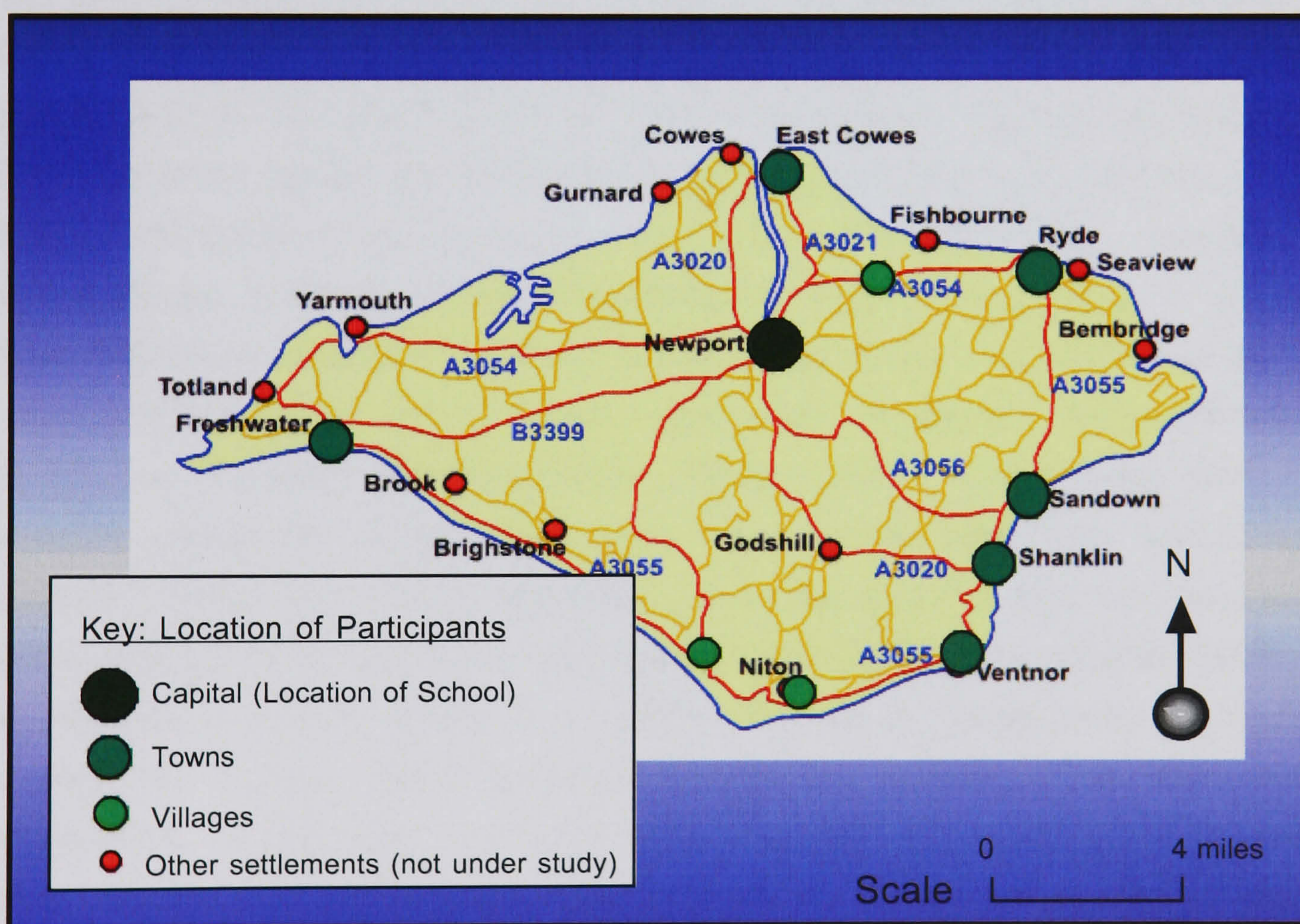


Figure 4.6 Research Participants Residence (adapted from iwight, 2003b)

Just over one fifth (21.7%) of teenagers at Medina High are entitled to free school meals compared to a 2001/2 national average of 15.3% (OFSTED, 2003b; DfES, 2003c). In terms of academic achievement, Medina High falls below the national average of 52% with 38% of young people gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C in 2002 (DfES, 2003d). This is, however, a significant improvement from 25% in 1996 (OFSTED, 1997). This last

OFSTED report reflects a difficult and challenging period within the school's history. I have not, therefore, chosen to work within a beacon school, either in terms of overall academic achievement or specialist status, but in one which has faced many challenges. This, I believe, has allowed me to reach teenagers who are facing or are at risk of social exclusion. The subsequent section of this chapter details the influence of my own past and present experiences on the research process.

4.4.3 The Influence of Personal Positionality

I would argue that it is perhaps more appropriate to discuss a researcher's multiple positionalities. To do this acknowledges that I am not always consistent or rational in my thought processes and that I am open to develop my ideas and adapt the research process. Arguably, the most significant influence on my own positionality was that I had lived in the case study area and had attended the case study school up to the age of eighteen (see Weller, 2004). This was, in many instances, beneficial in that I was able to gain greater access to Medina High, as I was known by the relevant gatekeepers, than any other school would probably be able to provide. Furthermore, with many participants, I believe, rapport was easier to establish, as I was able to communicate in terms of local knowledge(s). This common ground is often more difficult in unfamiliar research areas. Although we had never met before I had common ties and networks which were invaluable in establishing continuous dialogue with participants (Weller, 2004). At the same time, my position within the school and wider case study area was sometimes awkward. Within the school, I inhabited an uneasy position between teachers, some of whom had taught me, and the teenage participants (Weller, 2004). In an attempt to situate where my loyalties lie, some participants wanted to engage in gossip about teachers within the school. This was often challenging to appease, particularly in the age of the 'friends reunited' phenomenon and adult reflection back to school days. I was, of course, at times curious. The teachers were, however, key gatekeepers and also participants in the research.

The key issue *vis-à-vis* my relationship with the case study area lay not in my previous status as a resident but in my new status as a non-resident (Weller, 2004). On one level I felt a sense of abandonment. I no longer lived there - what insight did I, therefore, now have? The period of time away from the area

has reshaped my conceptualisations of rurality, as well as distorting my memories of my teenage years. For example, having grown up in a village in my case study area, and now as a resident of London, I perceived the Island to be rural, and reinforced these ideas through indicators developed in other research (Cloke & Edwards, 1986; Tucker & Matthews, 2001). These notions were challenged by some participants who were adamant that they resided in an urban area, set aside from rurality (Barker & Weller, 2003a; Weller, 2004). Such challenges highlight the complexities in both establishing a case study area, as well as the implications of the researcher's own ontological foundations.

Holmes (1998) believes that the gender of the researcher is significant in both the relationship that the fieldworker establishes with participants and in the interpretation of findings. Children are, Holmes (1998) suggests, seen to react differently to the physical appearances of men and women. Working alone on a research project renders the evaluation of gender problematic. In other research I have undertaken (Barker et al, 2003), there were clear distinctions between to whom children wanted to talk. For example, girls were keen to spend time with me, whilst boys favoured communicating with my male colleague (see also Barker & Smith, 2001). I believe the age of participants is a significant factor. Older children and teenagers appear to have more cross-gender friendships than younger children (for further discussion on children's friendships see Bruegel & Weller, forthcoming). The boys in this research participated to the same extent as girls. Furthermore, in relation to interpretation, Holmes (1998) suggests that early socialisation into differential gender roles results in women seeing the world in a different way to men. For example, Holmes (1998) believes women are likely to be more empathetic and more aware of subjectivity. Whilst children can be seen to be socialised to recognising gender roles, Holmes (1998) fails to acknowledge gender beyond the dualism of male and female. Holmes' (1998) essentialisms, therefore, disregard eclecticism in a researcher's positionality.

Being an adult can both aid and hinder research with children and teenagers (Holmes, 1998). Quintessentially, my role in the research process was influenced by my own 'messy' conceptualisations of age. I was, in most cases, ten years older than the teenagers with whom I was working, although I often felt I projected a younger appearance physically (see Morris-Roberts,

2001). These perceptions of myself were quashed to some extent in an interview discussion with Funda and Nikki (Weller, 2004). Although Funda socialises with older people, her following comment in a discussion about power and the royal family significantly increased the age gap between us!

Susie: *Prince Charles came to the Isle of Wight when I was a kid*

Funda/Nikki: *Did he?*

Susie: *Yeah (Laughs) very little*

Funda: *He must have been quite young then. He's quite old [now]*

(Discussion with Funda & Nikki, 2nd July 2002)

I believed that my position as a former pupil of the school meant that, in general, participants did not view me as a teacher-figure (Weller, 2004). I used what Giddens (1997) views as 'impression management', so that participants did not see my social role as one of teacher, or even adult figure in power, through the clothes that I had chosen to wear. This was an attempt to 'manage' the expectations that teenagers may have of an older person questioning them. This pseudo-insider role was reinforced as I established greater relationships with the teenagers, and several participants moved on from calling me 'Miss' to talking on first name terms. This is a scenario in which teenagers rarely find themselves at school, as teachers, guest speakers and visitors often prefer to be addressed more formally (Weller, 2004). When explaining my research, I was able to do so in terms of my role within a similar learning institution, and some participants seemed to understand my research in terms of helping me out with something akin to a school project (Weller, 2004).

At the same time as wanting almost to become an insider, I also wished to establish a credible relationship with staff within the school. Several teachers had worked in the school when I was a pupil there and so I had to forge a different kind of relationship, demonstrating my role as a researcher, as someone who might be able to help the school, and ultimately someone who was older and no longer a pupil (Weller, 2004). This conflict between my role with teaching staff and pupils is best illustrated in what might seem a trivial decision, over whether to dress smartly to gain the respect of the teaching staff or to dress more informally, and in some respects in a 'trendy' way, to establish a rapport with the teenagers. This was not, as Leyshon (2002) heeds against, to replicate the dress sense of participants, but to appear less formal and authoritative. Such tensions are heavily influenced by how

childhood and adulthood are seen, and hence my indecision between 'sensible', adult attire or more casual, play-like clothing.

Reflecting further upon my own perceptions of age, my 'messy' understandings and contentions between identifying with either the teenagers involved or the teaching staff at the school was further challenged by my role as a stepmum to three young people, two of whom were aged thirteen and sixteen, whilst I was conducting fieldwork. My personal experiences, I believe, aided my ability to communicate and relate to diverse views and understandings of teenagers, and, as noted earlier in this chapter, my husband's children worked with me, enabling me to produce a more teenage-centred research practice.

In order to reconcile these tensions created by my personal positionality, I frequently reflected upon a passage from Harper Lee's (1992) *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which had remained poignant to me since I was at school. Atticus Finch explains to his daughter:

"You can never really understand a person until you consider things from his [sic] point of view - until you climb into his [sic] skin and walk around in it" (p. 33).

In many senses Atticus Finch's wisdom summarises the essence of reflexivity in relation to research. In every instance I had to 'climb into the skin' of every participant. My own relationship with the case study area, I believe, allowed me greater insight.

4.5 Implementing a Multi-Method Approach

Teenagers' diversity, like any other social group, necessitates the adoption of methods which celebrate eclectic forms of communication. A multi-method approach utilises complementary techniques to explore the same phenomenon in a variety of ways, thus allowing teenagers with different skills to participate (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Hoggart et al, 2002; Barker & Weller, 2003b). Otherwise known as triangulation, multi-method research does not inherently enhance the quality of research, for this would mirror, for example, a positivist idea of the existence of a reality, but may produce a more in-depth account(s) (Hoggart et al, 2002). Primarily, multi-method research is advantageous in that it allows findings to be cross-validated (Hoggart et al, 2002). The following section of this chapter outlines and evaluates the methods used to explore teenagers' experiences.

In all around 600 participants contributed to the research. Of those, 500 teenagers aged between thirteen and sixteen took part in at least one of two questionnaire surveys. Over a period of eighteen months, 20 teenagers aged thirteen and fourteen worked on all or some of the in-depth methods, including diary writing, photography and group/individual discussions, as well as informal chats and e-mail exchange. A further 50 participants of a variety of ages, including councillors, parents and teenagers, contributed to radio and web-based discussions. These methods, coupled with observational work in citizenship lessons, teaching planning meetings and policy-orientated conferences were the result of a multi-method approach (figure 4.7). Techniques utilising media such as the radio and internet developed out of a dynamic and evolving research process (Mason, 1996), which sought to home in on teenagers' own preferred communication techniques. Moreover, in their entirety, the research methods used were chosen and created to respond to different aspects of the research inquiry. It is to the development and implementation of each method that this chapter now turns.

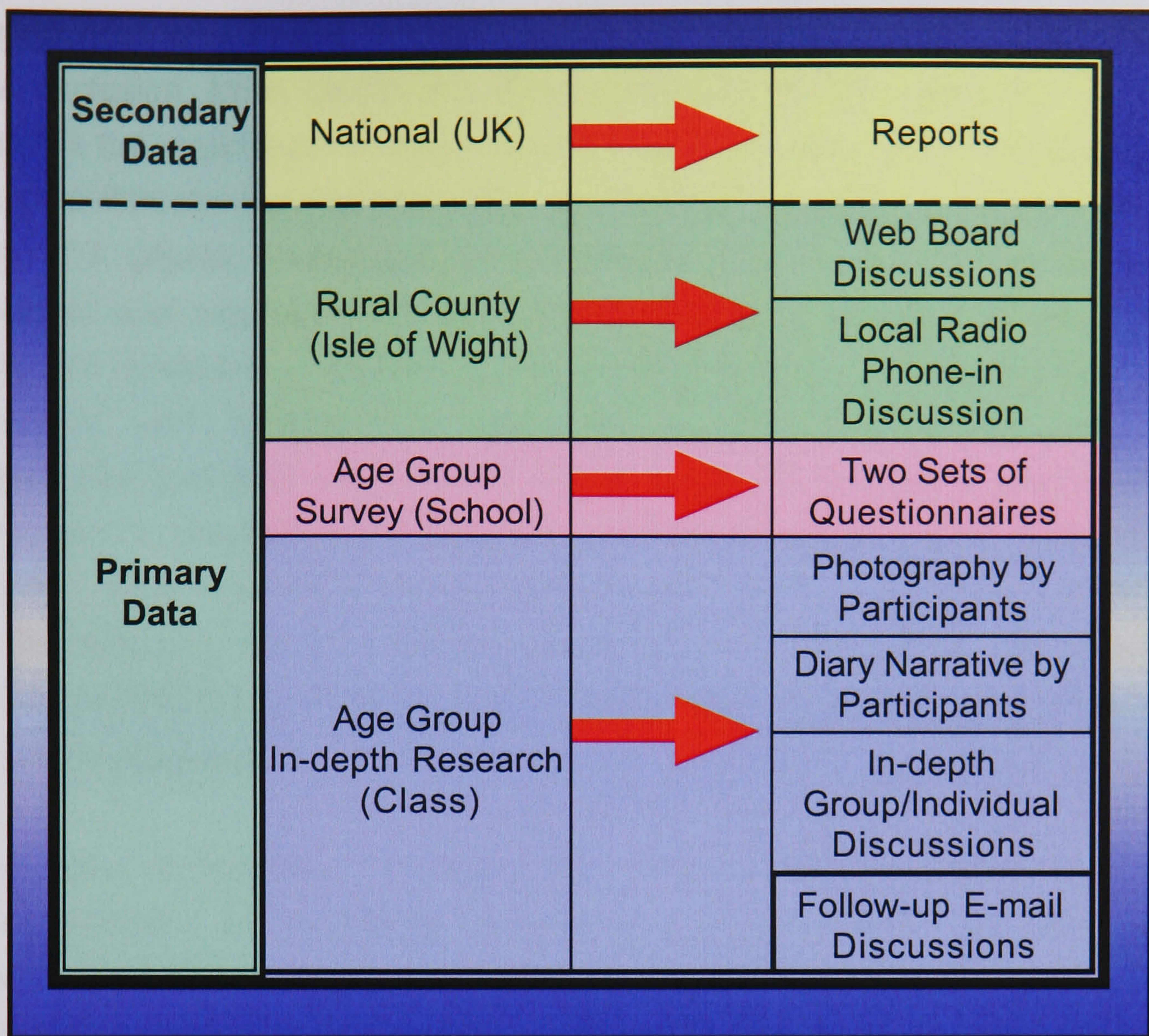


Figure 4.7 A Multi-Method Approach

4.5.1 Exploring Teenagers' Experiences through Questionnaires

The use of social survey methods predates the Domesday book in 1085, and has been utilised prior to and during the Enlightenment to explore demographics, and more generally statistical science (Hoggart et al, 2002). Such approaches, based on empiricism sought to expose 'facts' particularly in relation to social and economic issues, and did not encompass qualitative elements until further into the nineteenth century (Hoggart et al, 2002). The aim of survey research is to investigate trends, and so tends to examine large scale populations (Hoggart et al, 2002). As a result, questions are circumscribed and often restrict the extent to which respondents can elaborate upon their feelings and experiences. In the past, much statistical research has neglected children and teenagers amongst other excluded groups, focusing either upon households or families. Furthermore, quantitative analysis has primarily considered factors such as the socio-economic impact that children have upon adult lives, rather than their own

experiences as competent social actors (Scott, 2000). The reasoning behind this exclusion, Scott (2000) proposes, comprises of four elements. The first factor is the resistance in much research to move beyond questioning adults about children's experiences. This, Scott (2000) suggests, principally stems from the greater knowledge and experience accorded to adult cognition. Children and teenagers are seen to lack the skills required to respond to research questions. Furthermore, the practical and ethical issues inherent in research with children and teenagers imposes barriers between the researcher and their respondents (Scott, 2000). The ability of children and teenagers to respond to the research aims varies primarily by age, but also by gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity (Scott, 2000). Care must be taken, however, not to underestimate children's capabilities. As Lewis & Lindsay (2000) note, children and teenagers often respond to questionnaires in teen magazines.

Innovative techniques, however, are currently being utilised to make questionnaires an accessible research method for children and teenagers. For younger children with more limited linguistic abilities, methods such as pictorial Likert scales are proving expedient (Dockerell et al, 2000). It is also fundamental that questionnaires are constructed in a manner that is relevant and comprehensible to a respondent's knowledge (Scott, 2000). The use of open questions affords participants some freedom to structure their responses (Dockerell et al, 2000). Many children and teenagers, not unlike many adults, also respond to questions regardless of whether they possess the relevant information (Weber et al, 1994; Scott, 2000). This issue is particularly important to consider within the school setting, where attempting to answer all questions and complete tasks is an everyday part of classroom practices. Oakley (2000) actively encouraged her participants to accept that there would be questions that they could not or would not want to answer. Furthermore, Scott (2000) outlines an innovative approach to countering literacy problems in questionnaire design. The British Household Panel Study incorporated the '*Young Person's Survey*' into their research in 1994. A pre-recorded questionnaire was given to each participant to be played on a personal stereo. Respondents answered the questions at their own pace, in a booklet divided into response categories, ensuring that young people of differing abilities could access the survey as well as maintaining confidentiality (Scott, 2000).

Two questionnaire surveys (Appendices B & C) were implemented to gauge a broad perspective on teenagers' opinions, particularly in relation to social exclusion and the expectation of compulsory citizenship education. The first was administered at the beginning of the knowledge collection process, prior to the implementation of more in-depth methods. The second survey was conducted at the end of the fieldwork period, and explored teenagers' experiences of citizenship education in the five months after its introduction as a compulsory subject. For both surveys it was paramount that the questions were comprehensible to a mixed ability group of thirteen to sixteen year olds. Moreover, I wanted to ensure that the questionnaires would engage teenagers in relation to language and relevance to their lives, as well as providing the introductory context for the research project. My advisors played a key role in the development of both pilot questionnaires. Research conducted by Oakley (2000) highlighted the importance placed on language by many young people. It was, therefore, important that not only was the use of jargon avoided, but that linguistically the construct, tone and expression used in the questionnaire was appropriate and relevant to the teenagers questioned (Matthews, Limb & Taylor, 1998). Newell (1997) recommends that a pilot should consist of 10% of the final target population. I, therefore, implemented a pilot of 75 questionnaires for the first survey, which was eventually distributed to 500 teenagers. This first pilot was administered amongst three classes in different year groups to ensure that the survey was comprehensible to teenagers of differing ages. A pilot of 30 questionnaires was deemed suitable for the second survey, which was distributed to 316 teenagers in year ten. In addition to the pilot questionnaire, a covering letter explaining the nature of the research and an invitation to submit feedback on the questionnaire design was included. Participants were asked to remark upon the layout and clarity of questions, formatting preferences, and the appropriateness of topics areas. As a result of the consultations several key changes were implemented on each survey (figure 4.8).

Survey Amendments: Recommendations from Participants

- The design of each survey was made more 'teenager-friendly' through the use of coloured paper and less formal fonts.
- Some questions were redrafted so that responses could be given in a 'tick-box' style. This aided subsequent analysis.
- The question on 'ethnicity' was rephrased as many had indicated that they did not understand the meaning of the word.
- Some participants requested the inclusion of other categories in particular an open section where they could write freely.
- In the first survey the section on citizenship education was redrafted to more fully examine teenagers' awareness by looking at specific elements of the curriculum.

Figure 4.8 Key Changes Made After Piloting the Surveys

In addition to more general ethical issues previously highlighted in this chapter, one key issue arose relating to confidentiality during the piloting of the first survey which was administered by teachers during registration and tutor periods. As the following extract from my research diary highlights:

"... students appear to be reluctant to answer some of the questions relating to the use of 'out of bounds' or 'forbidden' spaces. Several ticked 'yes', and then scribbled it out again. I assume that some of the kids did this because they didn't want to disclose their activities to their teachers ... My assumptions have been reinforced! One teacher just commented that he had checked through some of the questionnaires to see if they had answered the questions properly!"
(Research Diary Extracts, November, 2001).

It is not uncommon for teaching staff to feel they have right or need to know what a participant has divulged to a researcher (France et al, 2000; Barker & Weller, 2003a). I had to come up with a solution that would maintain my promise of confidentiality to the respondents without jeopardising my

relationship with teaching staff (Barker & Weller, 2003a). As a result sticky labels were included with the final questionnaires so each teenager could seal them before handing them to their teacher. Despite the challenges in administering questionnaires within a school it did prove beneficial in creating high response rates. Of the 500 questionnaires in the first survey 85% were completed and returned, whilst the second survey achieved a 54% response rate. The second survey was arguably more complex to complete.

Important insights were gained, particularly through the implementation of the first questionnaire which 'made real' the issues of conducting research within a school environment. The two questionnaires were fundamentally useful means of gaining vital background information, as well as contextualising broader perspectives. In addition, the surveys provided a valuable means of opening and closing the 'knowledge collection' element of the research process in addition to allowing me to track changes. The next section of this chapter moves on to explore more qualitative and in-depth methods.

4.5.2 Exploring Teenagers' Experiences through Photographs

Photography allows teenagers to explore and record their own experiences, feelings and senses of place(s) through personal observation (see Sidaway, 2002). This technique is more conformable with the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' than more traditional researcher-centred methods of observation as participants have greater power to control the outcomes of the method. Providing teenagers with a disposable camera affords them the opportunity to conduct a piece of their own research with some guidance, and provides invaluable prompts for further discussion or interviews. Furthermore, research using disposable cameras allows participating children and teenagers of mixed abilities to communicate using relatively simple equipment (Barker & Weller, 2003b). Visual methods of data collection are also beneficial when working with participants of poor educational backgrounds (Young & Barrett, 2001).

For this element of the research, participating teenagers were given a disposable camera for one week (figure 4.9). I outlined to participants that they were free to photograph as they wished, although some guidance was given. Participants were asked to take pictures of the places where they hang out; places from where they feel excluded; places that they have claimed as

their own; places that they have made decisions over; and places that they feel should be improved or changed. The majority of participants used their cameras to demonstrate issues based around these themes, thus illustrating life within their communities.



Figure 4.9 The Diary and Camera Pack Issued to Participants

As Young & Barrett (2001) suggest, the presence of a researcher in many situations alters that dynamics of the space studied. Over the period of a week, participants used cameras to photograph spaces of importance, spaces of exclusion and what I refer to as 'creative spaces', or arenas which they had had a role in shaping. Responses to the method varied, with most teenagers using the majority of the film. For those who took few pictures, this was not necessarily an indication of their lack of interest in the project, as later discussions revealed. Fewer pictures sometimes became more in-depth stories through verbal communication. For some teenagers the key factor in participation was confidence in their ability to take 'good' pictures (Barker & Weller, 2003b). Such divergent engagement in the photography element merely illustrates the importance of acknowledging the diversity of teenagers' communication preferences, and further provides a solid justification for implementing a multi-method approach.

I assured the teenagers that their photographs would be kept confidential and would only be used with express permission of the participant. In order to achieve this, I had to overcome the problem of identifying the owner of each set of photographs once the films had returned from the developer. As a solution I suggested that each teenager should ask a friend to take the first picture on their camera of them. If they were not keen on having their photograph taken, they could write their name on a large piece of paper and photograph that. Not only did this aid practical issues of getting the right pictures back to the right person and maintaining confidentiality, but it also appeared to give the teenagers some sense of ownership over their cameras and photographs. In all, 18 teenagers chose to participate in the 'camera project'. There was an equal gender split in uptake.

Giving children and teenagers the responsibility for a camera forges a relationship of trust (Young & Barrett, 2001), and I aimed to ensure that participants maintained a sense of ownership over their photographs by seeking consent to use some or all of their pictures. Only two boys declined consent to use material from their diaries and cameras, one of whom feared that his friends would be identified even if their faces were covered. Each participant received a set of their photographs to keep as part of our reciprocal relationship (Barker & Weller, 2003b).

Parallel to this sense of ownership was responsibility. Once the completed films came into my care, I felt obliged to forewarn the developers that I was unaware of the nature of the photographs taken as I had not been present. This was important in order to protect myself as a researcher (Horton, 2001; Barker & Weller, 2003b). One boy created a graphic story board of a space important to him and his friends. They had constructed wooden bike ramps in their cul-de-sac. The first few pictures illustrated the boys' stunts on the ramps. In the third picture, however, Bob Steven's friend has fallen off his bike, and as Bob Steven's accompanying diary extract illustrates, the fourth picture shows graphic details of his injuries!

"Me and Al' played out the front of my house. Stu' came down too at the end. Al' hurt himself due to glass on the green outside. I have a picture of the injuries" (Diary extract, Monday, Bob Stevens, aged 13).

Such an example, perhaps seemingly trivial, highlights more significant ethical issues relating to participants' freedom with such research methods,

which relate more broadly to issues of ownership and control over the end product (Alderson, 2000c).

Interpretation is a fundamental issue with regard to such a method. This can encompass both the freedom of interpretation of the research task by participants, as well as the subsequent interpretation of images by the researcher. The majority of participants produced images demonstrating their understanding of the research task. Photographs which seem to the researcher irrelevant can be frustrating (Warren, 2000), but further discussion often highlighted that a seemingly unrelated photograph of a pet dog portrayed a much more complex reality. Moreover, it is all too easy to assume that an image is detailing one side of a story when in reality it is not. As Bailey et al (1999) highlight:

“Researchers come to the study with their own ideology, and as such will harbour their own interpretations of others’ construction of reality”
(p.173).

During subsequent interview discussions I asked participants to outline their interpretations of each photograph they had taken. This triangulation process sometimes challenged my own assumptions and interpretations. Kat, for example, photographed a graffiti-covered bus shelter which I initially interpreted as *‘a place she would like to improve’* from my research agenda. What Kat was actually demonstrating was a place of importance to her, where she regularly hung out, and had played a key role in painting as part of a local Government grant (Barker & Weller, 2003b). It is essential, therefore, that researchers do not transpose their own, often ‘adultist’ interpretations on participants’ photographs and, instead, seek explanations as part of a multi-method approach (Barker & Weller, 2003b). Indeed, later discussions with participants informed the captions used to explain each photograph in chapters five, six and seven.

The ‘camera project’ was implemented in collaboration with the use of week-long diaries. Although each participant was free to opt out of either or both methods, all chose to complete both. The next section of this chapter explores the use of diaries as a teenage-centred research method.

4.5.3 Exploring Teenagers’ Experiences through Diaries

A diary is synonymous with a personal account of one’s life. It, therefore, has

the potential to provide a participant with a sense of ownership over the method, allowing them freely to disclose feelings and experiences that they may find embarrassing or challenging to discuss in an interview setting (Barker & Weller, 2003b). Scott (2000) briefly describes the diary as an interesting and useful method for obtaining in-depth information. Scott (2000) suggests that diaries should be kept simple, and highlights examples in survey research where children's diaries have been beneficial in gaining insights into expenditure and time-use.

The diary as a research method has, however, received recent criticism. MacKenzie (2002) discusses the use of the diary in recording radio listenership. In the study carried out by RAJAR, 215 participants completed diaries, as well as wearing small radio controlled armbands, which recorded the radio stations to which they had tuned. In the diaries, participants noted that they had listened to an average of 2.7 stations a week. The armband recorded an average of 4.4 stations. Participants also overestimated the amount of time they had spent listening to different stations (MacKenzie, 2002). This example reveals the inaccuracies in using diaries, particularly as the sole source findings. Diaries do, however, have many advantages as part of a multi-method approach and as a valuable means of gathering perceptions and feelings.

Participants were asked to complete four sections each day in a week long diary, concerning their inclusion and exclusions from school and the wider community (figure 4.10). These sections included describing the day's events and social activities; illustrating places where participants hung out, avoided, did not feel comfortable or from which they felt excluded; citing people or groups of or from which they felt part or excluded; and elements of citizenship that they had learnt at school or from the television and internet. Diary completion is not always popular as it is seen as 'too much like school work', involving the completion of written tasks (Costley, 2000; Barker & Weller, 2003b). Nevertheless, an equal number of teenagers participated in both the diary and photography projects. Each of the 18 participants completed their diary in a variety of styles. Although each respondent was free to produce drawings, tapes or videos of their week, all chose to write. Some participants wrote daily whilst interest was not prolonged with others, as some obviously grew tired with their diaries. Several used their diaries as a vehicle for airing

their views on many topics and challenged the boundaries of the diary by writing their own comments on how they felt about citizenship or other subjects, particularly local issues.

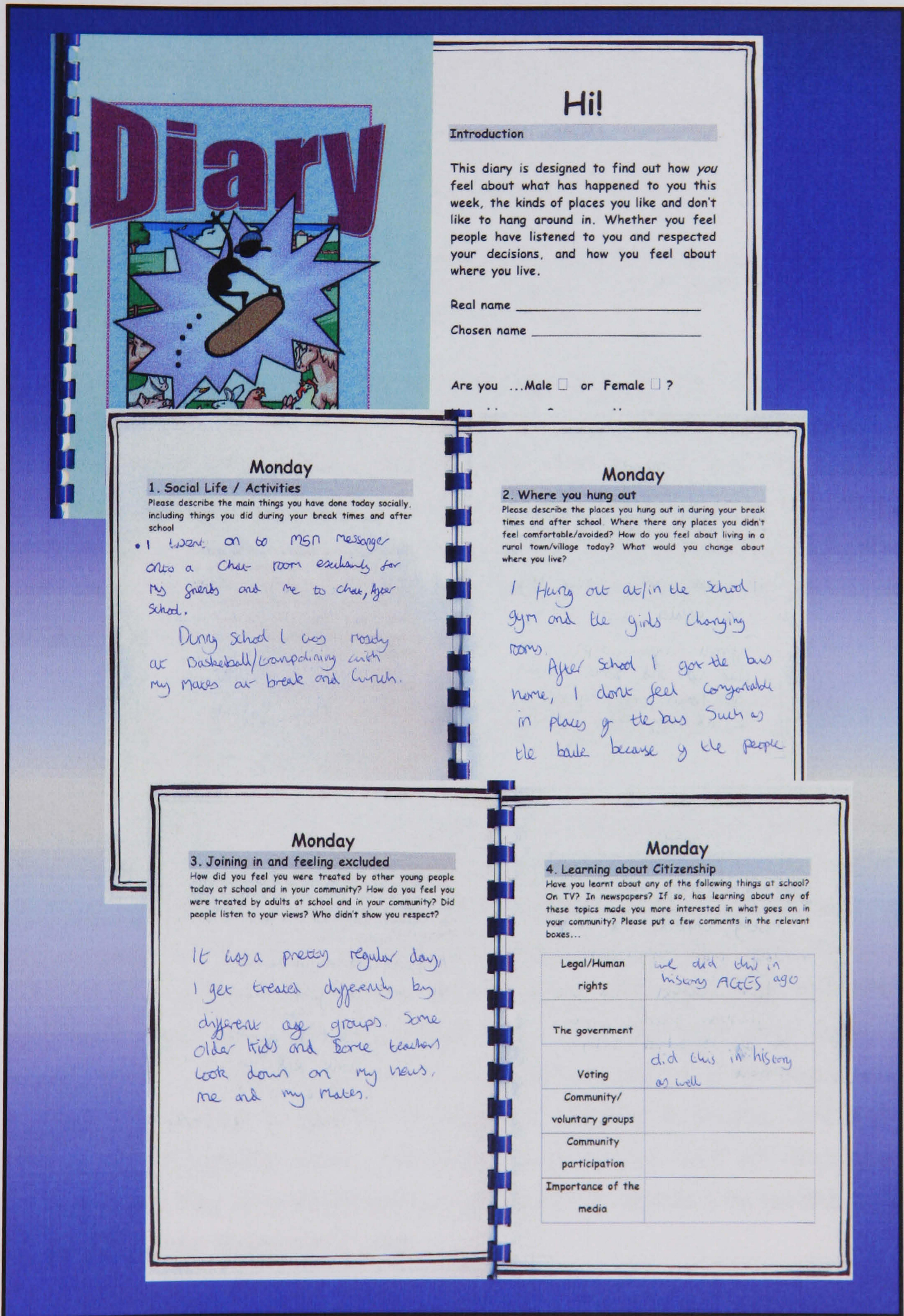


Figure 4.10 The Diary

Several methodological issues arose from adopting diary-completion as a research technique. Whilst freedom of interpretation is important to children or teenage-centred methodologies, this does not always result in the 'data' the researcher first set out to 'obtain'. Participants interpreted the guidelines in a variety of ways, all of which aids contextualisation and allows the diversity of teenagers' lives to be displayed. On preliminary examination of the diaries, I experienced many of Warren's (2000) anxieties and frustrations when he felt a child had not always responded to the task in the way anticipated. NoX's diary reveals very detailed anecdotes about dinner time in his household:

"At 6:30 we had dinner (it looked like cat food but Dad said it was chunks of ham and some peas and carrots but I don't really believe him!)" (Diary Extract, Thursday, NoX, aged 13).

More in-depth contemplation of this reveals a great deal about his daily routines and his interactions with his family. Teenagers' interpretations of research tasks may not explicitly reveal direct 'answers' to research questions, but instead highlight issues and experiences important to their own lives and everyday use of space. Moreover, diaries must be understood within their temporal context. They represent a 'snapshot' from the life of a teenager, as Janna highlights:

"I'm afraid you did not chose a very exciting week. My mum works shifts so I would usually do stuff with her over the weekend!" (Diary extract, 'notes', Janna, aged 13).

The diary method can also raise issues of confidentiality not unlike that of questionnaires. The diaries were distributed in class with two members of teaching staff present. The nature of each research project was outlined, and each teenager was given a consent form explaining that they were free to opt in or out of any particular method. Whilst some exercised their right not to participate, there was some pressure from both teachers and peers. As highlighted earlier, within a school environment it is not usual for teenagers to be given the choice to opt out of activities (Barker & Weller, 2003a). To maintain confidentiality, each respondent was issued with an envelope in which to place their completed diaries before being collected by teaching staff, and subsequently forwarded to me.

The use of diaries not only provided useful detail relating to teenagers' everyday lives, but also as an invaluable stimulus for group and individual

discussion. It is to such discussion that this chapter now turns.

4.5.4 Exploring Teenagers' Experiences through Discussion

Conducting interviews can provide rich, in-depth findings, which focus less upon the closed, 'factual' glimpses of a participant's life that questionnaire-based studies ascertain, and more upon experiences, opinions and feelings (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). The interview is a tangled social encounter; a conversation ingrained with the ebb and flow of power relations in which the interviewer is often seen to hold the greatest power (Robson, 1993; Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Giddens (1997) notes that such an encounter is based upon focused interaction, whereby:

"... individuals directly attend to what others say or do" (p. 77).

Researchers who uphold a more positivist ethos seek to focus upon maintaining objectivity, placing their own views and experiences outside the research agenda. I uphold arguments adopted principally by feminist researchers (see Kitchin & Tate, 2000), in which interaction and reciprocity between researchers and participants is advocated. This, I believe, was highly significant in establishing and maintaining trust and rapport.

For qualitative research methods to be 'successful', they must be contextualised (O'Kane, 2000). Interviewing is seen as a useful tool in gelling such methods into a holistic research process. Alderson & Goodey (1996) outline the fears and complexities associated with interviewing children, and suggest that participants should be given the opportunity to dictate parts of the process. It is important not to view the interview as a passive encounter (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Children and teenagers actively construct and redefine the interview scenario, often bringing their own agendas to the research process. As Alderson & Goodey (1999) suggest:

"... the child interviewees create challenges, refusals, inversions and ironic survival strategies, all of which reset the ethical framework of our encounters" (p. 109).

Kitchin & Tate (2000) outline a typology of interview strategies ranging from the closed quantitative interview, based predominantly upon the idea of a verbal questionnaire, through to the informal conversational interview, offering little predetermined structure, except that of a theme. The former of these

interview strategies arguably adds little to a multi-method approach that has already implemented a questionnaire. Participants are limited in the extent to which they can expand upon their experiences, and contribute to areas of the research that the interviewer may not have considered. Nevertheless, such an approach does allow for ease of comparison between respondents (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). The latter, the informal conversational interview, allows respondents to disclose their experiences with more freedom, and in the order they wish. This often negates, to some extent, interviewer bias and frequently provides rich findings based on questions which arise during the discussion. The researcher is then able to probe and determine questions, which are often more relevant to the individual research setting (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). In the centre of this typology lies the structured open-ended interview and the interview guide approach. The former of these two typologies essentially builds in a qualitative element and some flexibility rather than closed categorisation. The interviewer guide approach, however, is a highly favoured option as it allows the researcher some structure through the use of themes. The exact wording of questions and the order in which they are asked is not predetermined. This permits greater flexibility to probe, discuss, identify and follow up interesting points. This strategy can often be challenging for the researcher as topics may be omitted, and comparative analysis between interviews is difficult. The interviewer must also channel the conversation to the research (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). The style of interview chosen for this research fuses the interviewer guide approach with Kitchin & Tate's (2000) final typology; the group interview (figure 4.11). In the group interview, the researcher often takes on the role of a moderator directing the focus of the discussion (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Group interviews instigate discussion as respondents encourage, respond and feel 'safer' as a group, although less confident participants may be excluded (Kitchin & Tate, 2000).

Name: _____ Pretend Name: _____
 Date: _____ Address: _____

1. Introduction
 - (a) Reason for research
 - (b) You choose what we talk about
 - (c) Confidentiality - address to check agree/Pretend name
 - (d) Happy to use photos/diary - examples from journal
 - (e) Tape recorder
2. Tell me about yourself...
 - (a) Interests?
 - (b) Mainly socialise?
 - (c) How long live on Island? (i) Rural/Town? (ii) Like living? Community?
3. Tell me about where you live...
 - (a) Like where live? Rural? Urban?
 - (b) Images of rural?/Countryside?
 - (c) Island? Like? Change views with age?
 - (d) Feel portrayed as rural?
4. Tell me about where you hang out... (Photos/Diary)
 - (a) Hang out - Important places? /Forbidden places?
 - (b) Excluded from? Uncomfortable places?
 - (c) Claimed as own/Reason for Decision?
 - (d) Helped create/Made decisions
 - (e) Change/Improve
5. Tell me about your experiences of...
 - (a) Asked opinion? Feel listened to? Ignored? By whom?
 - (b) Excluded? who/when/where/how -People/money/ examples
 - (c) Youth Forum
 - (d) Participate in Community? Want to?
 - (e) Facilities?
6. Tell me about citizenship lessons...
 - (a) What know about - what does it mean? Topics?
 - (b) What experiences already bring to citizenship?
 - (c) How feel about studying it?
 - (d) Interesting/Useful? Now/Future
 - (e) Encourage in community? Confidence? Are interested?
7. Tell me about how you feel as a young person.
 - (a) Dependent on parents to make decisions?
 - (b) Responsibilities
 - (c) How treated by other young people? Other teenagers?
 - (d) What suggest for better community?
8. Tell me about any other views you have..
9. Age? Ethnicity?

Notes from
Diaries/
Photos

I am happy for you to use my (please tick)
 Interview Comments ... [] Diary Comments ...[] Photos ... []...as long
 as no-one can identify me in them.
 Signed _____

Figure 4.11 The Interview Schedule

All interviews took place as face-to-face discussions, in order to gauge body language and facial expressions, in addition to establishing rapport. As Giddens (1997) suggests, 'the compulsion of proximity' renders face-to-face conversation more desirable than at a distance using, for example, email, enabling participants to gauge unspoken gestures and feelings. Gestures are often culturally specific, whereas much research suggests that facial expressions are not subject to such cultural variations (Giddens, 1997). Observing non-verbal communication is useful in providing context to participants' responses; for example, when a teenager indicates they are being humorous or responding in jest.

As Giddens (1997) suggests, interaction is 'situated', being bound geographically and temporally. Location is, therefore, a fundamental factor in the effectiveness of an interview. Discussion with a teenager within their home raises practical and ethical issues. Finding a quiet and private space within the home is not always simple (Valentine, 1999). Conducting an interview within a teenager's bedroom potentially places the researcher at risk of either accusation or assault. Moreover, it may be seen by the teenager as an infringement of privacy (Valentine, 1999). More 'neutral' spaces may, however, be subject to disruption and noise. Similarly, interviewing teenagers within a school may encourage different responses to those gleaned at home. Conducting interviews within a school is not unproblematic. Finding a space both physically and within the timetable requires a process of negotiation with teaching staff and the participant(s). I was allocated a classroom:

"It was a small classroom overlooking the library. There are no external windows. The room was set out fairly formally so I moved a couple of chairs and tables, and arranged four seats more casually around the table. The table was useful for the tape recorder and also showing photos" (Research Diary, p. 53, 2nd July 2002).

I attempted to change the layout of the room that I had been assigned to make it less classroom-like. Having viewed photographs (figure 4.12) of the changes, it is apparent that despite efforts to reconstruct a space within the school it still maintained the appearance of a classroom (Barker & Weller, 2003a). Holmes (1998), in part, remedies this dilemma by suggesting that a classroom setting is a more suitable venue in which to conduct interviews, as taking a teenager out of the classroom is often equated with 'bad behaviour'.

Other spaces within the school, such as the canteen or 'year bases' (similar to common rooms) were also deemed inappropriate. Such areas would not have allowed confidentiality to be maintained as the architecture of the school renders these spaces very public. Furthermore, an 'on call' teacher patrols such areas during lesson time checking for truants.

Before we started the discussions, I endeavoured to break down barriers between myself and the participants by identifying common interests aside from the research task. Furthermore, the feminist stance on methodology refutes the idea of researcher objectivity and so to establish rapport I turned to television:

"We then did a test run of the tape. I asked them whether they'd seen 'Big Brother'. This seemed to break down the barriers a little"
(Research Diary, pp. 53-54, 2nd July 2002).

This short conversation prior to the more research-based discussion allowed me to learn a little about the participants' views and interests, as well as to forge a reciprocal relationship by sharing some of my own ideas on a subject unrelated to the research. All participants consented to recording the discussion on tape. This enabled me to engage fully in dialogue without the distraction of note-taking (Kitchin & Tate, 2000).

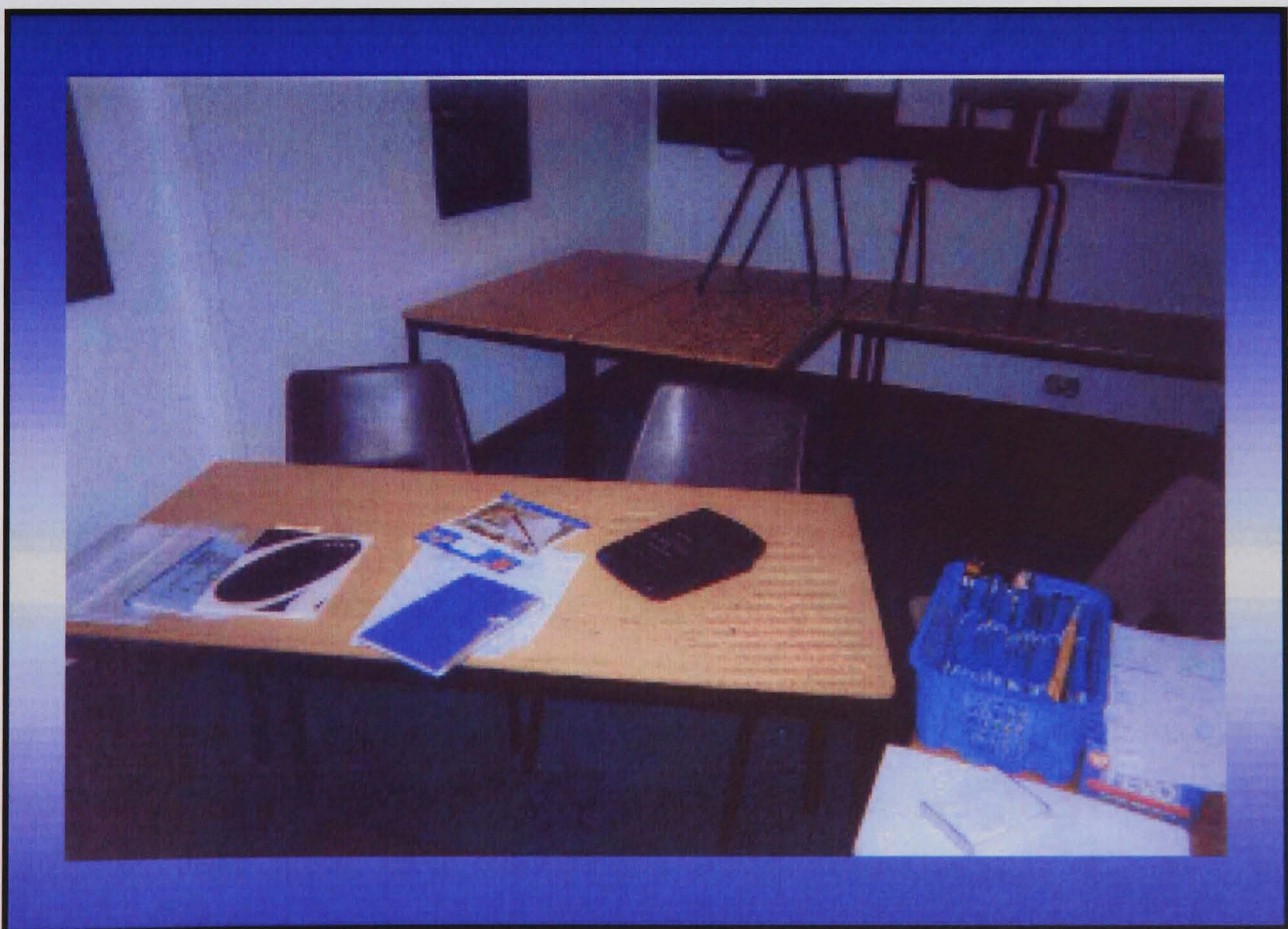


Figure 4.12 Attempting to Change the Space of Discussion

In an attempt to deconstruct the 'traditional' interview scenario, children's geographers have adopted innovative approaches to 'the interview'. Young & Barrett's (2001) paper outlines the use of mock radio interviews with street children. During this exercise participants questioned and probed one another, in addition to controlling tape recorders. Nesbitt (2000) also encourages her respondents to turn off the tape recorder at any point during the interview. Innovative adaptations of 'the interview' are also beneficial in maintaining the interest of a participant. Holmes (1998) devised a game where the children became newspaper reporters, interviewing both one another and the researcher. Such approaches allow participants to feel an integral part of the research process, nurturing confidence, respect and trust. I tried to foster such trust and rapport by negotiating and consulting with the teenagers involved at each stage of the interview process. With the agreement of the school, I was able to give the respondents a free choice over the timing of their discussion within one school week. This not only established rapport but also meant that many interviews were prolonged and more in-depth, as participants preferred to be interviewed than to take part in their lesson:

"I then drew up a list for people to sign their name against and to choose a time slot. Most spent time calculating when their worst lesson was so some time slots were very popular [Maths!]"
(Research Diary, p. 52, 2nd July 2002).

Participants appeared to value this freedom to choose, and on the final day of discussions many thanked me. The teenagers also chose whether they wished to participate in group discussions with friends or on their own:

"Only three teenagers chose to be interviewed individually. All the rest in groups of two or three. So far I've only done group interviews and they definitely seem effective. As friendship groups they seemed to be quite open and bounce views and thoughts off of one another"
(Research Diary, pp. 52-53, 2nd July 2002).

Whilst group interviews were, in general, seen to be beneficial, there were two cases where members of the group tried to dominate discussion. This, interestingly, occurred in groups of three and in every case the participant sitting in the middle was most vocal. Early on in the discussion, each teenager went through their own photographs explaining their rationale for taking them. This acted as a counter to the dominant group member, as each participant had the opportunity to share their own experiences. Individual interviews were quite different and on the whole took place with less vocal

teenagers, and frequently required flexibility in the interview process:

“Rammstein Nut was much more quietly spoken (and admitted so herself) but did talk on the tape recorder for about 20 minutes. Occasionally she folded her arms and I sensed her discomfort. Perhaps I was not giving out good signals as I had a terrible headache and was, by now, feeling quite tired ... After the tape recorder was switched off Rammstein Nut opened up more and discussed her life and issues in much more depth for about 40 minutes. I felt it would be too intrusive to write notes so I just listened, memorising the main points and jotting them down after she’d left” (Research Diary, pp. 58-59, 2nd July 2002).

As Kitchin & Tate (2000) suggest, it is important not only to record verbal dialogue but only to note body language and gestures. After each discussion notes on the direction of the conversation were taken, as well as adding any ‘findings’ referred to whilst the tape recorder was not on. Such notes also allowed for critical evaluation of the progression of each discussion from which changes were made to the wording of some questions.

I believed it was important that participants felt not only at ease during the discussion, but also that their responses would be used meaningfully. Integral to seeking informed consent, I demonstrated potential ways in which findings might be disseminated by showing participants journal articles with polyvocal text and photographs. Participants were also asked if they would like to receive a transcript of the discussion to amend, although no-one did so. Moreover, as Kitchin & Tate (2000) profess, researchers must:

“... become engaged in the life of the interviewee” (p. 219).

My own experiences as a former pupil of the school and resident of the Island, coupled with my position as a young, white woman, impacted upon the discussion process in that I was often able to relate to some of the teenagers’ experiences, either by having knowledge of a local space, a facility or a frustration. Whilst this appeared to aid ‘access’ to many of the participants’ thoughts and feelings, it must not be overestimated as their experiences were diverse, subject to temporal change and quite unique (Weller, 2004). Using the synthesis of the interview guide approach and the group interview allowed me to identify a basic set of themes and emerging questions. Having completed a preliminary examination of the participants’ photographs and diaries, I was able to customise each interview schedule with annotations. This enabled me to ask specific questions to participants and provided good

sources to probe and prompt conversation, in addition to forging more established research relationships which resulted in continued discussion via email. This, as Kitchin & Tate (2000) suggest, is significant in fostering relationships beyond the interview scenario. Furthermore, I was able to demonstrate a central element of this research; that I had listened to their voices.

Whilst group and individual discussions proved an effective means of gathering information on teenagers' experiences, I wanted to develop methods which would enable a broader range of teenagers from across the Island to participate. The following two sections of this chapter highlight innovative approaches which, I believe, have the potential to become inclusive research methods.

4.5.5 Exploring Teenagers' Experiences through a Radio Phone-in

Those conducting children or teenage-centred research continuously seek new and innovative methods which encourage participants to select their own form of communication as active researchers (Thomas & O'Kane, 1999). More broadly, children-centred researchers often draw upon feminist thought to develop methods which aim to empower children and teenagers. Concurrently, but quite distinct from research methodology, Ingram (2002) suggests that radio listenership has increased within the UK. Barnard (2000) emphasises the universality of radio, as a medium readily available in Britain. A multitude of radio stations exist promoting eclectic mixes of music, politics, ethnic and cultural diversity. Moreover, radio has become an alluring mechanism aimed at empowering socially excluded communities. For example, *Radio Regen* in Manchester, UK was established as a force for community regeneration, whilst in Australia the Goulburn Valley community has utilised radio broadcasting for the *Schools on Air* programme (Communications Law Centre, 2002; Everitt, 2003). Barnard (2000) highlights that community radio is often:

"... a response to mainstream radio's tendency to either ignore or fail to adequately reflect the needs of minority audiences" (p. 68).

Alternativism to mainstream radio has played a key role in broadcasting and communicating alternative standpoints on a plethora of issues, from music

genres to political opinions during conflict (Barnard, 2000). Moreover, Glover (2001) highlights the immensely powerful way in which 'Radio Montserrat' operated to reunite families, and purvey essential information to communities after catastrophic volcanic eruptions in 1997. As such, community radio exists as a 'not-for-profit' entity seeking to include the excluded (Barnard, 2000; Everitt, 2003). Nevertheless, local commercial radio, operating as a 'business-for-profit', also provides a forum for both the public sphere and inclusion of community members through engaging listeners and participants in local issues. Barnard (2000) outlines children and teenagers under the age of fifteen as the largest listenership of commercial radio.

Whilst, to some extent, radio fits within the realm of mass media, in many cases genres such as community radio reflect Habermas' (1989) analysis of the emergence of the public sphere, and more influentially democracy itself, in European coffee houses and salons (Giddens, 1997). Habermas argues that mass media has devalued the public sphere, by what Baudrillard refers to as the creation of hyperreality, whereby forms such as television are not just representations of the world but are those which define it (Giddens, 1997). Community radio, however, continues to allow this kind of arena of public discussion, or public sphere, to exist at the local level. As Barnard (2000) suggests:

"... radio lets the world in, but on the listener's own terms; it enables the listener to become as close or as distant as he or she prefers. Through radio, a listener can connect without engagement or commitment" (p. 105).

It is through talk radio, or more specifically in relation to this research, the radio phone-in, that listeners transgress the boundaries to become participants. Such programmes emerged in 1950s America, allowing listeners to respond and participate in discussion, quite spontaneously via telephone (Barnard, 2000), and more recently by e-mail. The importance of, and interest in, the radio phone-in has been recently popularised and documented by the American television series 'Frasier', as well as in literary terms through Armistead Maupin's (2001) novel 'The Night Listener'. Radio phone-ins in the UK exist at both the national and local levels. Whilst, for the radio station, phone-in programmes attract high audience levels, they also reinforce relationships between listener and community, with the presenter negotiating between the two:

“Phone-ins are the only real means by which ‘ordinary people’ reach the airwaves: they give the everyday listener the opportunity to speak his or her mind and influence the opinions of others. In reality, the opportunity may be limited and subject to gatekeeping policies ...”
(Barnard, 2000: 158).

As Barnard (2000) highlights, the limitations of the phone-in discussion as an instrument of empowerment must be acknowledged as programme presenters can sometimes contradict or even humiliate callers to make the show more appealing.

Whilst children have largely been excluded from the world of radio (Everitt, 2003), several Non-Governmental Organisations have utilised the medium as a tool for empowering and educating children. *Redd Barna*, for example, used radio broadcasting as an educational tool for promoting the UNCRC, whilst UNICEF have been key instigators in developing the *International Children’s Day of Broadcasting* (Communications Law Centre, 2002). Nationally, a few radio stations have been created which adopt a children-centred approach, providing children and teenagers with the opportunity to have some degree of control over the running of the station and, moreover, a space in which to broadcast their views (Everitt, 2003). Examples include ‘*Takeover Radio*’ in Leicester and ‘*KidsFM*’ in Reading (Everitt, 2003). Both children-centred research and radio broadcasting, therefore, adopt many similar principles relating to community empowerment. In attempting to synthesise these two concepts I sought to develop a ‘new’ method, which aimed to collect teenagers’ voices, whilst at the same time serving to promote them to a wider audience. Moreover, this approach, I believe, echoes the connection of presence/absence or local/global discourse utilised in other forms of media (McGrew, 1996; Valentine et al, 2000; Barker & Weller, 2003a).

Isle of Wight Radio has been broadcasting since 1989 and was awarded an FM licence in 1998. The expansion and development of the station was acknowledged in 1998 when it was nominated as Station of the Year at the eminent Sony Radio Awards. In 2000 the station achieved the highest average audience in England (Isle of Wight Radio, 2003). During a previous research project I had negotiated access to the local radio phone-in (Weller, 2000). The programme features as part of the weekday lunchtime line-up, and the topic of discussion may be suggested by a caller, guest speaker or the radio station,

although predominantly it is determined by local current affairs. Discussion topics vary from local unemployment to the positioning of three foot ornamental kangaroos! The broadcast is one hour long, broken by two to three commercial breaks.

Establishing a children and teenager-centred phone-in involved two lengthy sets of discussions. The most important negotiations took place with the teenage participants. Whilst most teenagers preferred listening to national stations many were keen to get their ideas across to the rest of the Island on local radio. Many explicitly expressed feelings of not being listened to and were struggling to find ways to compel local decisions-makers to hear their views. This initial stage of negotiations with participants suggested that a radio phone-in dedicated to local children and teenagers would be an effective method of both experience collection and dissemination. With support from the school, several teenagers volunteered to lead discussion during the live programme. Two volunteers, Janna and Nikki, were available on the day the radio station had scheduled the show (figure 4.13). I hoped that the direct involvement of participants in shaping the discussion would help to foster a teenage-centred research space (figure 4.14). The second set of negotiations involved the radio station. Initial discussions were straightforward and the station agreed in principle to host the phone-in during the school holidays to ensure that teenagers would be able to participate. Shortly after these discussions the live show received some hoax calls and the presenter became concerned that a show dedicated to children and teenagers could attract further difficult calls:

“I have to try and convince them today that it’s a good idea, and that lots of kids will call in. This wasn’t going to be easy! ... [the DJ] was concerned that there would not be enough callers so I told him about my ideas to write to all the local schools to advertise it, and also hopefully, to put a few lines in the [local paper] ... They hadn’t said no, which was great but at the same time they hadn’t set a definite date so I still had big concerns about whether it would come off. I’m so keen to try and develop this as a research method and not to let the kids down” (Research Diary, pp. 29-30, Saturday 16th March 2002).



Figure 4.13 Research Assistants, Nikki and Janna, at the Radio Station



Figure 4.14 Spaces of Research: the Radio Station

The phone-in had to be marketed specifically to children and teenagers as the programme is on-air during the school day and, therefore, usually only attracts adult participants. Prior to the school holidays I distributed posters to every primary, middle and high school on the Island, to ensure a wide range of age groups would have the opportunity to voice their opinions (figure 4.15). I later discovered, during a conversation relating to local events on the programme, that posters are not always an effective means of communicating with teenagers. A further method of promotion involved submitting a press release advertising the programme to the local paper. There appears, however, to be some hostility between the paper and the radio station and so the article was never published.

Feel Ignored?

- Do you feel ignored as a young person?
- Ever wished someone would listen to your opinion on Island life?
- What would YOU like to change about the Island?

Have YOUR Say!

On **Thursday 6th June**
between
12 noon - 1pm

Isle of Wight radio is hosting a radio show for young people to discuss their views on Island life.

Tune in & Phone in!
Phone in and have your say live on air!
(01983) 822002

Tune in to Isle of Wight radio on
102 FM OR 107 FM

Figure 4.15 Advertising the Radio Phone-in

The power relations during the broadcast ebbed and flowed between Janna, Nikki, the presenter, the callers and myself. Kitchin & Tate (2000) draw upon feminist ideals to suggest that power relations must constantly be re-negotiated. The interviewer bias and intersubjectivity was perhaps more explicit in this method due to the multiple interviewer effect. This adds greater challenges to Kitchin & Tate's (2000) consideration of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Many feminist researchers would suggest that it is fundamentally important for the interviewer to answer questions from the interviewee in order to build trust and rapport. During the radio broadcast, there was not one interviewer but at different times Janna, Nikki, the presenter, the callers or myself asked direct or rhetorical questions to each other or to the wider audience. The presenter undoubtedly asked the most questions, and led and often dominated discussion with his own agenda. This particular presenter was not the regular host and so I was not aware of his attitudes towards children and teenagers before we started the show. Potentially, he had the power to promote teenagers' voices in a derogatory light or to be dismissive or hostile, thus achieving the opposite of what I had set out to do. The presenter also prepared his own sheet of questions to ask, many of which were skewed to his agenda. He was particularly critical of a recent music concert held on the Island and was keen to muster support. He often played on the fact that it was a children and teenage-centred phone-in to reinforce his views that ticket prices were too expensive. As Barnard (2000) notes, presenters often use both overt and covert techniques to control and filter out callers, and determine the length of the discussion with any particular participant. The role and potential power of any such individual enlisted into the research process is important to acknowledge especially when attempting to foster teenage-centred research spaces. In this instance, the presenter often dominated the discussion which, at times, challenged the legitimacy of the radio phone-in as a viable research method. Any calls that the presenter felt could not be marketed to the audience were cut short. He also appeared to give more time to calls which fitted in with his own agenda. Whilst this meant that many issues I wished to discuss were contextualised his actions often made it difficult to foster a meaningful teenage-centred research space. The presenter's power to construct discussion and select which voices were given the greatest credence and airtime did not conform to the way in which many social scientists aim to carry out their research, for example, sensationalising issues. Indeed, his training as a media

presenter/interviewer is likely to have been very different to the interview ethos adopted by those conducting research with children. Furthermore, Janna and Nikki were often only included in the discussion when the presenter asked them questions:

"[The DJ] had an amazing ability to waffle on for ages and had made a list of possible topics for discussion. In a way this was really good but it also made sticking to my own research agenda quite challenging" (Research Diary, pp. 44-45, 6th June 2002).

The 'interviewer effect' was, therefore, highly complex. Whilst endeavouring to create a children or teenage-centred research space, it was apparent that the multitude of agendas greatly influenced the research process. The research agenda that Janna, Nikki and I had created was often challenged by the presenter's own particular opinions on local political issues or by topics that would increase the listenership of the programme. One caller participated merely to advertise his business, thus detracting from my original teenage-centred approach. This is not to say that Janna and Nikki did not have their own agendas either, as they were both seeking to improve their oral communication skills for future careers:

Nikki: *To make me more confident with my speaking out loud.*

Presenter: *Oh well you're very ... you're speaking out loud now to the whole Island!* (Radio Phone-in Discussion, 6th June 2001).

Furthermore, the relationship between those in the studio and callers was also imbalanced, as the former incur the benefit of quality sound equipment rather than speaking over, for example, a mobile phone which may be intermittent (Barnard, 2000).

The impact of this censorship was apparent throughout the broadcast as the presenter reinforced his role as an employee of the radio station. One caller criticised the local bus company. The presenter was obliged to defend the bus company to ensure that the radio station was not threatened with legal action, thus illustrating the limitations of a radio broadcast as a research method. The freedom of speech afforded to, for example, an interview or focus group is controlled by the public/commercial nature of the discussion. Children-centred research aims to present children and teenagers with the opportunity to select their own forms of communication. Other research methods that I have utilised demonstrate that some teenagers opt to use 'bad language' to highlight their experiences. The radio discussion prevented this

kind of freedom of speech. For some adult callers, however, derogatory language was an issue. One example of the limitations inherent in creating a children or teenage-centred space was the power that adult callers held over Janna and Nikki in the studio. Caller nine, an elderly man, insisted on referring to Janna and Nikki as kiddies, even when corrected by the presenter. The presenter had the potential to be a positive influence on the research setting by helping to promote a teenage-centred ethos. Nevertheless, the presenter was not trained in carrying out research with children and young people. This section has illustrated important ethical and methodological implications of enlisting an external individual into the research process.

The most important issue for this research method was the adult domination during the broadcast. The majority of callers were adults telephoning to discuss their perceptions of teenagers' experiences. Whilst Janna and Nikki participated a great deal, this was often only in response to the presenter's questions or callers' comments. This was, in part because the research space was a new experience for them. Often during commercial breaks the girls would discuss issues related to the research but would be too nervous to mention them on air. The presenter was an important enabling factor in this instance as he was able to incorporate conversations that had taken place off-air into the programme. Radio stations, such as '*KidsFM*', which are organised and managed by children themselves, have the potential to provide more empowering and comfortable spaces for children-centred research as they are not led by adults. In this radio phone-in the presenter was often domineering and authoritarian which may have deterred some teenagers from participating. Ultimately he was the commander of the research space, giving Janna and Nikki little opportunity to actually lead discussion. Moreover, the phone-in was governed by regular callers often operating as their own, rather exclusive, community. Such frequent contributors may have alienated new, younger participants.

Informed consent became a complex issue within the radio phone-in. One of my key ideals behind the discussion was that participants would be able to invite themselves into the discussion. Unlike a focus group, callers would not be preselected. As Barnard (2000) notes:

“The phone-in presenter is always in control: ‘the invitation’ to take part in his or her programme is just that - an invitation from someone who is himself empowered by the station to temporarily empower others (with given limits)” (p.160).

Once the programme had begun, potential participants were under no obligation to call in. Some callers might respond to a particular point, or to another listener’s comment. This I hoped would create a ‘self invitation’ type of research method, a more egalitarian approach than perhaps a focus group. Listeners were informed about my research project throughout the show and gave their consent to participate by calling in. Shy listeners could participate via e-mail, remain anonymous or give a pseudonym. I hoped that such an approach might involve participants who would not perhaps come forward for face-to-face research, and so had the potential to reach those most socially excluded. This method may, however, have provided potential participants with the opportunity to present themselves with ‘false’ identities, although this may also occur when using more conventional techniques.

The only written consent that was obtained was from Janna, Nikki and their parent(s). This raised several ethical issues which related especially to the ability of teenagers to make an informed decision about participating in the programme. Unlike more conventional research methods, which have been tested rigourously, I did not know what the potential outcomes of the phone-in would be. It was difficult to explain to Nikki and Janna the full implications of the show which raises ethical issues in terms *informed* consent. Moreover, prior to the show an academic had, having seen a poster advertising the broadcast, called with concerns about the ethical implications of a distressed teenager calling in. This was a particularly challenging issue and one upon which I reflected for all my research methods. Ideologically, I was determined to provide children and teenagers with the freedom to call in. There were, however, several practical measures in place to deal with distressed callers before they were live on air. Participants were placed in a queuing system and asked the nature of their call off-air. Had the scenario arisen, distressed callers could have been advised on suitable organisations to contact for help. There was also a four second delay system on the broadcast. The issue of informed consent for the radio phone-in raised many similar issues to more traditional research methods. These were, however, refracted due to the unique public and private sphere of the research space. For callers, there was perhaps greater freedom to withdraw consent during the implementation of

such a technique than in a research method where the participant has to be physically present.

Using alternative technologies, I believe, increases the opportunity for reaching a wider range of participants, including those more disenfranchised teenagers. Such methods, although seldom used, appear attractive to children and teenagers, particularly when they raise the profile of causes which participants hold dear. The final outcomes of the phone-in were, indeed, adult orientated although these findings did enable a broader picture of teenagers' lives to be ascertained. Positioned between public and private spheres, such new methods do, however, raise particular ethical and procedural challenges. This research recognised such challenges, adopting practical measures to counter ethical problems. Importantly, as a research space the radio phone-in fell short of becoming an ideal children or teenage-centred research space in that discussion was adult and presenter dominated. Nevertheless, I do believe that it has the potential to be adapted and refined into a more realistic teenage-centred research method, which enables the promotion of teenagers' voices. The next unit of this chapter examines the use of web-board discussions as a teenage-centred research method.

4.5.6 Exploring Teenagers' Experiences through the Internet

Hewson et al (2003) outline the possibilities of using Internet-Mediated Research (IMR) to carry out primary research through the adaptation of existing methods. A vast variety of *Listservs* or electronic discussion groups exist globally on any number of issues. More recently, they have become an effective research tool (Hewson et al, 2003). *Listservs* are constructed around members' common interests. Once a user has subscribed to an electronic discussion group they may post messages to all other members of that group. The only prerequisite for participation is that each contributor has to have an email address (Hewson et al, 2003). Electronic discussion groups or web-board discussions are an increasingly popular form of communication with teenagers, and so are ideally suited for adaptation as a research method. As Kitchin & Tate (2000) cite, e-mail and Internet Relay Chat are growing in popularity as interview techniques. Such methods are beneficial in that they allow geographically dispersed participants to discuss issues anonymously with others (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). The use of online surveys

has been noted by Hoggart et al (2002) to be a useful means of reaching excluded groups.

One of the principal criticisms of IMR is sample bias. Until recently this would have excluded a large sample of the population in the UK, but the introduction of free internet access in public libraries and the emergence of cyber-cafes has increased potential contribution to those who do not have internet access at home. Electronic discussion groups, by their very nature, will, however, involve specific sections of the population (Hewson et al, 2003). Although few comparative studies have been undertaken, several (see Krantz et al, 1997; Smith & Leigh, 1997; Stanton, 1998) suggest that samples recruited using IMR do not differ tremendously from those gathered through more conventional methods. The key factor in ensuring fair representation lies in the chosen sampling method (Hewson et al, 2003). Furthermore, Hewson et al (2003) argue that the focus of much research is not upon the entire population but upon specific demographic or interest groups. Indeed, the focus of much qualitative research is upon the exploration of individual experiences (Hewson et al, 2003). Instead, IMR is beneficial in that it allows a wide-range of participants to be targeted relatively quickly across the world (Hewson et al, 2003). In terms of children or teenage-centred research, incorporating young people into IMR raises specific ethical issues in relation to the potential power or threat an adult posing as a child may have on young contributors. The internet is often portrayed as an arena in which individuals can adopt any chosen identity. Such issues are echoed in media panics about children's safety when using the internet in relation to, for example, their vulnerability to predatory adults. Arguably, whilst there are implications for respondents to give false identities, this could also occur in other research methods (Giddens, 1997; Hewson et al, 2003).

Hewson et al (2003) outline three types of discussion group. The first is the open list where anyone is entitled to contribute. The second is the moderated list where all messages are screened before posting. The final form is the closed list where permission has to be sought prior to contribution. I participated in a number of web-board discussions utilising an Island-wide forum moderated by the Local Government. This site is the only web-based arena for the debate of local issues open to all age groups. The discussion board is subdivided into several forums, including 'Island Living' and 'Island

Learning' (figure 4.16).

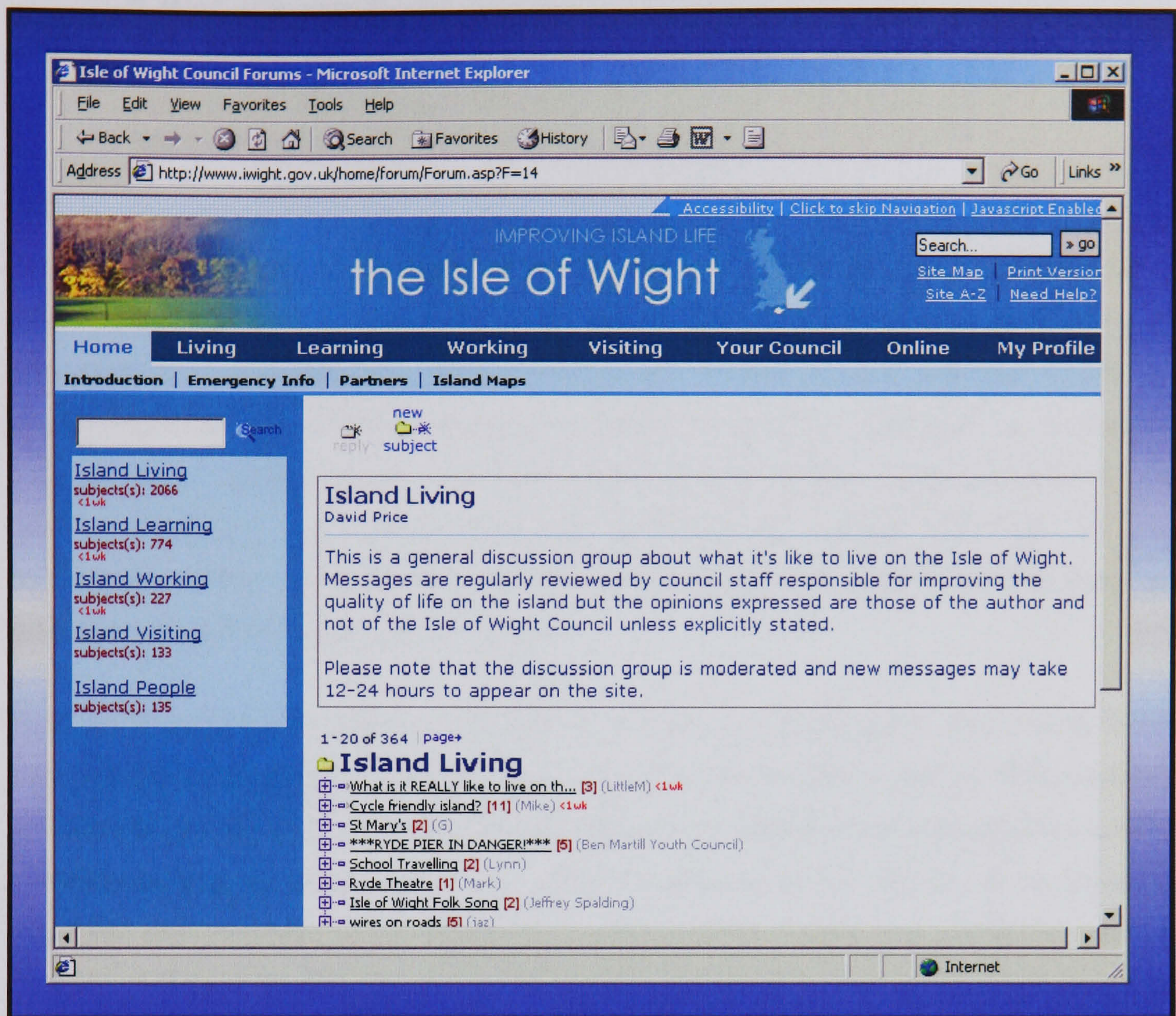


Figure 4.16 Spaces of Research: The Isle of Wight Web Discussion Group.

Participants post a message on one of these forums and other respondents are able to reply to that message or to start a new subject. Whilst the forum is monitored for content by the council, the nature of some of the messages currently on the board suggests that censorship is rare. This method was chosen in tandem with the radio phone-in discussion and was believed to allow the contribution of residents who were less confident or wished to maintain their anonymity. There is a delay (usually 24 hours) between when a message is posted and when it appears on the forum. This method, therefore, requires some degree of patience between participants.

This method is, of course, not wholly inclusive as it is dependent on access to the internet. In many ways, however, the web forum was a more successful means of engaging teenagers than the radio phone-in as it attracted more participants. I asked one regular contributor whether he felt the forum was a

good way for teenagers to be heard:

“I think this web board is a good way to communicate to the adult population, to be listened to. Most teenagers are judged on their appearance and this is why a lot of them are ignored or they are considered incompetent of understanding etc.” (Richard, aged 17, ‘Island Living’ Web Forum, 12th February 2003).

IMR is also advantageous in that participants often respond at greater length than in other survey techniques. Furthermore, negative aspects of interviewer effect may not be so apparent (Hoggart et al, 2002). Richard was able to continue our discussions privately through email, which created more in-depth, rich findings. The legitimacy of IMR as a means of providing authentic voices is, to some extent, questionable. Using follow-up discussions via email reinforced the ‘authenticity’ of participants’ voices although in any research method individuals provide interpretations of their lives that may be adapted to portray alternative guises.

Further to asking my own questions in relation to teenagers’ experiences on the Island, I observed archival data from previous discussions. IMR creates challenging ethical dilemmas surrounding the validity of a researcher using publicly available information as data (Hewson et al, 2003). It is unclear whether the Internet, as a whole or in part, exists within the public or private domain. Whilst Hewson et al (2003) acknowledge that further work is required in this area, they suggest that using postings which have been in the public domain is ethically justifiable as long as participants’ identities remain anonymous. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity may arise, however, amongst discussion groups which are geographically close. For example, whilst participants can use pseudonyms to disguise their identities, other aspects of their contributions on the web forum may give their identity away.

Positioned between both public and private domains, both IMR and the radio phone-in, as relatively new and innovative research methods, have particular ethical and procedural implications. The principal implication of adopting such methods is that participant’s contributions, whether given openly or anonymously, automatically enter the public domain.

The plethora of methods utilised in this research were tied together through constant observation and the completion of a fieldwork diary. The next section of this chapter turns to explore the final process of ‘experience finding’.

4.5.7 Exploring Teenagers' Experiences through Observation

Observation requires the noting and interpretation of behaviours and events (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). It allows the researcher to view participants' actual practice rather than their perceived practice as communicated orally in an interview. Observation also permits a more longitudinal account of a social group's experiences rather than the single glimpse that an interview might provide. Observation is, however, often criticised for the extent to which observers place their own interpretations and prejudices upon the lives of others. Kitchin & Tate (2000) refer to this stance as a 'selective position', whereby the positionality of the observer impacts upon what is seen. This can take the form of over-emphasising the significance of a particular practice and reading too much into the situation. Indeed, anthropological research pertaining to functionalism has been criticised for applying characteristics held by individuals to whole societies. Giddens (1997), for example, notes functionalist thought on the 'needs' and 'purposes' of societies, when these notions can only belong to individuals.

Observation can be undertaken in a covert or overt manner. In the former the role of the researcher is not disclosed, thus the researcher does not impact upon the actions and events under observation. Covert observation carries many ethical dilemmas, particularly in relation to deception and failing to gain informed consent (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Overt observation aims not to be hidden, although arguably a researcher is unlikely to reveal all aspects of the project to participants. Furthermore, covert and overt observation can be approached as either participant observation or straight observation (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Participant observation involves the observer moving beyond the role of 'seeing' to taking part actively in individual lives by becoming a member of the observed community (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). This approach frequently involves the full time collection of findings over a sustained period of time, and issues of access can often be challenging. Overtly, researchers partake in participant observation by building relationships in their study communities (Kitchin & Tate, 2000), and observations can be reinforced by questioning participants. Giddens (1997) warns that researchers may lose sight of their role as an outside observer by becoming too much of an insider. Alternatively, overt participant observers risk exclusion and non-acceptance from original community members (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Participant observation can also be conducted covertly, again raising issues of deception and informed

consent, as well as arguably and, presumptuously, presenting research findings that do not accurately reflect the experiences of the observed. As Kitchin & Tate (2000) acknowledge, straight observation adopts a more detached role, attempting to be unobtrusive. Generally this approach is undertaken in an overt manner with the researcher observing events on the periphery. Covert straight participation is, however, possible. Robson (1993) describes such a method as marginal observation whereby the researcher is both detached and unsuspected by the observed.

Participant observation was favoured for citizenship education planning meetings at the school. This was seen as integral to fostering a reciprocal relationship between myself and the school, and I was able to contribute to the meeting by bringing my own knowledge and experiences to the discussion, in addition to observing the meeting as a whole. Straight observation was more suited to observations of citizenship education in the classroom. In this instance I sat towards the back of the class so as not to distract attention away from the main speaker and learning activities. I was, however, able to substantiate my observations by questioning some of the teenagers and their teacher before and after the lesson, and via more general observations during the whole research process. My main observations of citizenship were conducted towards the end of my research, and thus I had already established relationships with the majority of the participants who I was observing.

I wrote down as many of my observations as I could during the lesson. Other notes were taken directly after to ensure accuracy, and to prevent what Kitchin & Tate (2000) refer to as 'selective memory'. The observation was written in the form of descriptive narrative as opposed to the completion of a coded schedule or checklist, principally because I wanted to be open to all the experiences around me rather than to check off specific events, in order to gain a more holistic picture (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). These were noted in my research diary along with narrative from my entire time in the field, providing an invaluable contextualisation of the whole process. The examination of observations completes my outline of the methods utilised in this research. The subsequent element of this chapter highlights the methods of analysis used to synthesise the multi-method approach.

4.5.8 Analysis

Quantitative information from the questionnaire was analysed using both descriptive statistics and more rigorously using cross-tabulations and SPSS (see Matthews & Foster, 1995; Foster, 1999; Bryman, 2001). The quantitative data was entered onto a spreadsheet and each variable was labelled. A syntax file, in which statistical commands are written, was then created. The use of a syntax file allows operator errors to be monitored. A few variables were recoded, for example, the length of time respondents had been resident in their current communities was reclassified into fewer categories to simplify analysis. Descriptive statistics, including percentages and means, were calculated first. This produced an overall picture of the outcomes from the questionnaire(s). The use of cross tabulations and chi-square tests provided more detailed analysis and was particularly advantageous in examining differences between girls' and boys' responses:

Qualitative analysis is centred upon what Crang (2001) refers to as '*building a picture*'. This description is particularly relevant to research which focuses upon diversity and difference. Bailey et al (1999) call researchers to consider adopting a grounded theory approach which advocates 'reflexive management' throughout the research process. Originating in the 1960s from thought associated with symbolic interactionism, grounded theory is founded upon the notion that research findings are dynamic and thus do not pronounce grand theories (Glasner & Strauss, 1967; Giddens, 1997; Bailey et al, 1999; Dick, 2002; Hoggart et al, 2002). As Bailey et al (1999) suggest:

"[Grounded theory] is concerned with trying to understand the interplay between the subjective experiences of everyday life and the broader historical and structural relations" (p. 174).

In practice, a grounded theory approach requires continuous evaluation of the research process, of data collection and interpretation until emerging themes can be categorised (Bailey et al, 1999). I achieved this by writing a research diary throughout the process.

In order to present a picture of teenagers' lives which accurately and fairly represents their experiences and voices, I adopted a three phase approach to the qualitative analysis. After the interviews had been transcribed in full, I implemented thorough 'item level analysis' (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

During this phase each transcript (including photographs and diaries) was coded in detail (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Fielding, 2001). I utilised a combination of 'in vivo' codes, or words used by the participants, and analytical codes devised by myself (Strauss, 1987). This allowed emerging themes to be identified, as well as specific elements of the research agenda. In the second phase the transcripts were analysed as one unit to determine meta themes or 'discursive repertoires' (Jackson, 2001). Themes were divided into master or sub-categories. This process is often referred to as splitting and splicing (Kitchen & Tate, 2000) and allows teenagers' experiences to be explored for common themes. The final phase centred around what Jackson (2001) refers to as 'discursive dispositions'. This allows links and connections between transcripts to be established. The identification of contradictions may also be made.

Once the findings from this research had been analysed, I returned my thoughts to the philosophies of advocacy geographers. Matthews et al (2000) draw attention to axiological issues or those which question a researcher's allegiances. Whilst it was my aim to promote participants' voices, it is important to acknowledge the power relations inherent in selecting which voices to highlight (Hey, 1997; Matthews et al, 2000). Furthermore, as Phillips (1998) suggests, a researcher's positionality often leads to the exclusion of some voices and the promotion of others. The longitudinal nature of this research allowed me to revisit participants' stories and to develop a process of co-interpretation. For example, participants who presented their experiences using photography were able to provide interpretations of their pictures during discussions. It should also be recognised that the voices used in this research are teenagers' interpretations of their lives, and some may have provided stories which presented their lives in the way they thought I would want or ought to hear. Nevertheless, I believe it is highly problematic to critique these voices beyond contextualisation when the central aim of this thesis is to promote teenagers' voices. I, therefore, present these voices in a relatively 'raw' form. Indeed, drawing upon participants' interpretations and representations provides valuable insights into their lives.

4.6 Disseminating Findings

In relation to the hermeneutical idea of interpretation, researchers do not simply make interpretations of participants' findings but also reconstruct them textually (Hoggart et al, 2002). As noted previously, researchers have significant power over which voices are included and excluded (Hoggart et al, 2002). The final element of this chapter outlines the methods of relaying findings to participants and the wider community.

4.6.1 Language & Fair Representation

One key area relating to dissemination is that of language. Teenagers place great importance on language, often using hybrid forms of slang and colloquialisms. Some participants chose to express their sentiments in what is conventionally understood as 'bad language'. In much the same way that Holland (2001) noted the often greater credence given to the voice of a 'sensible' child, I was determined not to exclude teenagers' voices on the basis of 'bad language'. Those who chose to communicate in this way realised the significance of their language, which in many ways demonstrated that they did not view me as a teacher-figure. At no point did I correct them but rather encouraged their free communication. Such an approach raises several dilemmas or what Murphy & Dingwall (2001) refer to as a '*crisis of representation*', the first of which relates to voices which express offensive material. In a survey question regarding local decision-makers one boy, aged fourteen responded:

"The gay village council who don't have a clue, just make money and try to be arseholes (they succeed!)".

Furthermore, the use of 'bad language' may alienate key gatekeepers in the research process, and the research may fail to be taken seriously by decision and policy makers. This has obvious implications for the representation of participants who choose not to use 'bad language' (Barker & Weller, 2003a). It is therefore apparent that different spaces of dissemination often require distinct considerations of language.

4.6.2 Feeding Back to Participants & the Wider Community

The critical geography movement places emphasis on dissemination practices that are accessible and far reaching (Hoggart et al, 2002). In my research I have attempted to feed back to participants at each stage of the process, in order to ensure fair representation and interpretation. Such an approach also allowed participants the opportunity to comment upon transcripts. It is fundamental that research participants see and experience research outcomes, and are fully involved in the ongoing research process (Matthews, Limb & Taylor, 1998). It is, therefore, essential that research dissemination moves beyond the esoteric and utilises methods which are appropriate to the participant group. At each stage of the research process participants received a summary of findings, principally in the form of posters for display within the school. Longitudinal research of this nature requires the researcher constantly to maintain contact with participants and to demonstrate that their contributions are being used and valued.

Two reports (Appendices D & E) summarising findings from the entire research process were produced with the principal aim of informing participants and the wider community of the main findings. The first report focused upon teenagers' experiences of citizenship education, participant's perceptions of their role as current and future citizens, and notions of rights and responsibilities. This report was specifically aimed at providing feedback for the school and was sent to both teaching staff and participants. The report was accompanied by a set of posters (figure 4.17), for display on the school's citizenship notice board. This site was used to display findings throughout the research process.

Active Citizenship!

Have you participated in your community?

A survey carried out with teenagers in year 10 earlier this year revealed:

38% of teenagers had been involved in their communities.



The most popular way of participating was in a local campaign. This through a Sk8 park (Photograph by Ken)

8% of respondents involved in voluntary

Other activities, for example, include local event, painting a mural, & involvement for money to improve the local environment

For further information contact: susie_weller@hotmail.com

What responsibilities do you have?

A survey carried out with teenagers in year 10 earlier this year revealed:

At home?

- 40% of respondents help out with housework.
- Several teenagers stated that it was their responsibility to behave well at home.
- Other responsibilities included cooking, looking after siblings & pets and homework.



At school?

- 51% stated it was their responsibility to complete their work, to learn and to do their best.
- 26% believed it was their responsibility to behave well at school by: Allowing others to work without disruption; Respecting the school rules, uniform & building; Being sensible and responsible; And not truanting.



In the community?

- The most common response was respecting the environment, keeping areas tidy, safe, and free from vandalism.
- Several teenagers felt it was their responsibility to be a citizen and to help and respect others.

Active Citizenship!

What rights do you have?

A survey carried out with teenagers earlier this year revealed:

- 23% felt that as teenagers they had few or no rights. "We don't have a lot because everybody thinks that all teenagers are trouble makers. We have less rights" (Female, aged 14)

"Not many - not a child but too young things" (unknown)

- A few (8%) respondents disagreed stating that they had a lot of rights.

- Several people suggested that as teenagers they had the:

"Right to education. Right to be treated equally" (Female, aged 14)

"The right to get asked what we think, not just at school" (Female, aged 15)

"The right to our own opinion and beliefs" (Female, aged 15)



"Right to learn, right to be protected. Right to free speech. Right of opinion" (Male, aged 14)

Figure 4.17 Feeding Back to Teenagers using Posters

Integral to my research was the exploration of teenagers' socio-political exclusion within their rural communities. I felt it was essential that I did not

reinforce the idea that adults do not listen to teenagers, a feeling which incited much frustration amongst participants. As a result I decided to provide some feedback from my research to local decision-makers in order to highlight local issues which participants had discussed. Dissemination was in the form of a short report and was sent to councillors representing the communities in which respondents lived. The report addressed teenagers' participation on the Isle of Wight. More specifically, findings were disseminated in three sections. The first, *'being left out'*, outlined teenagers' lack of a sense of belonging in their communities and their feelings of frustration at being stereotyped and not listened to by local decision-makers. The second component, *'participation'*, noted case study examples of teenagers' who had actively been involved in their communities, although their contributions were often unrecognised. The final section, *'ideas for improving the Island'*, detailed teenagers' constructive recommendations for the local council. The first response I received incited initial laughter, followed by anger and much head banging against the proverbial brick wall! Not only had the councillor not spent time considering the report, but he also reinforced all the feelings of mistrust and disengagement that many teenagers' felt towards the council:

"Thank you for your booklet on the activities of the teenager's behaviour, I find it quite informative ... Thankfully we, on the Island, are not subject to any prolonged acts of misbehaviour but I suppose we must always be vigilant, ready to take action when and how it occurs" (Response Letter From Councillor, 15th July 2003).

Such a response brings into question the extent to which researchers have the power to 'make a difference'. Advocacy geography is, therefore, limited by the extent to which policy-makers are prepared to hear and comprehend the research findings which are presented to them.

4.7 Conclusions

Following the teenage-centred ethos of this research I believed it was essential that participants entered the research process freely and did not feel coerced either by myself or by teaching staff within the school. In terms of sampling, such an approach may have neglected the views of the most disenfranchised teenagers. Whilst both questionnaire surveys were implemented either across a whole year group or the entire school, the views of absent or truanting teenagers would not have been reflected. This is one disadvantage with adopting such an approach. In order to focus upon the

most disenfranchised teenagers it may have been possible to specifically target 'known truants'. I believe, however, that this would have had challenging implications for my relationship with the school, who may not have been keen to promote such teenagers' voices. The school has had a problematic reputation in the past and I would have encountered difficulties in my relationship with teaching staff had I attempted to adopt this approach. Furthermore, the school has an annual unauthorised absence rate of 1.3% which reflects the national average (OFSTED, 2003b). Whilst it would have been beneficial to gain insights into these teenagers' lives, methodologically the small proportion of truants would have made little statistical difference to the resultant questionnaire findings. I also believe that the findings from both surveys do suggest an overall picture of disengagement, reflecting a cross-section of experiences and opinions. Responding with '*don't know*' in the survey may also have demonstrated a level of despondency.

With the more in-depth research methods, where the sampling emphasis was upon self-selection, the issue of 'missing' respondents may have been more significant. Those opting out of mainstream schooling are the most difficult to reach in such a research project. Indeed, several participants described, constructed and distanced themselves from other teenagers on the basis of their 'wild' behaviour, for example, drug abuse and promiscuity. Chapter seven, for example, details several participants' derogatory comments surrounding the actions of 'townies' - groups of teenagers who, several participants argued, '*get drunk, take drugs and act like prostitutes*'. None of the participants in this research described themselves or their activities in these terms which may reflect that they did not identify themselves as 'townies'. Furthermore, skateboarders were labelled by one teenager as '*dope smokers*', whilst none of the participants in this research reinforced this view.

The self-selecting sample used in this thesis may also represent those more vocal teenagers. Whilst several teenagers, who described themselves as shy or quiet, did participate in individual interviews, many of the participants involved in more in-depth elements of the research appeared to be relatively confident. In part, I believe, interviewing teenagers in friendship groups helped participants to overcome their shyness. Nevertheless, a self-selection approach is likely to have 'missed out' the least confident and potentially the

most socially excluded teenagers. This has important implications for a research project which seeks to explore social exclusion. At the same time, several participants' enthusiasm for sharing their contributions to their communities may have resulted in a more positive representation of teenagers' experiences than would have been illustrated by targeting the most disengaged. Kendal, for example, brought along photographs of the skate park campaign in which he had been involved before we had started working on the in-depth research methods. Many of these acts were unrecognised or castigated as forms of civic engagement despite reflecting more conventional understandings of citizenship. The most apathetic teenagers are, therefore, likely to have been 'left out' or disengaged from this project. I believe, however, that it is important to reflect upon the notion that many participants were simultaneously engaged in some acts of citizenship whilst also being disengaged and excluded from mainstream civic engagement. Drawing upon the views of the most socially excluded teenagers would have added another element to the picture of teenagers' lives. Apart from the stories of a few participants, there was little discussion about the destruction of rural communities in terms of vandalism. As a result of adopting a self-selecting sample the findings in chapter seven are likely to reflect a more 'positive' representation of teenagers' lives than would have been gained from those who are suffering more extreme forms of social exclusion. Nevertheless, it is possible that more disenfranchised groups of teenagers, who were reluctant to participate in this research, also engage in less conventional acts of citizenship that are concealed from the public gaze. This is, however, conjecture and identifies both an area for further research and exemplifies the inherent difficulties in developing a complete picture of teenagers' lives.

It is challenging in these circumstances to overcome the difficulties in reaching the most disaffected teenagers. It may have been possible to 'target' such teenagers through organisations such as Connexions (discussed in chapter three), but I believe this would have been problematic on two counts. Firstly, there are ethical implications for targeting teenagers in such an institution in terms of the organisation's commitments under the Data Protection Act 1998. Secondly, organisations such as Connexions may not reach the most disengaged teenagers. An alternative approach would have been to use a 'snowballing' technique through one of the more 'wild'

participants with links to more disenfranchised networks of teenagers. Such teenagers were, however, often involved in conflict with the police (see Loki's accounts in chapter five). There are numerous ethical issues involved in observing and interviewing teenagers' experiences in this setting in terms of either being seen as an accomplice to any criminal act or in relation to the conflicting interests that would have arisen had I witnessed such criminal behaviour. Furthermore, observing teenagers in their own arenas alters the research space.

Adopting a self-selection approach has several implications for this research. The findings presented in later chapters may not represent the most socially excluded teenagers. As social exclusion is a central theme of this thesis this may be particularly problematic and may, indeed, result in the further neglect of a group of rural 'others' whose voices I sought to promote. Moreover, such findings have the potential to portray a 'rosier' picture of rural life than is experienced by many teenagers. Issues associated with conflict over space and between identity groups were not fully explored from the point of view of those constructed by many teenagers as 'other'. Failing to capture the views of the most socially excluded also has implications for disseminating this work to policy-makers. Ultimately, in upholding the teenage-centred ethos of this research I believe self-selection was paramount. Targeting those who are viewed as 'wild' or 'trouble-makers' also runs the risk of reinforcing the negative stereotypes that participants were so frustrated with.

Mason (1996) suggests 'validity' and 'reliability' are of great importance to research outcomes. I believe that the multi-method approach adopted in this study fostered a rigorous research process, which provided participants with the opportunity to detail their experiences through a number of complementary media outlets. By adopting a process of reciprocity I was able to compare my own interpretations with what participants had intended to reflect. Each method was designed not specifically to answer any one research question, but was developed to examine contradictions and complexities in teenagers' experiences. Utilising several methods to explore the same concepts allowed potential biases inherent in any one of the methods to be alleviated, whilst maintaining a coherent research process.

This chapter has outlined the conceptual and methodological framework for

this research. The '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' and '*New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship*' have been outlined as the most prominent conceptual frameworks influencing the interpretation of findings in the following chapters of this thesis. Many of the ideals bound to these conceptual frameworks have inherently influenced the design and implementation of the teenage-centred multi-method approach utilised. It is to the discussion of research findings that this thesis now turns.

5

Frustrating Spaces: Exclusion in Rural Communities

5.1 Introduction

One of my own personal motivations for exploring some of the harsher realities of rural life stems from my brother's childhood. We went to a primary school about five minutes walk from our home in a quintessentially chocolate-box village. When my brother was around eight he started walking to the local primary school on his own as I had moved to another school. I arrived home from school one day to find a police car parked outside my parents' house. My brother, about half an hour earlier, had taken the seemingly simple journey from his school along the main road when a car pulled up alongside him, and tried to pull him in. Fortunately he managed to escape. Whilst incidences such as abductions are rare, events such as these forced me to question the idyllicism of the countryside. Over the past few years the move towards dispelling the mythical rural idyll has gathered momentum (Little, 1999). Concurrently, a small body of research has sought to explore the diverse experiences of children and young people living in rural areas (Philo, 1992; Valentine, 1997b; Matthews et al, 2000; Tucker & Matthews, 2001). This chapter focuses on 'frustrating spaces', where participants' voices are masked by the perceived idyllicism of rurality. This chapter, therefore, responds to research question one:

How, and to what extent are teenagers socially excluded from local governance in rural communities?

The first section of this chapter explores teenagers' experiences of belonging to and exclusion from their communities. In order to analyse the diverse encounters of participants, sense of belonging is initially examined in relation to the provision of facilities and services for teenagers. Subsequently a more

micro-scale analysis is adopted to explore the spaces that participants felt 'uncomfortable in' and 'forbidden from'. I then progress to outline the influence of wider-scale prejudices on teenagers' senses of belonging and exclusion. The second section of this chapter specifically examines participants' experiences of being listened to, and more fundamentally, being *heard* by local decision-makers. This section illustrates the frustrations felt by many participants when their voices were not heard, and feeds into Lister's (1997a; 1997b) examination of citizenship as exclusionary. The final section of this chapter explores participants' interests within their communities as a precursor to chapter seven. I begin by highlighting teenagers' advocacy of participation and their interest in rights. I complete this chapter with a summary of changes and improvements that participants would like to witness and facilitate in their locales.

5.2 Exclusion From and Within Communities

Drawing upon Lister's (1997a; 1997b) notion that citizenship is exclusive in two dimensions, this section examines teenagers' exclusion from and exclusion within their communities. This is achieved by exploring teenagers' experiences of belonging and exclusion. Initially, participants describe their diverse encounters of belonging. Subsequently I examine the principal ways in which participants felt excluded from their communities, by highlighting teenagers' sense of exclusion brought about by a lack of facilities. I then progress to investigate two alternative spaces within participants' localities, those which they felt uncomfortable in and those which they felt they should not be in. Finally, I outline some of the experiences that participants had of being targeted, stereotyped and, as teenagers, used as scapegoats for local social problems.

5.2.1 Geographies of (Non)Belonging

Exploring teenagers' sense of belonging provides the basis for later examination of inclusion and exclusion from spaces of citizenship. Participants in the first questionnaire survey revealed little sense of belonging within their communities. Whilst the majority (63%; n=425) of respondents liked living in their communities, only 34% felt a sense of belonging. Many participants (40%) were either undecided or ambivalent to the question.

These figures are key indicators of teenagers' sense of exclusion from 'mainstream' community life. The nature of the questionnaire survey, however, prevented participants from elaborating upon their own definitions of belonging. A sense of belonging, Relph (1976) suggests, may also have negative connotations. Participants may have stated that they belong to their communities, whilst simultaneously feeling trapped or isolated. As chapter seven will reveal, participants did not always interpret 'community' in terms of the physical location of their home or school. Philosophically, as chapter two outlined, 'community' is a challenging concept and the survey was, therefore, limited as it did not allow respondents to define to which community they were referring. Nevertheless, the questionnaire provided a foundation for exploring this complex concept. Later discussions allowed the complexities inherent in the notion of belonging to be explored. For example, Chloe & Katie outlined a geography of (non)belonging on the Island which provided a useful explanation for disparate experiences of inclusion highlighted in the survey:

Susie: *Where you live do you feel there's like um ... a sense of community?*

Chloe/Katie: *No (Laughs)*

Chloe: *I live um ... down the road. It's like on the [name] estate ... down [name] road and it's like [estate 2] opposite ... there's no sense of community at all really.*

Katie: *Yeah 'cos I live in [town 1] but there's not that many people living there really compared to [town 2], is there?*

Chloe: *... mostly just old people*

Susie: *... do you feel you belong to the community there?*

Katie: *Yeah. I sort of do*

Chloe: *I sort of do but not as much as I did when I lived in [town 3] ...*

Katie: *Yeah*

Chloe: *... 'cos that was like smaller and everybody knew everybody else (Discussion with Chloe & Katie, 3rd July 2002).*

Chloe feels that some areas of the Island do have a 'sense of community' much like the idyllic view of rural life, where communities are close-knit and inclusive (see Halfacree, 1996a). Entrikin (1991) discusses how socio-economic change has fuelled the movement of people from established, authentic communities to more temporal, manufactured spaces. This, Johnston et al (2000) suggest, highlights the nostalgia inherent in (past) 'community'. Despite some references to close-knit communities where '*everyone knows everyone else*', none of the participants spoke of a decline in community. This is, perhaps, somewhat unique to the age group in question.

Time was, however, one key feature in understandings of belonging and was

discussed in two ways. In the interviews, several teenagers highlighted the importance of frequent social contact in fostering a sense of belonging:

Susie: *Do you feel there's like much of a community where you live?*

Nikki: *Yeah we get together like near enough every day and we meet after school and stuff*

Funda: *Yeah ... most ... most people around [town] do stuff together as well so it's all right but usually older people's stuff*
(Discussion with Funda & Nikki, 2nd July 2002).

Time was also important in relation to participants' length of residence, thus reinforcing the writings of Cater & Jones (1989). In the survey there was a statistical difference (at the 99% level of significance in both calculations) between whether participants liked where they lived or felt they belonged in their communities, and the length of time they had lived there (figure 5.1). For example, teenagers who had resided in their towns or villages for the majority or all of their lives were more likely to both like and feel a sense of belonging to their communities than those who had lived there for a shorter period of time. Teenagers who had resided in their neighbourhoods for less than four years more commonly disliked or felt detached from where they lived. This finding reinforces Bauman's (1992) suggestion that migration and mobility render attachment, or a sense of belonging to a place, problematic.

(n=416)	Length of residence	Agree (%)	Don't know (%)	Disagree (%)
I like living in my community	All my life	71	19	10
	Most of my life	65	22	13
	Around half my life	67	16	17
	Fairly recently	53	18	29
I feel I belong in my community	All my life	43	43	14
	Most of my life	38	41	21
	Around half my life	36	44	21
	Fairly recently	23	35	41

Figure 5.1 The Influence of Time on a 'Sense of Belonging'

Time, therefore, appears significant in the foundation of belonging and attachment to place, as Kimbo and Kat reiterate:

Susie: *Do you kind of feel that you belong to that community?*

Kimbo: *I do really but 'cos I've like known everyone down there so long. There's like everywhere you go like ... [people say] 'all right', yeah so ...*

Kat: *Yeah same for me as well* (Discussion with Kimbo & Kat, 4th July 2002).

For Kat and Kimbo the importance of length of residence to their sense of belonging is also coupled with familiarity. Knowing local residents, at whatever level, connects these girls with the area in which they live. Watt & Stenson's (1998) work reinforces the impact of familiarity on young people's perceptions of safety. Furthermore, Johnston et al (2000) outline social interaction as significant in establishing a sense of place.

In the first survey there was no statistical difference between girls' and boys' sense(s) of belonging. This was reinforced in the qualitative elements of the research. Parallel to Chloe, Katie, Kat and Kimbo's understandings of community and belonging, Kendal, Matt and Tommey described their locales in terms of '*everyone knowing everyone else*':

Kendal: *I know everybody really around [town]. It's a small town. Just know everybody*

Matt: *As [village] is small I like know every person there. It's much smaller than [town] so ...*

Susie: *Have you always liked living on the Island or are your views changing?*

Tommey: *No. I've always liked it. You've got a limited like places to go and stuff but it's home* (Discussion with Kendal, Matt & Tommey, 4th July 2002).

Tommey's emphasis on 'home' is inherently tied to a sense of place and familiarity (Johnston et al, 2000). Reay & Lucey (2000), however, suggest that feeling 'at home' cannot necessarily be equated to liking a place. In this research those who stated they liked where they lived were more likely to feel a sense of belonging to their community. Indeed this was statistically significant (at the 99% level of significance), with 86% of those who like where they live also feeling a sense of belonging.

Loki, for example, details a rather different picture of community life, highlighting a lack of belonging and exclusion from his local area. Loki encounters many challenges on his estate, particularly between residents and teenagers over the use of space (figure 5.2):

Loki: ... that's where I play football sometimes but I hit the cars and, by accident, ... then people come out and tell us to 'F' off ... Point to my house and say 'that's where I live' and he goes 'bog off up that way then ... a bit more', and that's it.

Susie: Mmm, so you get quite a lot of hassle ...

Loki: Yeah

Susie: ... about what you do and where you go and stuff ...?

Loki: Yeah. They tell you to move ... go down there. So you go down there and then there's more old people who tell yer to 'F' off. They don't say 'please could you go', they say 'Fuck off' (Discussion with Loki, 3rd July 2002).



Figure 5.2 Spaces of (Non)Belonging, Photographed by Loki

Loki furthers discussion of his sense of exclusion by highlighting some of the encounters that his friends have had in local spaces:

Loki: Oh. It's what the old people are like ... it's like you're sat there kicking a football around like that ... you sitting there kicking a football to each other yeah. They come up to yer 'there's a perfectly good field down there'. There's smashed glass bottles, er, you know, stuff like that ...

Susie: Yeah

Loki: There a boy called [Boy's name] in the forest there and we play manhunt sometimes and he fell over and there was a bag of heroin needles ...

Susie: Really!

Loki: ... and he got stabbed in his hand and he had to have a blood test but there was nothing ... (Discussion with Loki, 3rd July 2002).

Loki surmised that he and his friends were not welcome in many areas of

their communities. Other residents often instructed them to disperse or gather in other areas. Their presence and activities, therefore, were not seen as legitimate uses of the space. This echoes Reay & Lucey's (2000) notion of a '*child-hostile social landscape*' and mirrors the encounters noted in Morrow's (2000) study. The alternative, more hidden, spaces to where they relocated often presented other problems, which ultimately led to further exclusion. Loki lives on a 1950s housing estate ranked within the top 10% of wards in England suffering multiple deprivation (ONS, 2000). Reay & Lucey's (2000) exploration of children's lives in inner city council estates highlights the stigma felt by many residents. As a former resident of the Island, my analysis of teenagers' experiences is ultimately influenced by my own understandings of where they live. Moreover, much of Loki's dialogue upholds the sentiment that teenagers are viewed as 'trouble' or threatening. This inherently impacted upon his own sense of belonging. It should, however, be noted that Loki took some pride in telling me about the trouble he had been in. This reflection on Loki's personal narrative highlights how teenagers can reinforce such negative stereotypes. Whether Loki's actions contribute to, or are a result of, stereotyped representations of youth is, however, questionable.

A lack of belonging was not always easy to define. Gumdrop, for example, was adamant that there was not a sense of community in her local area but could not express her feelings beyond conjecture. Moreover, an individual sense of belonging or a collective sense of community, whether experienced positively or negatively, may not always be interpreted in the same way. Bob, also struggled to pinpoint why he did experience a sense of belonging. This is somewhat challenging as he is relatively new to the area and has few friends there. Whilst this did not appear of consequence to Bob's sense of belonging, it did matter to Rammstein Nut. She felt that the lack of community in her local area was borne out of tensions between adults and children. Rammstein Nut resides in an isolated hamlet with few children and teenagers:

Susie: *Is there much of a community down there?*

Rammstein Nut: *Um, not really. Do you mean like how many people ... and all bonding together ...*

Susie: *Yeah, yeah.*

Rammstein Nut: *... and stuff like that? No there's just like mainly old people and stuff. We don't sort of ... they're all like stuck up and stuff, and, you know, they don't really like children around* (Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002).

Bob and Rammstein Nut explicitly identified themselves as 'quiet people'.

Both commented upon their occasional self-exclusion and indeed selected individual interviews:

"I didn't really feel like joining in much" (Diary extract, Monday, Bob, aged 13).

A few participants outlined further ways in which they had excluded themselves. Kaz shouted abuse at a local shopkeeper, which resulted in her permanent exclusion from the store (figure 5.3):

Susie: *Did you say you weren't allowed in there?*

Kaz: *Yeah*

Kimbo: *'Cos she called the owner 'a little bit of scum'* (Discussion with Kaz & Kimbo, 4th July 2002).



Figure 5.3 Spaces of (Non) Belonging, Photographed by Kaz

Rammstein Nut also highlighted the temporal and dynamic faces of exclusion. Diary completion proved to be an advantageous means of charting participants' changing inclusions and exclusions within school and the wider community:

"I didn't feel at all excluded today. I was the centre of attention! ... I felt excluded later on when I found out a whole bunch of my mates had all gone into [town] without me. That made me upset, annoyed and angry" (Diary extracts, Wednesday & Saturday, Rammstein Nut, aged 14).

The divided response to a sense of belonging is complex and, as Massey

(1993) suggests that there is no “... *single sense of place that everyone shares*” (p. 60). The experiences outlined in this section demonstrate the challenges in defining a sense of belonging. Understanding this concept is essential to the understanding of both geographies of exclusion and feminists’ conceptualisations of the exclusionary nature of citizenship. Importantly, respondents demonstrated examples of self-exclusion through manifestations of their personalities, such as shyness, or through their actions with other local residents. The following section of this chapter examines the ways in which participants felt ‘outsiders’ in their communities.

5.2.2 Neglected Youth

One notable way in which the majority of participants felt a lack of belonging or exclusion from community life was through poor provision of facilities and services. In the first questionnaire, 75% (n=425) felt there was not enough to do where they lived. Furthermore, 89% specifically called for more facilities for children and teenagers. Age was a prevalent issue. Many participants felt their attitudes towards the provision of facilities on the Island had changed as they had got older. Several looked back with nostalgia at the plethora of activities available to younger children. Several commented that, as young children, they were happy with simple activities, such as playing in the garden. As teenagers, with greater spatial freedoms, many stated the need for more facilities away from the home:

Susie: *Have you kinda changed your mind a lot about living on the Island, whether you like it or not, as you’ve got older?*

Bob Stevens: *Yeah*

Agnuz: *Yeah ‘cos when I was younger there was a beach ... just played in the garden. When you’re older you like go out and there’s not much to do (Discussion with Bob Stevens & Agnuz, 3rd July 2002).*

Rammstein Nut discusses her evolving attitudes especially in relation to the Island’s isolation from the wider world:

Susie: *Have you always liked living on the Island? Have your ... have your views about living on the Island changed as you’ve got older?*

Rammstein Nut: *Yes. Definitely. When I was little I used to like it ... it was like a little Island, you know, all fun but now it’s just like isolated from the world ... it’s just ... really annoying (Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002).*

For participants, such as Rammstein Nut, living in isolated villages and

hamlets the problem of 'nothing to do' is exacerbated by physical distance from other towns and villages:

"I don't live in a village or anything so I don't live near any kids ... I wish I could live in the village 'cos if I want to see any of my mates I have to get up some massive hills, which takes 15 mins if I'm quick on my bike!" (Diary extracts, Monday & Tuesday, Rammstein Nut, aged 14).

Kat also lives in an remote village. She specifically draws attention to the only facility in the vicinity, the local shop (figure 5.4).



Figure 5.4 Nothing to Do, Photographed by Kat

Although physical isolation from other children and young people is particularly significant in remote rural areas, some participants noted that they also felt isolated and excluded living in small towns. Both Katie and Bob live in towns where the majority of other teenagers attend a different high school. Katie and Bob, therefore, cannot easily transfer social networks developed within school to 'hanging out' outside school. Transport was one key issue in this particular problem. For those under the age of seventeen, independent mobility and access to affordable transport is problematic, as Chloe and Katie discuss:

Chloe: *Transport. Um ... buses are really, really expensive 'cos um ... most people go to beaches in [town 1] or [town 2] ... and it costs lots and lots of money ... just to get there. It used to be like a quid when I was little but now it's like £1.55. You can't spend that much like going there and coming back ... just for a day out.*

Katie: *And that's half as well, isn't it? £1.55*

Chloe: *Mmm ... and the age I am now, 13, they all think you're an adult so you have to pay full prices sometimes ... which is really annoying (Discussion with Chloe & Katie, 3rd July 2002).*

The *Isle of Wight Social Inclusion Strategy 2001-2005* acknowledges that limited transport exacerbates exclusion from wider services (iwight, 2002). Over three and a half thousand families do not have access to a car on the Island (iwight, 2002). This presents obvious implications and concerns for the mobility of some children and teenagers (see Pert, 2002). Isolation, felt in many rural areas, is heightened further in the case study by the very nature that it is an Island.

Whilst existing facilities were acknowledged, many felt that there was not enough to do during bad weather or in the evenings:

“If I could change where I live I would make more things for young people to do - youth club open more and at weekend ... I would make more places indoors for young people e.g. cafes aimed at young people ... I would make more open spaces - for recreation” (Diary extracts, Gumdrops, aged 14).

In part, this seasonal and nocturnal problem is related to the Island's economic base. Centred upon tourism, many recreational facilities close in the winter. It is common for teenagers to feel that such facilities only cater for visitors, an issue also highlighted in the National Children's Bureau's video *'Experts in their Fields'*. Such feelings foster resentment and frustration as local decision-makers are seen to be neglecting the needs of teenagers. Moreover, many participants felt that existing facilities were too expensive (see Morrow, 2003) and inaccessible:

“Yeah I think ... I think you've got cases like the cinema and ice skating and stuff but that's like really expensive to get over there for me and it's expensive when you get there as well” (Discussion with Funda, 2nd July 2002).

Much discussion revolved around creating amenities not just for teenagers, but facilities which would have positive benefits for the whole community. Kendal, Tommey and Matt, for example, suggested that building a large sports facility encompassing a large hall, badminton and tennis courts and a 50 metre swimming pool would allow the Island to enter the 'Island Games', thus bringing revenue for the tourist and transport industries. Alternatively, many teenagers called for a large, centrally located, indoor skate park. This again could be used for national competitions.

Moreover, some participants were frustrated by the closure of several teenage-orientated facilities. Katie not only reinforces the notion that many

facilities focus on the needs of young children but that existing facilities, for example youth clubs, have closed, leaving many teenagers with little to do (figure 5.5):

“Um ... (Laughs) that’s the town hall. It used to be ... it used to be er ... a youth club there but it’s ... it’s like gone ... gone now ... but it was for like six year olds stuff. So there’s not much for our age now ... (Discussion with Katie, 3rd July 2002).

Such measures show little respect for teenagers’ status or belonging within society, and by no means suggest that teenagers are seen as active and equal citizens. In this scenario teenagers are again situated as ‘outsiders’. Their own views and needs do not directly equate to votes, in the same way that perhaps the requirements of younger children might through the voices or votes of their parents. On the Island this is not necessarily the case as facilities for young children are also relatively poor. Only 3% of playgrounds, for example, reach expected performance targets (iweight, 2002).



Figure 5.5 Where the Youth Club Used to Be, Photographed by Katie

Moreover, Loki and Bob Stevens highlight their frustration and confusion at being excluded from local youth clubs. Aged thirteen and fourteen, they are viewed by some youth clubs as ‘too old’ to attend:

Susie: *Do you go to youth clubs or anything?*
Bob Stevens: *I used to but then I got too old*
Loki: *Yeah they won't let us in*
Susie: *Really?*
Loki: *They say we're too old*
Susie: *What age is youth club then?*
Loki: *It's like ... for year eights*
Bob Stevens: *Year eights*
Loki: *They say it's for year eights and that ... The one in [town] they hold it in the thingy ... it's like they won't let us in for it yeah so we just wait outside and they say 'go away or we'll phone the police' and we just like sitting there ... so we've got to go away and if you don't they do actually phone the police*
Bob Stevens: *Can I just say something about the youth club thing?*
Susie: *Yeah sure*
Bob Stevens: *We're still actually youth if you think about it. So why would they want to call the police ... (Discussion with Loki & Bob Stevens, 3rd July 2002).*

Loki and Bob Steven's experiences demonstrate the challenges that are embodied in the period between childhood, youth and adulthood. Here, Loki and Bob Stevens do not 'fit' into any of these categories and are not only excluded from the youth club but criminalised for inhabiting the space. Within the broader context of Loki's narrative some of his actions may have, in part, led to his exclusion or criminalisation. Nevertheless, this situation echoes research by Chrisafis (2002) who, in dialogue with young teenagers in Liverpool, reported the neglect many fourteen year olds face when they are excluded both from spaces designed for children and those catering for older teenagers. Williamson (2002) outlines the continuous juxtaposition between children and teenagers as both threatening and in need of protection. Furthermore, the Kids' Club Network is currently pioneering the '*Make Space*' scheme, which will provide valuable places for young teenagers to socialise after school (Barton, 2002). At present the scheme only extends to urban areas (Barton, 2002), thus reiterating the neglect of rural teenagers' needs.

The lack of, and exclusion from, facilities and services on the Island often led to a sense of frustration and lack of power within the community. The results from an online poll, conducted on the Island in 2003, suggested that a significant proportion (42%: n=125) of voters believed that a lack of facilities for teenagers resulted in young people behaving badly (iweight, 2003c). Although this poll is likely to be a reflection of the thoughts of those most vocal members of the Island, who regularly contribute to the iweight web forum, it nevertheless highlights the nexus constructed between 'teenagers' and

'trouble'. Moreover, it is hardly surprising that many teenagers feel 'out of place' or excluded from public space when there are moves, highlighted in the media, to create 'children-free villages' (Khan, 2003) and curfew zones in areas of the UK (see Davis, 1990; Travis, 2000; Burrell, 2001; Mendick, 2002). Little recognition has been given to the fear that teenagers feel in public spaces. The next section of this chapter turns attention to the spaces which participants identified as 'uncomfortable' or 'out of bounds', thus illustrating further details on the micro geographies of exclusion.

5.2.3 Uncomfortable & Forbidden Spaces

In the first questionnaire 29% (n=425) of respondents described places in their communities where they did not feel comfortable even within a group of friends (figure 5.6). The majority of participants outlined public spaces, such as woodland, recreation grounds and bus stops. Many respondents also referred to specific towns, villages or neighbourhoods in which they did not feel safe, as one teenager noted:

"Going in to [name] road 'cos it is a druggy place" (Female, aged 13).

As an illustration of the complexity in foreseeing participants' interpretations of survey questions, some teenagers also detailed more conceptual arenas rather than distinct physical spaces. For example, one respondent noted a sense of discomfort in spaces *"where I can't get my opinion across"*.

Number of times particular spaces are cited by participants		Key examples
Private spaces	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At home
Public spaces	68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The woods/hills • The streets • Skate parks • Bus stops/shelters • Outside shops • Recreation ground/greens
Specific areas	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In main towns • Specific housing estates • Specific villages
Other	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark places • Where I can't get my opinion across • Where there are other teenagers • Where people smoke/drink/take drugs

Figure 5.6 'Uncomfortable Spaces' Cited in Questionnaire One

Although Funda had spent most of her life living in London, she and Nikki believed the crime rate on the Island was relatively high:

Funda: *There's sick people out there that you wouldn't even know'em*

Nikki: *The thing is on the Island where everyone trusts everyone you're all too close and if somebody messes it up it ruins your trust issues with everyone*

Funda: *But you still don't know who it will be 'cos you have so much trust in everyone*

Nikki: *It's supposed to have a low crime rate but I think it's really high*

Funda: *I think it's really high because ...*

Nikki: *I think it's high. It's only a little Island*

Funda: *In [town] ... since I've been in [town] which is just over a year something has happened every week (Discussion with Funda & Nikki, 2nd July 2002).*

Funda and Nikki suggest that this problem is masked by perceptions of the Island as a close-knit community. Statistically, the 2001 Census suggests that the level of crime on the Island is significantly lower than the average rate for England and Wales, with the exception of sexual offences, which reflect the national average (Census, 2001). Funda and Nikki's perceptions do not, therefore, reiterate these figures. In a sense, Funda and Nikki reinforce dominant norms of fear and safety, suggesting that the Island should be safer than other (urban) places. Many rural residents, Yarwood & Edwards (1995) note, perceive crime as a phenomenon primarily associated with urban areas and as a result are somewhat complacent. Nevertheless, teenagers are often blamed for criminal behaviour, despite evidence to suggest they are more likely to be victims of such incidents (iwight, 2002). Funda's world is, in part, tied to hanging out on the streets with older teenagers and, therefore, she is potentially more likely to witness any such tensions.

One of the underlying reasons why participants felt uncomfortable hanging out in certain public spaces was that they felt threatened by the presence of other groups. Many participants felt uncomfortable, especially around older teenagers:

"Out of school I don't feel comfortable walking down ... oh ... what ... I can't remember what the street was but there's this street that um ... all these teenagers hang out in that um ... I don't feel comfortable walking down 'cos they just yell abuse at everyone that walks past and everything ... you just get shouted at all the time by everyone that's your age ... they don't actually know you but they just look at what you're wearing and make a judgement of you" (Discussion with Bob, 4th July 2002).

"Wherever older people are - sometimes in the park or along the road" (Female, aged 13).

Adult notions of childhood often filter down to children themselves (Alderson, 2002; Mayall, 2002). Many teenagers perpetuate the gradation of age and development to adulthood:

"Felt intimidated outside youth club - where older kids hang around - make remarks ... Older kids don't show younger people respect, think they can push us around" (Diary extract, Tuesday & Thursday, Gumdrop, aged 14).

Respect and fear of being bullied by older teenagers made several participants uncomfortable on a regular basis as the threatening parties hung out in the same spaces. Janna draws attention to the bus stop at the end of her road (figure 5.7):

Janna: *There's a bus stop. It's like ... it's changed a bit now but it's somewhere a lot of people just my age hang around and smoke.*

Susie: *Yeah*

Janna: *... and often, often you feel quite intimidated by ... round the corner, even though I know them ... you know that there's always somebody saying something about you or pointing something out about you ... and I don't really like going past there very much when there's big crowds around it ... bit uneasy there (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).*



Figure 5.7 Uncomfortable Spaces: The Bus Stop, Photographed by Janna

Teenagers, such as Katie, devised alternative routes in their communities in order to avoid spaces in which they felt uncomfortable. This echoes feminist writings relating to women's coping strategies in public space. Katie, for example, avoids walking past the public toilets in her town (figure 5.8):

"Yeah ... when ... when I'm walking down the town in the evenings and then people around the toilets. I don't like that. I have to go around the long way. It's horrible. People shout stuff and it's horrible"
(Discussion with Katie, 3rd July 2002).

Katie's experiences demonstrate how numerous teenagers, in common with many children and adults, develop a geography of safety, or perhaps more explicitly, a geography of coping with fear whilst negotiating everyday spaces in their local areas. Understanding such geographies is essential to exploring spaces of exclusion and citizenship.



Figure 5.8 Uncomfortable Spaces: The Public Toilets, Photographed by Katie

Whilst many participants hung around in groups of friends, several also felt the presence of gangs was particularly significant in fostering a sense of discomfort or lack of belonging in public spaces. Rammstein Nut notes:

Rammstein Nut: *Yeah I feel uncomfortable where there's like lots of older people ... like gangs that I don't know like ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Rammstein Nut: *... you know like sort of town people in big groups. Like I was in McDonalds the other day and there was this*

massive fight and apparently this girl just came out of prison, and another girl and she was just bleeding all over the floor ...

Susie: *Mmm*

Rammstein Nut: *... and I felt ... 'cos it was just horrible. I don't really ... I'm a bit. I don't know I'm not antisocial it's just I don't like people I don't know sort of hanging ... around. I feel uncomfortable around them* (Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002).

A sense of discomfort is, for Rammstein Nut, again linked to conflict between different age groups. The fear of different gangs is also intrinsically linked to space. One girl in the survey described how all the local gangs gathered outside the chip shop in her local town. Chloe noted that she avoided Marks and Spencer because of the type of people who hang out there, whilst Kendal opted not to go near his local green as other teenagers smoked there. These participants are, therefore, constructing certain types of behaviour in their local spaces as 'other'. As Sibley (1999) suggests, through his psycho-analytical approach to 'sameness' and 'difference', individuals both internalise notions of other(s) as 'good' or 'bad' whilst projecting images of pleasure and anxiety. As a result, Sibley (1999) believes, individuals construct boundaries around themselves defining people and places that are not like them as 'other'. Not only are these participants excluding themselves from such spaces but they are also displaying their norms and values in relation to what is constructed as (in)appropriate or threatening behaviour within those arenas. The relationship between uncomfortable spaces and the groups that hang out in certain areas manifests not only fearful or threatening spaces for adult members of the community but also for many teenagers. As Kitty Sandoral highlights, this is often interwoven with ideas of difference or otherness:

Susie: *... [Are there] any uncomfortable places you don't feel comfortable in either in school or where you live? ... or you don't feel very safe at certain times?*

Kitty Sandoral: *Um ... down [town] esplanade ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kitty Sandoral: *... at like weekends ... like late night and stuff like that it isn't very nice. You get all the ... I don't want to say townies, but you get all the people that go down there just to like wear very short skirts and get drunk and act like prostitutes basically and ...*

Gumdrop: *That's not very nice*

Kitty Sandoral: *... don't feel comfortable when I walk past them 'cos I'm not like that surprisingly* (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral & Gumdrop, 2nd July 2002).

It is not only other teenagers that create spaces of discomfort and fear. Loki frequently spoke of his fear of hanging out in one particular space, which was

also of concern to his mother:

Loki: *She don't like me up chalk pit way because of the geezer that hangs around there*

Susie: *Why's that?*

Loki: *Um ... he calls himself a warden as I said earlier. You go up there and instead of like walking through he chases yer ...*

Susie: *Really?*

Loki: *... and says come back*

Susie: *Do you think he is a warden?*

Loki: *NO! He's a pervert. He scares me* (Discussion with Loki, 3rd July 2002).

Loki challenges the notion of spatial freedom within the countryside by discussing spaces in which he feels frightened by an adult presence. One female furthers Loki's discussions by suggesting that she feels uncomfortable everywhere because of the way in which young people are represented:

"We get shouted at wherever we go! So everywhere" (Female, aged 14).

In the first questionnaire 32% (n=425) of respondents stated that they hung out in places they knew or thought they should not be in. There was a statistical difference (99% level of significance) between girls' and boys' responses. Boys were more likely to say that they hung out in forbidden spaces, which included private property such as farmers' fields and the grounds of other schools. Whilst the survey was limited in that it did not allow participants to elaborate on their feelings, more in-depth discussions reiterated the same issues. Some participants' responded by describing places where their parents did not like them going. Kendal outlines one such place:

Susie: *Are there any places that you go to that you think you shouldn't go to and hang out?*

Kendal: *Up the green probably in [town]. There's just loads of druggies and alcoholics hang out there. My mum doesn't really like it up there*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kendal: *I go up there sometimes. I don't ... I don't drink or smoke ... I'm just saying loads of people hang out there*

Susie: *Yeah*

Matt: *... the farmer's fields* (Discussion with Kendal & Matt, 4th July 2003).

Other respondents suggested 'forbidden places' were also those arenas in which young teenagers are not legally permitted to enter, for example, pubs

and clubs. Funda argued that forbidden arenas are not necessarily determined by space but by the legitimacy of the activities carried out in them:

Susie: *Are there places that you go that you shouldn't go? You don't have to tell me if you don't want to.*

Funda: *It's not necessarily places that we go ... It's necessarily the things that we do*

Nikki: *Yeah*

Susie: *Right yeah*

Funda: *But it's not nothing bad. It's like the older ones will drink and they'll offer us some so we might drink ... but I don't think I get up to that much bad things 'cos we usually go driving ...*
(Discussion with Funda & Nikki, 2nd July 2002).

Janna, however, contests the conditions placed upon space suggesting that whilst conflict and control may be placed on a particular arena, this will often be challenged or ignored by teenagers:

Susie: *How about ... um ... places that you go to that you think you shouldn't be?*

Janna: *(Laughs) Yeah!*

Susie: *(Laughs)*

Janna: *(Laughs) I go to quite a lot of places I probably shouldn't be ... bushes and stuff! (Laughs)*

Susie: *(Laughs)*

Janna: *Um ... It just ... it doesn't really bother us 'cos we just go there*

...
Susie: *Yeah*

Janna: *... and that's ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Janna: *... that, and if someone wants to stop us then they can. I don't think it would actually do much good if they try, so ... (Laughs)*
(Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).

The exploration of 'uncomfortable' and 'forbidden' spaces contributes to geographies of belonging and exclusion on the Island by highlighting micro-level analysis. The next element of this chapter looks more broadly at the treatment of teenagers when represented as a distinct social grouping.

5.2.4 Targeted Teenagers

A lack of belonging within communities is also related to teenagers' perceptions and experiences of stereotyping and scapegoating. Several participants spoke of being unjustifiably accused of 'deviant' acts and monitored by local authorities. The story from Loki, Agnuz and Bob Stevens is one of struggle: struggle against prejudice. Loki lives on a council estate, one of the most deprived in the country and he tells of his struggle to stay out of trouble whilst being faced with regular blame for antisocial behaviour:

Loki: *I've got the typical routine of an old person 'I KNOW YOUR PARENTS!'*

Susie: *(Laughs)*

Loki: *'Who are they are then?' 'I know them'. 'Don't get lippy with me boy'. 'What?' 'Don't answer me back. Do you want some of this (fist)? I'll chase you I will'' (in a shrill voice) (Discussion with Loki, 3rd July 2002).*

Loki and Agnuz's story was also one of continuous surveillance in public spaces:

Susie: *Do you ... do you ever get moved on from where you hang out?*

Bob Stevens: *Sometimes*

Agnuz: *Yeah*

Loki: *Mmm*

Susie: *Who ... who by?*

Loki: *Police. Old people mostly.*

Susie: *Do they tell you why you shouldn't be there?*

Loki: *No. They go 'move on, move out the way. You're causing trouble' or we're loitering ...*

Agnuz: *'Cos you're thinking you're not doing anything wrong and they just chuck you out 'cos down [supermarket] we're just sitting on the wall there eating crisps and stuff and they like come out and go stop skating there ... and we didn't even have skateboards with us! And they went and phoned the police (Discussions with Agnuz, Loki & Bob Stevens, 3rd July 2002).*

Loki and Agnuz also described the surveillance that teenagers face in private, commercial spaces. In particular they discussed their experiences in a large music store where they felt their presence was seen as suspicious or potentially criminal. Shopping centres are significant social sites for many teenagers (Matthews, Taylor, Percy-Smith & Limb, 2000; White & Sutton, 2001). Loki and Agnuz's encounters reflect the work of Sibley (1995), who examined spaces of exclusion within shopping centres. He details a documentary, the subtext of which highlighted the surveillance and control of 'undesirables', mainly teenagers, who did not 'fit in' to the family-orientated image of the shopping centre (Sibley, 1995). This image, White & Sutton (2001) describe, is often sanitised and exclusive. Furthermore, Morrow (2000; 2003) notes the lack of trust many young people feel that adults afford them. Discussions with Loki, Bob Stevens and Agnuz revealed an explicit geography of surveillance, regulation and conflict (Weller, 2003). Loki and his friends outlined specific spaces where their presence, often because of their age, was not welcomed or tolerated:

“There’s tons of big fields. We go and play manhunt in ‘em, but the old people, I think it’s the farmers probably all walk their dogs through and they tell us to clear off. They tell us to ‘F’ off and ‘go away you little fuckers’ ... ‘cos you run along the footpaths and they come running off the fields ... we don’t smash up the crops or nothing. We just find tracks and jump in and hide” (Discussion with Loki, 3rd July 2002).

Loki’s observations emphasise the rural idyll as a myth. Rather than the utopian portrayal of freedom to run through open fields, Loki and his friends are chased off of the land by farmers. The gathering of groups of teenagers is often seen as a criminal threat and demonised (Salvadori, 2001; Kraack & Kenway, 2002). Past research has suggested that teenagers are often blamed for deviant behaviour, and are warranted little status as moral agents in many spheres of society (Mayall, 2000). Concurrently, Loki, rather over zealously at times, documented the trouble he had been in with various authorities. Indeed Loki made reference to the 1995 film, *Mallrats*, where two teenagers spend their days hanging out in a shopping centre, causing trouble. It must, therefore, be remembered that to acknowledge teenagers as competent social actors is also to accept that the actions of some may not always be positive for others. Nevertheless, hanging out within public spaces was often highly regulated. Janna outlined how new developments in her town have prevented teenagers from carrying out a regular activity (figure 5.9):

Janna: *Umm there’s the new harbour ...*

Susie: *Oh yeah.*

Janna: *It’s gonna be ... they’re like bringing in rocks round there. In the summer we jump off here. It’s called the wall ... (Laughs) we jump of it into the sea and this year, or perhaps next year they’re saying that we’re not actually going to be able to do it anymore ‘cos they’re building a brand new harbour in there.*

Susie: *Oh right.*

Janna: *Which is yet another thing we can’t do or have been stopped doing. I mean it’s dangerous but it’s up to us ...* (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).

Janna’s experience of regulation is a pertinent example of the increased societal emphasis on risk (see Beck, 1992) and relates to Burgess et al’s (1988) observation that many rural children are attracted to ‘safe dangers’ in their local environments. Again this illuminates the tensions that young teenagers face inhabiting a place on the edge of childhood, where their activities are controlled in their own ‘best interests’ (see chapter two). Moreover, the regulation of what is seen as dangerous or ‘deviant’ behaviour is often centred upon particular pursuits, such as skate boarding:

Kendal: ... when you're skating on the street and stuff 'cos it's the sort of place you get told off by the police and that's ... take your name down and stuff

Susie: Yeah

Kendal: And that's annoying. Even though there's a skate park there's other bits in [town] that are like good for skateboarding

...

Susie: Yeah

Kendal: ... and the cops don't like it so you get told off sometimes then

Susie: Is there anything they can do about it?

Kendal: Yeah sometimes if they give you three or four warnings and like they can take your board off you ...

Susie: Really?

Kendal: ... yeah, and like confiscate it and you can't get it back. They give you the warning. Even if you're like skating down to the skate park they'll still stop you, take your name down. I've been stopped a couple of times (Discussion with Matt & Kendal, 4th July 2002)



Figure 5.9 Targeted Teenagers: Hanging Out on the Seafront, Photographed by Janna

'Deviant' behaviour has been targeted on the Island. CCTV has been installed on local public transport to prevent vandalism (IWCP, 2002a). The Local Authority has also developed a scheme which places 'naughty' children and teenagers on a separate and very distinct pink school bus. One participant in the iweight web forum discussion expressed her disgust at the scheme:

“As a children's rights officer I am absolutely appalled by the Pink Peril bus initiative. You should be ashamed of yourselves. How on earth do you expect to engender a sense of responsibility, community and self-worth in kids who are having problems with school by humiliating them in public? ... It will foster an even greater sense of exclusion in kids who think that education isn't for them ... We complain about children's behaviour and label them a social nuisance but we are often the cause of that behaviour through not listening to them, not involving them and not meeting their needs. If I walked up to a shop which had a notice in its window which read "no more than two women in this shop at one time", how would I feel? If "reasonable chastisement" were a legal defence for a man to beat me without being punished, how would I feel? How would you feel?” (iweight web forum, VI Lenin).

VI Lenin's posting on the web board highlighted a number of issues relating to the social exclusion of teenagers on the Island. Indeed, the contributor suggests that exclusion of this nature could have a detrimental impact upon many of the elements associated with the citizenship curriculum, such as fostering a sense of responsibility. On the web forum and in other local media this view was, however, in the minority. Many advocated the scheme as a viable solution to the perceived 'youth problem'. Central to the notion of 'youth as threatening' is the dichotomy between 'young' and 'old'. Many participants felt that ageism was rife on the Island and as a result believed their use of space was highly regulated and monitored. Concurrently, many participants constructed their own stereotypes of older people as intolerant. Furthermore, many felt they had become scapegoats for trouble and crime:

“The Island youth don't feel like they belong because of the ageist attitudes that are so prominent. They are looked upon as troublemakers before anything has been done so that the elderly population thinks things are under control and safe for their little retirement village” (iweight web forum, Carl).

The correlation between teenagers and trouble-making has to end in order to appreciate teenagers not as agents of deviancy but as active contributors to their communities (Roche, 1999; Weller, 2003). This is particularly significant as age-based stereotypes result in teenagers believing they are of lower status and have less rights, as one participant argues (Wyn & White, 1997; Weller, 2003):

“Everyone thinks that all teenagers are trouble makers so we get less rights” (Female, aged 14).

Many teenagers felt marginalised and left out of their communities, primarily because of their embodiment as young. Their activities and interests are seen

to be in conflict with the rest of the community and, as a result, younger people often feel undervalued. The resentment incited by the lack of belonging experienced by many teenagers renders active participation and involvement in the community problematic. The following element of this chapter turns to the exploration of teenager's experiences of being listened to and heard by local decision-makers.

5.3 Being Heard in the Community

The following section of this chapter explores teenagers' encounters of inclusion and exclusion from local spatial governance by highlighting the extent to which participants felt listened to by local decision-makers. Initially, teenagers' experiences of participation in decision-making in the community will be examined with particular reference to youth parliaments and forums. Subsequently, I will argue that, whilst positive attempts have been made to increase the opportunity for involvement by young people, local decision-makers have used limited methods of gathering opinions and have made uninformed decisions on behalf of teenagers without thorough consultation. Whilst such moves are a step in the right direction, they need to be made with teenagers and not for teenagers in order to curb growing resentment.

5.3.1 (Non) Spaces of Listening

In 2002 the charity Childline, in conjunction with BT, commissioned the study 'Are young people being heard?' (RBA, 2002). Only one third (n=1387) of participants rated National or Local Government as 'good' at listening to the needs of children and young people (RBA, 2002). For those aged eleven to sixteen, not being listened to conjured up feelings of both anger and also acceptance that it was the 'norm' not to be listened to (RBA, 2002). Several measures have, however, been taken by Local Government to involve teenagers in decision-making (JRF, 2002; Freeman et al, 2003). Indeed, global ventures such as the UNCRC and Agenda 21 encourage the incorporation of children and young people in decision-making (Freeman, 1999; Chawla, 2001; Freeman et al, 2003). The recent Government Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters', also states that decision-makers should be providing children and teenagers with opportunities for participation (DfES, 2003b). Nevertheless, one fifth of local authorities in the UK do not have any

systems of consultation in place to listen to children and teenagers (Monahan, 2002). When positive action does occur, it is often in the form of a youth forum or parliament (see Matthews & Limb, 1998; Probert, 2001; JRF, 2002). Forums and parliaments are significant arenas for teenagers to engage not only in citizenship but in dialogue with local decision-makers (Weller, 2003). Children and teenagers aged nineteen and under represent just over one fifth (22%) of the Island's population (iwight, 2000). In the first questionnaire, however, 81% (n=425) stated that they had *never* been asked their opinion on a local issue(s). Of the 19% (n=425) of participants that had been consulted, the matters discussed included ideas for improving communities, crime & disorder, traffic & transport, and the development of skate parks.

On the Island, several opportunities for participation exist. A youth council is being developed to work alongside Local Government (IWCP, 2002b). On a smaller scale some villages have founded youth forums, and consultation has been undertaken on a variety of activity-based issues, such as the building of skate parks. A youth parliament, 'Wight2BHeard', has also been created, which annually involves around 160 children and teenagers and 40 adults including the MP and local councillors (Wight Insight, 2001; Rutland, 2002). In this parliament delegates participate in voting, questionnaire completion and general debates on Island-based issues (Rutland, 2002). For some, the structure of the parliament has brought about very real and positive outcomes, as one of the organisers highlights (Weller, 2003):

"The event actually came about from a conference [youth parliament] I organised ... where we had a lot of senior figures on the Island ... and a young lady stood up and said 'can Wight Leisure organise something for young people on the Island as part of the festival?' and that's how this came about ... Umm ... and ... you know, all credit to her for doing that because if she hadn't have done that and this young lady hadn't have spoken out the event last night wouldn't have happened and, of course, it did and it WAS a great success ..."
(Caller, Male, Adult on the local radio phone-in, 6th June 2002)

One participant requested more events be organised for children and teenagers under eighteen. The youth parliament responded with a dance night. The parliament does, however, only include a minute proportion of children and teenagers on the island (0.5%). Results from the first questionnaire suggested that only 12% (n=425) of respondents had been involved in any form of youth forum or council. Of those participants, 55%

(n=54) felt the points that they raised had been considered seriously. Whilst delegates represent other local teenagers, most participants in this research were both unaware of the existence of the local youth parliament and had not been invited to participate (Morrow, 2003; Weller, 2003), as Chloe & Katie discuss:

Susie: *It's called 'Wight2BHeard' youth parliament. Did you hear anything about that?*

Katie: *No*

Chloe: *That's the first time I've ever heard about it*

Susie: *Oh that's interesting. That's a shame, isn't it? Do you think you'd like to join in with something like that? Is it something you'd want to do?*

Chloe: *I think if the school was asked um ... quite a majority of people would go ...*

Katie: *Mmm*

Chloe: *... 'cos people are fed up with not having much to do here*
(Discussion with Chloe & Katie, 3rd July 2002).

Access to such spaces of citizenship is fundamental to the creation of inclusive arenas for participation. Many teenagers believed it was good ideological practice, with several keen to be involved if they felt they would be able to discuss issues relevant to their lives. Nevertheless, it did not appear to have impacted upon many of the participants in this research to date. Indeed, several were sceptical that it would have any real effect:

"It can't be that effective 'cos nothing ever changes. I don't actually think they'd listen. I think they'd just make out as if they're listening but not actually do anything about it" (Discussion with Nikki, 2nd July 2002).

This mirrors Smith et al's (2002) observations that those who are already disenfranchised often question the worth of youth-specific forums. Several participants had, however, benefited from smaller scale forms of participation such as village forums, as Kat outlines:

Kat: *We've got this other place where we go up in a little church room and we're discussing whether we should have a skate park or not. We've got our own little council thing ...*

Susie: *What like a youth council?*

Kat: *Yeah* (Discussion with Kat, 4th July 2002).

Kat had participated in creating spaces for children and young people within her relatively isolated village, which eventually led to the development of a youth forum. Further examples of such participation will be elaborated upon in chapter seven. It is important, though, to highlight at this stage the

significance of participation and inclusion at the micro-level. Smaller scale forums not only have the potential to include more teenagers but also afford participants the opportunity to discuss some of their most important spaces. Gumdrops outlines how she felt listened to at youth club by a visitor:

“Man came to speak to us about a ‘one-stop’ shop - information centre for young people - listened to our opinions” (Diary extract, Thursday, Gumdrops, aged 14).

Local decision-makers or ‘professionals’, as Freeman et al (2003) suggest, play a fundamental role in shaping teenagers’ everyday lives. Many participants (38%; n=367) felt that the local council made most of the important decisions regarding their communities (figure 5.10). Respondents also suggested parish councils (8%) and adults/old people (7%) influenced local decision-making. Other alternatives included the community, the MP, local churches and the Government. Just over one quarter (26%) stated that they did not know who determined the outcome of local issues.



Figure 5.10 Who Makes the Important Decisions in Your Community?

There was a great deal of antipathy towards the Local Government. Several teenagers described local decision-makers in ways suggesting that they

were not in tune with the needs of children and teenagers:

“The old fogies councillors who ain’t got a clue what they’re on about”
(Male, aged 13).

“Old, fat, rich men who don’t care what kids think (council)” (Male, aged 15).

“I think if they [those who make important decisions] know a child has wrote or phoned they’ll scrap the issue or say they’re busy or something” (Male, aged 13).

Freeman et al (2003) suggest that, whilst local authorities have endeavoured to include teenagers in decision-making, for a variety of motivations, the approach(es) used are often inappropriate. This ‘imposed agenda’ finds professionals attempting to incorporate young people into systems which are not accustomed to working with children and teenagers. These systems are often hierarchical, use traditional methods of consultation such as questionnaires, and work within electoral time periods (Freeman et al, 2003). What is most significant, however, is that the majority of participants had not had any opportunities to contribute to local decision-making. Nikki states that her participation in this research was the only time she had been asked her opinion on local issues:

“It’s the only time we’ve ever been listened to and it’s on tape”
(Discussion with Nikki, 2nd July 2002).

For the teenagers in this research the ‘consultation fatigue’ that many researchers (Davies & Marken, 2000) fear was obviously not an issue. Moreover, merely listening to teenagers’ voices is not sufficient and is in danger of becoming less than tokenistic. It is to the consideration of hearing teenagers’ voices that the next section of this chapter turns.

5.3.2 Listening But Not Hearing

Frustration resulted from both a feeling of not being consulted and excluded from political institutions (Wyn & White, 1997). Participation is constructed as an ‘adult’ activity, carried out in ‘adult’ institutions. Children and teenagers are often only afforded the status of ‘taking part’ (Wellard et al, 1997), as full participation is frequently regarded as a threat to adult autonomy. The solutions that authorities provide to what they perceive as the key issues or problems are also often misguided:

Susie: *Do you like living here?*

Janna: *Err ... I like ... I like some of it ... I mean I like the umm ... feel of the Island. It's very like nice place to live ... if you're not my age, because there's nothing to do. I mean people say 'oh yeah there's a skate park' blah, blah, blah but it isn't actually that good and it ... You could have done with children planning it instead of someone that doesn't actually know anything about skating (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).*

Several participants discussed the use of questionnaires by local decision-makers to gauge teenagers' views (Morrow, 2003; Weller, 2003). Whilst this was seen as a positive step towards incorporating teenagers into decision-making processes, the use of questionnaires limited the extent to which participants could elaborate upon their opinions and ideas:

Chloe: *I've done like questionnaires before but never been like.. asked like my actual ... true opinions ...*

Susie: *So when you did the questionnaire did you feel it was written to get like the answers they wanted?*

Chloe: *Yeah*

Susie: *Did you feel that what ... what you wrote was ever listened to? Did they ever do anything about [it]?*

Chloe: *No ... (Discussions with Chloe & Katie, 3rd July 2002).*

Consultation, therefore, was seen as ineffective and tokenistic and perhaps more fundamentally, seldom resulted in any real action (Weller, 2003):

Kitty Sandoral: *I've done like a couple of surveys and stuff ... and people like drop things through your door and stuff like that. And I've done um ... like through school and stuff people just ask you your opinion on things.*

Susie: *Do you think your opinion has ever been listened to?*

Kitty Sandoral: *No (Laughs) they listen to you but they don't actually do anything about it. Do you know what I mean? It was a waste of time. I mean they come in and ask you something and then they just leave it at that. That's all that they do and they don't do anything about it ... follow it up or anything.*

Susie: *So is there anyone in particular you think who's kind of ignored you?*

Kitty Sandoral: *I did a survey for the council asking about what they ... if we could have anything new in [town] what would they want and they didn't do anything I don't think. They just ... they did the survey I think and um ... I handed it in and all that stuff, and I didn't get any reply or anything and they didn't follow anything through (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral, 2nd July 2002).*

Whilst the opportunities designed to embrace teenagers in local decision-making go some way to develop inclusive spaces of citizenship, these arenas soon become 'frustrating spaces' if they do not allow participants fully to express their ideas and opinions. Furthermore, once listened to, participants were frustrated at the lack of solutions or feedback on the outcomes of the

consultation. Arguably, this form of consultation is not truly participatory and such an approach can heighten cynicism and frustration (Freeman et al, 2003). Many felt their views had just been ignored by authorities who provided misplaced solutions to what they perceived to be the important issues (Matthews, Limb & Taylor, 1999; Weller, 2003). This frequently led to a great deal of resentment from teenagers who felt they were not being taken seriously (O'Toole, 2003), as one mother on the iwight web forum argues:

"You are joking, they don't even get treated with respect in Mcdonalds! What chance have they of being heard!" (iwight web forum, Mother of two boys, 4th March 2003).

The poignant message that many teenagers wished to express to local decision-makers was that it was not only important to listen to their views and needs, but to create ways in which children and teenagers could actively participate in decisions which affect their lives and the wider community. This is central to the principles outlined in the UNCRC. It is also important that teenagers current participation, whether it be conventional or not, be recognised in order to challenge and break down stereotypes of teenagers as troublemakers:

"One point which has been made a couple of times is the decision making power that the Island's youth possess, or rather the lack of. The power to make decisions is perhaps something which the Island's youth need, to give them a sense of responsibility and respect. The youth see the council as the big bad, the authority that doesn't listen. Currently the only power the youth have is to suggest and complain to the council, they have no direct power or influence over changes to the Island. What I suggest is that the Island's younger generation is given the responsibility to make decisions. They should be encouraged to come along to local council meetings to air their views, and they must be listened to. The Island's current demographic is weighed down very much by the elderly, and youth are seen by many as inferior, but we must remember this is their Island too! Let's encourage the voices of tomorrow to help shape this island into a place they are proud of, not one they are resentful of" ('iwight' web forum, John, 26th March 2003).

As John's entry on the 'iwight' web forum argues, providing teenagers with opportunities to participate, if they so wish, is fundamental to the prevention of resentment and disillusionment between teenagers and local (adult) decision-makers.

Many teenagers also felt stereotyped by local decision-makers who responded to what they perceived to be the needs of teenagers. The most

common example was skate parks. Many felt that these had been constructed in response to a lack of facilities for teenagers without recognising that young people are a diverse social group with many different needs and interests, as Kitty Sandoral and Gumdrop emphasise:

Kitty Sandoral: ... *it's like adults design all these things but they don't really know what we want 'cos ...*

Gumdrop: ... *they think every single person under 16 wants to go to skate parks ... Yeah everybody wants to go to skate parks. Like not everybody's into skating* (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral & Gumdrop, 2nd July 2002).

It is apparent that the philosophies underlying the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' have not, in the main, reached policy and practice at the local level. Participants in this research described not only the denial of children and teenagers as political and social actors, but also the homogenisation of young people as a social group. Many participants believed that it was essential to involve children and teenagers in planning processes in order to develop facilities and services which met *their* needs.

Several participants called for inclusion into more mainstream political decision-making. This opposes the spatial separation of teenagers' citizenship and calls into question teenagers' perceptions of the effectiveness of distinct youth forums and parliaments. Many called for the age at which citizens can participate in elections to be lowered, as Katie stated in her diary:

"I think voting should drop to the age of 15" (Diary extract, Monday, Katie, aged 13).

Several participants also challenged both the notion of teenage apathy as well as providing suggestions for increasing teenagers' contributions to their communities. Other participants, however, remained sceptical:

Susie: *Yeah. Would you vote if you could?*

Funda: *I don't think I would. It doesn't interest me ... to be honest ...*

Nikki: *It doesn't interest me either. Once they are elected ... once there is someone elected I don't think they really do anything. I think it's pointless*

Funda: *They just have a higher power and get more money for doing nothing really and get all the credit for everything* (Discussion with Funda & Nikki, 2nd July 2002).

As Freeman et al (2003) outline, local decision-makers work within wider societal discourses which portray children and teenagers as citizens-in-the-

making. Some work has been done to improve the decision-making opportunities presented to teenagers, as Freeman et al (2003) conclude:

“The way forward is to ensure that this goodwill is harnessed and directed towards more effective and meaningful participation. It may be, that rather than arguing for increasing or better participation for young people in the existing Local Government system perhaps we should be arguing for a total review of how the system operates” (p.67).

Nevertheless, Williamson (2002) argues that policy in relation to, for example, children’s rights, education and social welfare fails to prioritise the needs of children and teenagers. Instead, policy is directed towards their perceived needs or the requirements of their parents. Ultimately, Williamson (2002) suggests, within this (mainstream) realm children have little political agency. Chapters two and four outlined the centrality of advocacy geography in this thesis. Many participants voiced concerns and presented ideas for change on the Island, but few knew how to put these ideas across to decision-makers. As part of a reciprocal relationship with participants, I endeavoured to provide a link between the teenagers and local policy makers by disseminating findings to both the school and council leaders (Appendices D & E). The next element of this chapter demonstrates participants’ ideas and concerns and is an important illustration of teenagers’ understandings of their rights and responsibilities.

5.4 Changing Communities

The final section of this chapter explores participants’ interests within their communities as a precursor to chapter seven. I begin by highlighting teenagers’ advocacy of participation and their interest in rights and responsibilities. I complete this chapter with a summary of changes and improvements that participants would like to facilitate and witness in their locales.

5.4.1 Interesting Spaces

Despite Government concerns over youth apathy, 72% (n=425) desired opportunities to voice their opinions, echoing Freeman et al’s (2003) research in New Zealand. Chloe & Katie highlight this view:

Katie: *I think like more participation between the community and more opinions and stuff about what needs to be done ...*

Chloe: *Yeah. We need to be asked our opinions on things*
(Discussion with Chloe & Katie, 3rd July 2002).

Participants involved in in-depth elements of this research demonstrated varying degrees of interest in community life. For some, this concerned very specific, youth-centred facilities such as skate parks or youth clubs, whilst for others a more holistic approach to participation was required by local decision-makers. Funda and Nikki's interests lay with the need to recognise that teenagers are experts of their own lives and experiences:

Funda: *Let's say ... let's say on poor places yeah the adults in the school could say 'oh we know this blah, blah, blah' but a child that is actually poor would know more about it than an adult ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Nikki: *Exactly*

Funda: *... and that's the way I see it. A child could ... it just depends what you've been through and I don't think its fair the way teachers treat us ... or adults for that matter look down on you. Urgh can't stand it!* (Discussion with Funda & Nikki, 2nd July 2002).

Davies & Marken (2000) believe that teenagers should be valued as experts of their own needs. Kendal and Matt felt this recognition was fundamental to understanding the needs of teenagers, as well as of the wider community:

Kendal: *'Cos if they asked us like what our opinion was as young people then they'd have more of an idea of what to be able to do and build for the people to do ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kendal: *... rather than sort of guessing*

Matt: *Then do something about it*

Kendal: *Yeah because sometimes the council just builds skate parks which are no use 'cos um ... they build them wrong like put the wrong pieces in the wrong places ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kendal: *Yeah no the right pieces in the wrong places so you've got good skate parks but all the bits are in the wrong places and it would be better if they asked children where they wanted the stuff to go*

Matt: *Get everyone to join in ... move it and put it where it's actually meant to be* (Discussion with Kendal & Matt, 4th July 2002).

Interest within the community involves not only the energy of teenagers but also concerted efforts from decision-makers to devise methods of participation which inspire and motivate children and teenagers. As Putnam (2000) argues:

“What we need is not civic broccoli - good for you but unappealing - but an updated version of Scouting’s ingenious combination of values and fun” (p. 406).

Kitty Sandoral and Gumdrop reinforce Putnam’s arguments by suggesting that, whilst greater opportunities for participation would be beneficial, they do not come without burdens:

Susie: *... would you want to kind of like participate in your community and be involved in decision-making?*

Kitty Sandoral: *Some aspects yeah, but the whole pressure would be a bit annoying and stuff, but being able to have a say would be really good and people listening to it would be even better*

Gumdrop: *Yeah (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral & Gumdrop, 2nd July 2002).*

Although many participants showed an interest in community life, few felt they were afforded many rights as teenagers. In the second survey 23% (n=172; 33% did not respond) believed that, as a teenagers, they had few or no rights at all:

“Not many - not a child but too young to do adult things” (unknown).

“We don’t have a lot because everybody thinks that all teenagers are trouble makers so we get less rights” (Girl, aged 14).

A small proportion (8%) disagreed stating that they felt they had a lot of rights. In terms of specific rights for teenagers 7% (n=172) responded by suggesting they had the right to an education, whilst 6% believed they had the right to be respected, and a further 6% stated they had the right to have their opinions listened to:

“Right to education. Right to be treated equally” (Female, aged 14).

“The right to get asked what we think, not just at school” (Female, aged 15).

“The right to our own opinion and beliefs” (Female, aged 15).

“Right to learn, right to be protected. Right to free speech. Right of opinion” (Male, aged 14).

“To enjoy life and not be treated as a horrible teenager but as an adult” (Male, aged 14).

This summary of participants’ interests within their communities coupled with their perceived status in terms of rights suggests that many do not feel empowered to change radically the places in which they live. The extent to

which other members of society feel empowered by local politics is also questionable (see Foley & Martin, 2000). Those under the age of 16, however, are much less likely to be engaged in conventional civic participation than all other age groups, with the exception of those over 75 (Attwood et al, 2003). In 1998 the Government White Paper, *'Modern Local Government: In touch with the people'* recognised the need for major changes in participatory systems to (re)engage British citizens (DETR, 1998). Within the context of contemporary local government practice, Sharp (2002) highlights the notion of 'participation management', where participants are often 'chosen' for the views that they are likely to put across. The increasing focus by Local Government on 'partnership' with particular organisations also adds an element of selection to local participatory systems (Gibbs et al, 2001). Whilst selection may benefit teenage-centred groups in some areas of the UK, such practice is not evident in this case study area. Moreover, young teenagers remain constitutionally excluded from mainstream spaces of citizenship, for example, by their exclusion from voting in local elections.

Chapters six and seven draw upon a myriad of experiences to demonstrate the ways in which participants have shaped and contributed to their communities, both inside and outside school. Nevertheless, many teenagers do not have the opportunity to change or express their opinions relating to rural life. The final section of this chapter outlines the modifications that participants would like to see implemented.

5.4.2 Changing Spaces

When asked what participants would change about where they live, most called for more facilities. In particular, many requested more amenities for both younger and older people, cheaper facilities, more places to socialise, and more skate parks. Other suggestions included *'less traffic'*, *'safety'*, *'less boredom'*, *'less old people'* and *'more say over what happens'*. Kaz and Kimbo reinforced questionnaire respondents' suggestions by calling for more activities and events:

Susie: *OK. If you could like suggest one thing that would make your community better what would it be?*

Kimbo: *More things to do*

Kaz: *Yeah*

Susie: *Any things in particular?*

Kaz: *Like the swimming pool and stuff*

Susie: *Yeah, yeah*

Kimbo: *Lots of things for little kids to do, like going to theme parks and stuff and teenagers*

Kaz: *And I think they should hold more concerts on the Island like say down [town] rec ... hold one there but I can't see they've ever thought of that* (Discussion with Kaz & Kimbo, 4th July 2002).

More specific requests from one group of teenagers included an indoor skate park so that their interest could be pursued all year round:

"What I would basically like/love to see would be an indoor skate park with a 'chill out' room which you could sit in and have a rest after skating. In this room you could purchase (cheap) food and drinks and chat with mates" (Diary extract, notes, Duey, aged 13).

Some participants wished to see changes which would be more inclusive, and would cater for the neglected needs of younger people more generally:

Susie: *And what kind of um ... facilities would you like to see on like the Island?*

Janna: *Something for ... there's a lot of young people on the Island and even though they say it's becoming an old place but people have to grow up to be old and there's a lot of people still growing up ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Janna: *... and er ... although the Island's mostly populated by old people there's still a large percent that are ... aren't young ... I mean aren't old and they ... I think they need to be listened to and I dunno ... I couldn't ... I can't really say what would make it better because I don't really know but I think most people just want somewhere to go ... just somewhere to hang out really* (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).

Again, Janna highlights the age-related boundaries that many teenagers construct around older people, thus reinforcing the dichotomy between childhood and adulthood. Moreover, both Rammstein Nut and Chloe called for wider changes which bring different elements of the community together. Their vision is for greater social cohesion as Rammstein Nut highlights:

Susie: *If you could suggest one thing that would make your community better what ... what would you suggest if you could think of anything?*

Rammstein Nut: *Er ... (Pause) something to make the whole community come together like old people ... youth ... I don't know what but something that would interest all ages really ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Rammstein Nut: *I'm not sure 'cos old people normally hate what young people like ...* (Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002).

Kat called for facilities which would improve the reputation of her village:

“People vandalise in [village] because there is nothing to do. We need a park. Otherwise [village] is going to be called a shit tip for ever” (Diary extract, notes, Kat, aged 14).

In juxtaposition to the notion of teenage apathy, many participants in this research had ideas and visions for improvements in their locales both for children and teenagers, as well as for the wider community (see also Morrow, 2003). The challenges and frustrations experienced by broader discourses which brand teenagers as troublemakers, coupled with the lack of suitable and accessible methods of participation in local decision-making, fostered a feeling of scepticism amongst many teenagers, leading them to question whether they can ever possess any power or influence.

5.5 Conclusions

This chapter set out to explore the extent to which teenagers are individually and collectively treated as ‘outsiders’ in relation to decision-making, through the first research question,

How, and to what extent are teenagers socially excluded from local governance in rural communities?

Within the context of this case study, little sense of belonging was highlighted by participants. The manifestations of rurality as an arena in which close knit communities are forged was upheld by several participants, but contested by many. Time emerged as significant in establishing a sense of belonging. This reinforces Cater & Jones (1989) suggestion that belonging strengthens with length of residence. Indeed, participants also outlined the frequency of social contact with local residents as important in the construction of sense of belonging. Whilst feelings of belonging and attachment varied amongst participants individually, as a collective many outlined experiences and feelings of exclusion from a variety of social and political spheres primarily due to their age. Defining a sense of belonging is, however, somewhat problematic. It is often a schizophrenic notion, temporal and spatial in nature but nonetheless dynamic. At the micro-level, exclusions were often fluid and subject to change throughout the day as participants hung out with different people in different places.

On a broader scale, exclusion from political engagement in local decision-making, a lack of suitable facilities and frequent negative stereotypes in local

and more global discourses, were more rigid. Many cited encounters which uphold the notion of 'threatening youth', and, whilst the activities of some might pose a threat to others within society, I do not believe that this was the case for the majority. Nevertheless, such negative stereotypes held important implications for teenagers' exclusion. With the exceptions of some practices within school, which will be discussed in the following chapter, there was a general air of despondency; a feeling of '*what's the point, no-one will listen anyway*'. Here, participants experienced much of what Lister (1997a; 1997b) refers to as exclusion from and exclusion within citizenship. Not only were the majority of participants excluded from mainstream practices of citizenship by virtue of their age, but many felt that the opportunities available for participation were not meaningfully participatory. With little stake in their local communities, many felt that they were afforded little status, respect and few or less rights.

The positioning of participants in the transitional period between childhood, youth and adulthood furthered these tensions. Many felt they simply did not fit in - too old for some activities, and too young for others. In these terms many teenagers are not only excluded from spatial governance within their local communities, but from everyday spaces and amenities.

At the local level, one third of participants also described their discomfort in certain, often public, places. Teenagers' fear is often neglected as they are situated as the perpetrators of 'deviant' behaviour. Several outlined coping and avoiding strategies for negotiating public spaces, not unlike those described by many feminist researchers in relation to women's use of public space (see, for example, Bondi & Domosh, 1998). Participants also highlighted spaces from which they were evicted and forbidden.

It is hardly surprising that participants felt 'out-of-place' within their communities. This sense of frustration was targeted towards local decision-makers. The vast majority of participants had never been consulted over a local issue. Those who had revealed often misguided consultation, the practices of which used traditional methods, not necessarily suited to engaging in consultation with teenagers. Furthermore, many felt that these consultations were meaningless and did not result in any real action. Local decision-makers play an important role in shaping teenagers' lives. There was, however, much antipathy towards the Local Government. The principally

age-defined boundaries between teenagers and local decision-makers were mutually defined. Not only did those in power construct boundaries between themselves and teenagers, but many teenagers themselves created their own barriers and stereotypes of, '*old, fat, rich, men*'.

It is apparent that many participants wanted to be involved in the political mainstream. This will be elaborated upon in chapter seven. It is also clear that the adoption of the principles of the UNCRC or indeed the philosophies of the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' would be beneficial to decision-makers' understandings of teenagers' diverse needs and interests. The recent Government Green Paper, '*Every Child Matters*', is a positive step towards achieving this (DfES, 2003b).

In summary, many participants described frustrating spaces of exclusion, of non-belonging, of not being heard, of superficial consultation, of little status and of stereotypes, many of which may be applied to other 'non-rural' settings. Chapters six and seven, in part, outline the ways in which many participants challenged and overcame these exclusions.



Educating Spaces: Citizenship at School

6.1 Introduction

For many teenagers living in rural areas the school day is extended by long bus journeys to and from school. Indeed, I recollect the bus winding its way through the countryside, stopping to pick up waiting children and teenagers huddled in the hedgerows at the side of the road. It was often a long and tough day as the regulation and surveillance associated with school was lengthened by similar control on the school bus. The National Children's Bureau produced a short film, *'Experts in their Fields'*, in which children living in remote areas highlighted the importance of going to school in order to socialise with their friends. Teenagers in compulsory education spend a substantial proportion of their lives under the authority of schools, but often have little opportunity to voice their opinions in that arena (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; Edwards, 2002; Thomas & Hocking, 2003). Consequently, such spaces are important spheres for social and political interaction, as well as for the formation of social capital (Armstrong-Esther & Goodwin, 2003). As Morrow (2001) notes, "*schools form an important kind of community for young people*" (p.37).

In light of the introduction of compulsory citizenship education, schools are also influential in the development of teenagers' political understandings and active citizenship. The overriding aim of this chapter, therefore, is to explore research question two:

Will the implementation of citizenship education influence the political actions of teenagers, allowing greater meaningful inclusion in decision-making and citizenship?

This is achieved by reflecting upon the transition to compulsory citizenship education and exploring teenagers' understandings and experiences of citizenship within different aspects of everyday life at school. Emphasis will also be placed upon the extent to which citizenship education can influence the political agency of teenagers, allowing greater meaningful inclusion both within their schools and in their wider rural communities. This is achieved threefold. Initially teenagers' attitudes to, and engagement with, citizenship lessons will be explored. Subsequently, the actual practice of citizenship will be examined, firstly through teenagers' experiences of being listened to by teaching staff, and secondly through participation in the school council. Finally, less apparent forms of citizenship will be illustrated through the exploration of active citizenship and exclusions during teenagers' 'free time' at school.

6.2 Citizenship Lessons: Citizens-in-the-Making

The first section of this chapter explores teenagers' attitudes towards the transition to compulsory citizenship education. I begin by investigating teenagers' opinions and understandings of the citizenship curriculum prior to the introduction of the subject. Subsequently, I draw upon participants' experiences five months after the commencement of statutory citizenship education in order to ascertain the extent to which teenagers are engaged in the subject. In the penultimate section, teenagers' active citizenship in their learning outcomes is highlighted alongside their preferred methods of teaching. Finally, the potential impacts of citizenship education both within the wider communities in which teenagers' live and in their future lives are discussed.

6.2.1 Approaching Citizenship Education

Prior to the introduction of compulsory citizenship education many schools in England taught aspects of the subject under the auspices of lessons such as Geography, History and Religious Education. Related topic areas were also delivered through Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). As a result of the sporadic existence of citizenship education, schools were required to conduct an audit to determine the positioning of the subject within the broader curriculum (OFSTED, 2003a). In 1999, secondary schools in England were given two years to prepare for statutory citizenship classes and could opt for

one of three approaches (OFSTED, 2003a). The first involved incorporating citizenship education within the PSHE curriculum. OFSTED (2003a) discovered that this approach was often ineffective as young people were not always aware they were studying the subject, and because 'citizenship' was not adequately emphasised. The second option placed citizenship within other national curriculum subjects and was also problematic (OFSTED, 2003a). Even if a citizenship-related topic was covered in history or geography, it may not be covered in a way that sufficiently extracted themes of citizenship (OFSTED, 2003a). This approach is only effective if the citizenship element is made explicit (OFSTED, 2003a). The most effective means of implementing the subject, OFSTED (2003a) suggest, is through distinct, regular lessons labelled 'citizenship' as well as through other curriculum subjects. The case study school has adopted this latter route and, in the view of OFSTED (2003b) has done so successfully.

The provision of education within the school is, as noted in chapter four, 'satisfactory' with GCSE results currently below the national average (OFSTED, 2003b). The quality of provision of citizenship education, however, was graded as 'good' and was praised for strong leadership and excellent planning (OFSTED, 2003b). The implementation of the subject through the 'pupil passport', where teenagers record their participation and responsibilities both inside and outside of school, was also highly regarded (OFSTED, 2003b), as I observed in classes that I attended:

"Tutor time lasts for 35 minutes on a Friday morning, and most weeks citizenship is studied. They have recently all been given folders to keep all their citizenship work in and, so far, they have mainly been looking at legal issues and laws. The form tutor had laid out their folders so I could take a look at them and several students seemed quite proud of them" (Observations from Citizenship Class, 24th January 2003).

The school was seen to provide young people with a sound understanding of democracy, the rationale for adopting rules, and trust (OFSTED, 2003b). In addition to weekly lessons the school also holds a biannual 'World Awareness Day' and a yearly 'Crime and Punishment Day' (OFSTED, 2003b), as Kitty Sandoral and Gumdrop discuss:

Kitty Sandoral: *We're having this big day when all these ...*
Gumdrop: *Oh yeah well ... we're having World Awareness Day ...*
World Awareness Day that's something to do with citizens
(Discussion with Kitty Sandoral & Gumdrop, 2nd July 2002).

Just before the transition to statutory citizenship lessons 425 teenagers aged thirteen to sixteen responded to a questionnaire survey. Just over half (53%) of the respondents surveyed were aware they had already been learning citizenship, although participation in this research may also have increased awareness to some extent. Furthermore, respondents were asked to outline the citizenship-related topics which they recalled learning from a list of human rights, the Government, voting, volunteering and community participation. Participants were also asked which topics they felt would be useful to them now as teenagers, in order to explore the extent to which respondents felt the subject was relevant to their present lives. Just under half (49%) of the teenagers surveyed recalled learning about human rights, whilst around one third remembered learning the other topics. Human rights (24%) was deemed the most useful topic to learn, whilst volunteering was regarded as the least useful (13%). In later discussions participants studied *'Citizenship: The National Curriculum for England - Key Stages 3 - 4'* guide (QCA, 2000) in order to assess for themselves the extent to which they felt they would be engaged with the subject matter. Overwhelmingly, human and legal rights were deemed to have the potential to be the most interesting and useful aspects of citizenship education. The appeal of these subject areas highlights participants' interests in local and global issues. Furthermore, these two areas were of interest as they reflected important transitional changes in participants' lives as teenagers. Nikki, for example, questioned the rationale underlying age-specific legislation:

"Legal rights would probably be quite interesting because I'd like to know why we're not allowed to do it ... but adults are" (Discussion with Nikki, 2nd July 2002).

At the same time human and legal rights were viewed as possessing future value. Bob felt that learning about legal rights would be helpful for adult life:

Susie: *And I just wondered what ... if there are any subjects there you thought would be interesting or useful for you?*

Bob: *Um ... legal rights*

Susie: *Yeah. Why do you think that might be useful?*

Bob: *'cos it's like good to know the umm ... law and everything 'cos it could like help you when you're older* (Discussion with Bob, 4th July 2002).

During the period of transition to compulsory citizenship lessons, relevancy was vital to teenagers' attitudes to the new curriculum. The popularity of human and legal rights relates very much to teenagers' understandings of

their changing place within society as they approach key legal landmarks as citizens. Nevertheless, whilst participants were able to select potential areas of interest, the forthcoming curriculum was in general viewed with some disinterest. Just over half of those involved in in-depth elements of this research stated that they would not choose to study citizenship if it was an option. Gumdrop and Kitty Sandoral believe that it is not necessary to be taught citizenship at school because much of the subject can be learnt outside school:

Susie: *If it was an option would you pick it?*

Gumdrop/Kitty Sandoral: *Probably not! (Laughs)*

Susie: *Why not?*

Gumdrop: *'Cos I think there's some things that are more important. 'Cos like there's stuff that you learn in lessons which you can only really learn at school. Stuff like this you could probably learn from other stuff like media and newspapers. That kind of thing (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral & Gumdrop, 2nd July 2002).*

Only 23% (n=25) felt they would choose to study citizenship. Kendal and Tommey once again drew upon the notion of relevancy whilst deciding the worth of citizenship:

Susie: *If you had a choice over whether you picked it or not, do you think it would be a subject you would choose?*

Kendal: *It depends really*

Tommey: *It depends on what the other ones ... what the other options would be*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kendal: *Yeah I dunno ... think about in later life what you were going to do ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Tommey: *Yeah*

Kendal: *Whether it's relevant*

Tommey: *Yeah (Discussion with Kendal & Tommey, 4th July 2002).*

Furthermore, during the final few months before compulsory citizenship education was introduced, teenagers questioned the relevancy of the subject and whether citizenship had a place within an already packed curriculum:

"Why encourage people to do things that they don't want to do! There are not many people who want to something like a citizenship course. Just leave the kids alone, let them do what they want!" (iweight web forum, Richard, 12th February 2003).

Before embarking upon citizenship education, participants' greatest concern was the relevance of the subject to their present lives. If their present lives are undervalued, this has the potential to impact upon teenagers' feelings of

belonging and worth within society. Participants' concerns that the subject should be relevant to both their present and future lives is, to some extent, reflected in the aims of the subject. The curriculum does promote the necessity to consider the needs of children and teenagers in terms of educational ability, gender and ethnicity as well as relating the subject to students' interests. The opening gambit of the curriculum guide for key stages three and four, I believe, implicitly defines citizenship as a future status by suggesting that teenagers should merely be '*helpfully involved*' in their schools and communities (QCA, 2000). The next section of the chapter explores teenagers' engagement with citizenship education after September 2002.

6.2.2 (Dis)Engagement with Citizenship Education

In January 2003 a second questionnaire was completed by 172 teenagers in year ten. It was designed to chart teenagers' views of, and reactions to, citizenship five months after the introduction of compulsory citizenship education. During the time that participants had been taking citizenship lessons they recalled having studied a variety of subjects including alcohol, drugs, smoking and solvent abuse; crime and law; sex education; the Government; rights; and friendships. These recollections matched the actual syllabus participants had been studying, which demonstrates a heightened awareness of citizenship since the introduction of distinct citizenship lessons. As previously discussed, respondents' memories of citizenship-related subject matter prior to September 2002 were considerably more vague. To some extent this may be a reflection of the presence of this research project within the school. This would account for heightened awareness amongst only twenty-five respondents.

In this second survey, many participants (58%) stated that they were not enjoying citizenship lessons. In order to establish whether a dislike of the subject was related to wider disengagement with school, a chi-squared test was utilised (figure 6.1). There was no statistical relationship between participants' interest in citizenship education and their engagement with school more generally. Furthermore, there was no statistical difference between girls' and boys' current disengagement with the subject.

(n=158)		Are you enjoying citizenship lessons so far? (%)	
		Yes	No
Do you generally feel happy about going to school?	Yes	66	63
	No	34	37

Figure 6.1 Enjoyment at School and Engagement with Citizenship Education

A small minority (9%) stated that they enjoyed everything relating to citizenship education. In terms of non-topic based enjoyment factors, several respondents found citizenship lessons both informative and relevant:

“The topics are informative” (Male, aged 15).

“They’re good for our age because we’re starting to do these things” (Male, age unknown).

“We cover issues that are relevant to everyday life” (Male, aged 15).

A small proportion (6%) of respondents also enjoyed voicing and discussing their opinions, whilst 4% enjoyed working together as a class believing that it fostered cohesion, as this respondent demonstrates:

“We always discuss the subject thoroughly making sure everyone understands” (unknown respondent).

Moreover, the survey asked respondents to ‘send a message to the Prime Minister’ in relation to their views on citizenship education. In total 8% responded with positive comments on the introduction of the subject:

“We should have more lessons” (Female, aged 15).

“It is a good idea and should be kept for future pupils” (Male, aged 14).

“It is very interesting and helpful to know what life will be like when you come out of school” (Male, aged 14).

“I think it is a good idea but there’s a lot of room for improvement” (Female, aged 15).

Teenagers who enjoyed their current citizenship classes were able to identify some kind of relevance to their lives. This was principally in relation to the transition from childhood to adulthood. For those who were not enjoying

citizenship lessons, the most common reason related to boredom (49%). Several (12%) stated that they had already studied the subject matter:

“Before the class started I spoke to one girl, who I had done a lot of work with before, and one boy, who had previously chosen not to be involved. They were quite happy to talk about their experiences although they were not all that positive. On the whole they found the subject boring. They felt that they either knew the subject matter before or that it was not relevant to them now. I asked them to compare citizenship to other lessons at school, and Lee felt that he preferred working in other lessons, although both he and Janna noted they had done a lot of work since the beginning of term” (Observations from Citizenship Class, 24th January 2003).

Again, Lee and Janna highlight relevancy as a key factor in their engagement with the subject. Another important element was the delivery of such lessons. Several criticised the format of the lesson, complaining that they always had to fill in sheets or copy down notes:

“It’s so boring because you only listen. You don’t interact and learn anything you haven’t already” (Female, aged 14).

“It is not interesting and the lessons are all of the same format” (Female, aged 14).

A minority of respondents did not enjoy citizenship lessons for a number of other reasons including disruptive behaviour by other members of the class, and a lack of time to cover topics sufficiently.

Again, when asked to ‘send a message to the Prime Minister’ regarding citizenship education, a significant proportion of responses (30%) were either negative or suggested areas for improvement:

“Don’t bother, no-one pays attention” (Female, aged 14).

“We need to learn about real issues like war, violence” (Female, aged 14).

“Pupils should not be forced into doing it as a GCSE course” (Female, aged 15).

“That it is a waste of time and we shouldn’t do it” (Male, aged 15).

A further 14% used this part of the survey as a platform for airing other political views, using the research to create their own space of citizenship:

“We want peace” (Male, aged 14).

“Ban fox hunting” (Female, aged 14).

“Screw citizenship, why don’t you give us a reason for going to war?”
(Male, aged 14).

Several respondents, therefore, reconstructed the questionnaire into their own space of citizenship to voice their opinions on a number of local and global issues. This indicates an absence of alternative platforms, which was indeed reinforced by several participants involved in interviews and diaries who thanked me for listening to their opinions, an opportunity most had never had before either within school or the wider community.

Since the transition to compulsory citizenship education the Office for Standards in Education has conducted a small-scale evaluation of the implementation of the subject. Having inspected 25 schools, OFSTED concluded that, whilst examples of good practice existed, progress in over half of the schools was unsatisfactory (OFSTED, 2003a). There was a general lack of understanding of what was meant by citizenship and what the curriculum should encompass (Kerr et al, 2003; OFSTED, 2003a). As chapter three outlined, the definition of citizenship is highly complex and open to much interpretation. In the second questionnaire respondents were asked to outline their own understandings of ‘citizenship’. For 19% of those surveyed, citizenship did not mean anything, whilst a further 34% did not respond to the question. In addition 6% defined it just as a (sometimes boring) lesson:

“A lesson which we have at school” (Male, aged 14).

These respondents did not appear to associate citizenship to any areas of their life beyond the classroom. Several participants (16%), however, defined citizenship as being a good or better citizen, as this respondent suggests:

“Training to be good citizens” (unknown respondent).

For some this related to being a member of their country or more globally, whilst 8% equated the notion to ideas of community and taking part in society, as these teenagers highlight:

“How to be a good member of the community” (Female, aged 14).

“Rights and laws of people in the community” (Female, aged 14).

It is apparent from such responses that citizenship is defined at a number of different levels, from local spaces to the wider global community. I would

argue that, in the main, respondents reflected a more cosmopolitan notion of citizenship, as outlined by McGrew (2000), which spans both local and global spheres but has little connection to the nation-state. Chapter seven further examines the diverse areas in which participants grounded citizenship. Moreover, some respondents (11%) believed that citizenship was related to people, in particular equality, respect and people working together:

“That we all get together and suggest everything what we need for the future” (Female, aged 14).

At present, citizenship education appears to have some way to go before the majority of teenagers are fully engaged with the subject matter. The key factors in the effectiveness of the curriculum lie with both relating the subject to teenagers’ everyday lives (as well as their futures), in addition to broadening understanding of the definition of citizenship (education). One further area participants outlined as essential to the effectiveness of citizenship education was its delivery.

6.2.3 Participation in Learning

Much of contemporary citizenship education literature is bound to the notion of *active* citizenship (QCA, 1998; Chisholm, 2001). It would seem somewhat paradoxical, therefore, that in mainstream schooling children and teenagers have little opportunity to voice their opinions over *their* learning. Creating space within the curriculum for participatory learning is often challenging (Christensen et al, 2000). Nevertheless, Griffith (1998) highlights that participatory education should be an essential element of citizenship. To explore the extent to which spaces of citizenship can be fostered within the classroom, this next section examines teenagers’ opinions on effective methods of teaching citizenship. Most participants preferred to be taught using a multi-method approach. The single most popular method was, however, the internet (mentioned by 52% of respondents):

“I like using the internet and watching videos and the teaching is good too” (unknown respondent).

This was followed by the use of videos (mentioned by 47% of respondents), and being taught by a teacher (mentioned by 37% of respondents):

“I like the teacher because they can express their own way of learning and teaching” (Female, aged 14).

A small number of respondents viewed the use of text books (5%) and group work (3%) as popular methods. Several teenagers cited practical participation as a favourable teaching method. In one citizenship class, for example, teenagers learnt practical lessons about alcohol:

"I enjoyed the lesson on alcohol because we measured out the different units" (Male, aged 14).

Discussion within the classroom is uncommon and, although some schools allow for group debate in citizenship classes, this is often led by the teacher (Kerr et al, 2002). The most productive lessons were viewed by OFSTED (2003b) as those which allowed participation in discussion. This view was echoed by many students:

"Talking with other class members helps us learn other information" (Female, aged 14).

Space to express beliefs and opinions in class discussions was valued by several teenagers (Weller, 2003). Drawing upon experiences in a science lesson, Nikki and Funda highlighted conflicts between teachers and pupils over preferred methods of learning:

Nikki: ... and I told my teacher that I wanted to do that the other day and she turned around and shouted at me saying that we have to do what she wants to do because it's work and we have to get it done but we're not allowed to have fun like all the other classes

Funda: Our teacher he ... 'cos we only have him for one lesson a week he actually sits there and says 'what do you want to do next lesson as long as it's scientific' ...

Susie: Oh

Funda: ... so we get to choose what we do and he'll make it scientific for us

Susie: Do you think you learn more doing it that way?

Funda: Yeah. It's more fun. It sits in your head more as well

Nikki: 'cos when you're bored in a lesson ...

Funda: It goes in one ear ...

Nikki: ... you don't pay as much attention. Yeah it just goes in one ear and out the other. But if you're enjoying it you remember it (Discussion with Funda & Nikki, 2nd July 2002).

Nikki and Funda emphasise not only the different learning experiences that teenagers encounter but, importantly, the positive outcomes that participation in decision-making over learning can have (Weller, 2003). A study conducted in the US revealed that the discussion of, and participation in, political issues was far more effective than civics education (Owen, 1996), as one

questionnaire respondent reinforces:

"I dislike the subject immensely as we are not allowed to discuss any of our own views ... we simply copy laws from a text book" (Male, aged 14).

OFSTED (2003b) praised the case study school in this research for inviting visitors to speak at citizenship lessons, especially as teenagers were given the responsibility to collect visitors from the reception when they arrived (OFSTED, 2003b). Visitors do, however, need to possess suitable communication skills and to allow for discussion in their presentations (OFSTED, 2003a). During one citizenship lesson that I observed, a visiting speaker purveyed some poignant messages to the class. She did so, however in an authoritative, teacher-like manner, ordering one teenager to 'stop chewing'. There was, in this session, some discussion although this was often in the form of the visitor asking the class questions rather than more open dialogue:

"The lesson that day involved a talk from a representative from the [organisation], a drop-in advice centre/ telephone helpline for young people. I sat on a table at the back of the class. The speaker talked of issues that are both relevant to young people now and in the future. After a while she introduced ideas for discussion through worksheets and hung these on a washing line. They covered issues of exclusion including 'loneliness', 'not fitting in' and 'bullying'. The class reacted quickly with answers, although there were varying degrees of participation in the class - this is probably usual within any class. One group of boys looked particularly bored" (Observations from Citizenship Class, 24th January 2003).

The teaching methods chosen to deliver citizenship education are highly significant to the 'success' of citizenship education. Teenagers in this research favour participatory methods, which enable them to make active contributions as citizens in school. The next section of this chapter moves on to explore the impact of citizenship education in the wider community.

6.2.4 Impact Outside School

Prior to the commencement of statutory citizenship classes participants were asked, through the first questionnaire and discussions, whether they felt learning such material would be of use to them now, as teenagers, or in the future. Exploring this issue is fundamentally important to understanding the construction of teenagers as citizens. Overwhelmingly, with only one exception, all teenagers involved in the in-depth research stated that the

subject matter would be of more use to them in the future. Such education was tied to adult activities which exclude teenagers of this age group. Janna, for example, suggests that her lack of interest in the subject is related to her exclusion from electoral politics:

Susie: *Yeah. So do you think that learning about some of that kind of stuff would be useful for you now or more in the future?*

Janna: *More in the future. Now 'cos I don't really care about voting or anything or who's the Prime Minister 'cos I don't really know much about it. As soon as I get to 18 where I can vote, I mean I'll start getting interested in it but it's just ... it's something I don't need to know at the moment so I'll probably be ...*

Susie: *So would you be interested if they like lowered the age of voting?*

Janna: *Yeah, yeah I would if it was like 16 as soon as I've got to 16 I'll be interested and want to know what's going on in the parliament and stuff (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).*

Teenagers' exclusion from mainstream, formal politics does not encourage engagement in citizenship as a curriculum subject. Despite this, Kitty Sandoral and Gumdrop highlight a contradiction. Whilst some teenagers appear not to be interested in the subject because they are not able to participate in formal participatory mechanisms, some do not feel confident or informed enough, for example, to vote:

Susie: *Yeah, and do you think those topics will be useful for you now or can you see it being more use in the future?*

Gumdrop: *I think more use in the future*

Kitty Sandoral: *Well elections and voting and stuff like that will be useful in the future but some of it wouldn't really be ... you wouldn't really need it for us now. So mostly for the future.*

Susie: *Yeah. Would you like to vote now if you could?*

Gumdrop: *I think personally ... I think probably ... we don't know enough about parties that kind of thing to be able to vote now. You got to like.. if you had to vote now you'd have to learn more about what's going on*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kitty Sandoral: *I feel that I'd be too influenced by other people and it would be difficult for people if they're not, like you said if they're not sure about things. They're just ... they're like 'oh well you should vote for my party' and then I'll vote for them or something like that (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral & Gumdrop, 2nd July 2002).*

Janna, Gumdrop and Kitty Sandoral raise perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing teenagers' engagement with citizenship education. A fine balance is needed between teaching teenagers subject matter that is relevant to them as citizens-in-the-present whilst providing information and debate for their different roles as future citizens. To reinforce this, many teenagers felt

that certain aspects of citizenship education might be of use to their future roles as parents or to their careers. Funda highlights her interest in the role of law courts for her future career as a lawyer:

Susie: *OK the topics that you're interested in are they useful for you now or more useful in the future?*

Nikki: *Probably more in the future*

Funda: *I think ... I think that if we learn about certain things now we're gonna have more of an understanding in the future so I think it's both but it depends ... 'cos I know exactly what I'm going to do when I'm older when I leave school ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Funda: *... and I have done since I was ten years old which I've had a very clear mind about that so I would be interested in like the role of law courts but I think the other stuff it's not gonna interest me at all (Discussion with Funda & Nikki, 2nd July 2002).*

Five months after the introduction of compulsory citizenship education respondents were asked again when they felt the topics they were learning would be of use to them (Figure. 6.2). This point was re-examined in order to assess differences between participants' perceptions of the subject prior to its compulsory implementation and their subsequent experiences. As a result, a minority (16%) believed that citizenship education would be directly useful to them now as teenagers, whilst 21% believed they would only be of value for the future. There was no statistical difference between when participants felt the lessons that they took in citizenship education would be of use to them and whether they were enjoying the subject. This finding, to some extent, challenges the notion of relevancy. Nevertheless, the majority (63%) of participants felt that citizenship education would be useful to them both now and in the future.

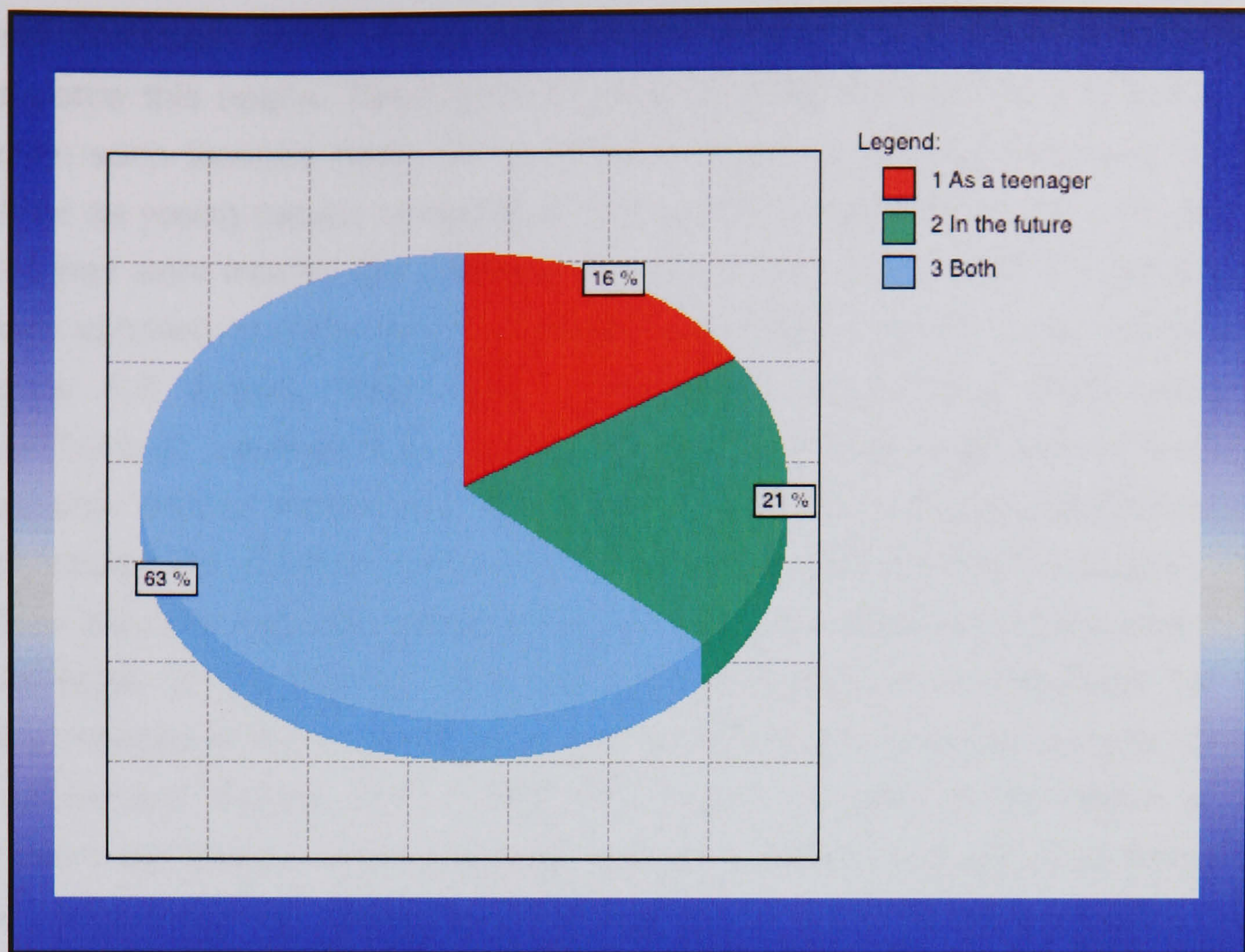


Figure 6.2 The Relevancy of Citizenship Education

The majority (71%) of participants felt that alcohol, drugs and smoking were the most useful topics to learn as teenagers. Sex education (19%) and law and order (19%) were also deemed to be useful to participants now, as two respondents suggested:

“Sex, education, drugs and drink so we know what we’re getting ourselves into” (Male, aged 14).

“Law because I’m not from this country and didn’t know what my rights were” (Female, aged 15).

A small number of respondents (7%) believed that all the subject matter they had studied was of value to teenagers, highlighting the broader value of:

“Making your mind up about things” (unknown respondent).

As Jenks (2001) suggests, the discourse of teenagers as ‘becomings’ is nowhere more fervently upheld than within the classroom as children and young people are constantly graded in terms of development. Most teenagers highlighted the future value of citizenship. Although participants’ emphasis on the future role of citizenship education would infer that the subject reinforces this discourse, which renders children and teenagers as ‘human becomings’

(see Cockburn, 1998; Prout, 2000), other findings from the survey did not reinforce this notion. Teenagers were asked how they felt they were treated within such lessons. Most (72%) of those surveyed felt that they were treated either as young people or adults in citizenship classes, with only 12% feeling that they were treated like children. Fundamentally, the status that participants were afforded in these terms impacted upon their interest in the subject. As figure 6.3 details, there was a statistical relationship (99% level of significance) between how participants felt they were regarded by teachers and their level of interest in citizenship education. All of those participants who felt treated like children during citizenship lessons did not like the subject. The more teachers regarded participants as adults, the more likely they were to be interested in the lesson. This finding has significant implications for the effectiveness of the curriculum, as well as teenagers' broader societal status. Furthermore, Davies et al (1999) have drawn attention to the notion of the 'hidden curriculum' or the encounters within a school that are educational but not necessarily an explicit part of the curriculum. This 'hidden curriculum' may, Davies et al (1999) suggest, be applied to how teenagers are required to refer to teachers. In these terms the school ethos has important implications for both citizenship education and the status teenagers believe they are afforded. The participants in this research, however, suggested that the ethos of individual teachers significantly impacts upon teenagers' engagement with citizenship.

(n=141)		How do you feel you are treated when you are taught citizenship? (%)		
		As a child (n=21)	As a teenager/young person (n=87)	As an adult (n=36)
Are you enjoying citizenship	Yes	0	39	72
	No	100	61	28

Figure 6.3 The Impact of Teenagers' Perceived Status on their Enjoyment of Citizenship Education

Prior to the introduction of compulsory citizenship education respondents were asked if they felt learning about citizenship would encourage them to be interested in their communities. Participants were shown a list of citizenship-related topics (DfEE & QCA, 1999; QCA, 2000). From those who responded, only 31% (n=342) felt it would make them more interested. In later in-depth

discussions there was a mixed response to this question, with just over half suggesting that learning citizenship in school would not impact upon their interest in community issues outside school, as Janna agreed:

Susie: *Do you think that learning some of those subjects would be um ... make you be more interested in what goes on in your community? Will they help you?*

Janna: *No, I don't think so. I wouldn't say that it would be one of my immediate reactions to 'Oh I want to learn something about my community. Let's learn human rights'. I wouldn't say that if you know what I mean (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).*

Some respondents did not see how the lessons learnt in citizenship education could be practically applied to their everyday spaces. Indeed, Davies et al (1999) infer that there is often a cleavage between schools and their surrounding communities. The absence of links among schools and communities may contribute to the difficulty that some participants face in relating lessons learnt in citizenship to their own lifeworlds. For those who believed citizenship education would have a tangible influence on their interest in community life, specific topic areas were highlighted as the most useful for engagement in local issues:

Susie: *Do you think learning about some of those things would make you more interested in what goes on in your communities now?*

Kendal: *Dunno*

Tommey: *I think so 'cos you learn how it's sort of run and stuff*

Susie: *Yeah*

Tommey: *... so you might be able to see the way you can help out and that ... sort of weaknesses and stuff you could help fix. Things like that*

Kendal: *Yeah like I just said again you'd know what was going on with the council and stuff ... all the people around ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kendal: *... what they're doing with the money and stuff but 'cos ... I suspect certain towns get money, don't they? ... to spend on things and it would be good to know what they're doing with your money*

Susie: *Yeah that's true*

Matt: *It would be quite good to understand what's happening (Discussion with Kendal, Matt & Tommey, 4th July 2002).*

In this discussion Kendal, Matt and Tommey outlined a number of 'real-life' scenarios relating to topics in the curriculum. In the second questionnaire just over one third (36%; n=133) of those who had participated in a local project, campaign or voluntary work believed that the topics covered in citizenship had helped them with their project or campaign. Moreover, there was a statistical relationship (95% level of significance) between whether participants were

enjoying citizenship education and their involvement in a local campaign (figure 6.4). Teenagers who had been involved in a local campaign or project were more likely to be enjoying citizenship lessons. Equally, those respondents who had not participated in their communities were more likely to dislike such lessons. A pre-existing interest in the community, on whatever basis, appears to aid engagement in the citizenship curriculum. These participants may, therefore, bring their own sense of ‘subject relevancy’ to the classroom.

(n=130)		Have you been involved in a local campaign/project? (%)	
		Yes	No
Are you enjoying citizenship lessons so far?	Yes	55	32.5
	No	45	67.5

Figure 6.4 The Impact of Past Participation on Teenagers’ Interest in Citizenship

Eighteen respondents outlined the ways in which they felt citizenship lessons had aided their project or campaign. Some responses suggested that learning citizenship helped with practical issues:

*“In law e.g. how we can campaign for a skatepark in a proper way”
(Male, aged 14)*

This questionnaire respondent highlighted how citizenship lessons enabled him to make planning and campaigning decisions over new skate park facilities. Here, citizenship education has practical outcomes for specific projects. Lessons in citizenship were also valuable in developing wider skills which could be applied to local participation:

“I think it makes you more sensible” (Female, aged 14).

“Responsibility” (Male, aged 14).

“They’ve taught you about the outside world” (Male, aged 14).

“They make me more aware” (Female, aged 15).

The skills these participants describe are central to the philosophy of the citizenship curriculum. Moreover, from the entire target population just over

one third (36%) believed that taking part in citizenship lessons had made them think about participating in a campaign, community project or to volunteer in the future (figure 6.5). It should perhaps be acknowledged that respondents may have been relaying the rhetoric of citizenship. Nevertheless, as chapter seven details, several participants were able to demonstrate their own practical engagements with citizenship.

The approach and delivery of citizenship education is fundamentally important to teenagers' understandings of democracy and citizenship and is likely to impact upon their future participation and inclusion. The enhanced engagement in citizenship education of teenagers who are or have been actively involved in their communities is highly significant. In conjunction with formal lessons, the ethos and spaces of citizenship within the wider school are also essential to the engagement of teenagers. As Alderson (2000b) suggests, children and young people become democratic citizens through praxis. The next section of this chapter explores citizenship in practice within school.

6.3 Practising Citizenship: Being Listened to at School

Fundamental to an effective citizenship curriculum, I believe, is the development of a participatory ethos within a school. Indeed, the curriculum guidelines suggest that members of the school should have the opportunity to be 'helpfully involved' (QCA, 2000). The extent to which teenagers feel able to act as citizens and have their opinions respected has the potential to impact upon their engagement with citizenship education and the wider community. This component examines teenagers' experiences of active citizenship within school in relation to the extent to which they feel their voices are listened to on an everyday basis by staff, and more formally through the school council.

6.3.1 Participation & Exclusion

Wyness (1999) suggests that, despite recent education reform which places emphasis upon 'choice', children have less opportunity for participation since the passing of the 1986 Education Act. This legislation, which Wyness (1999) believes does not adhere to the UNCRC, withdrew children's status on school governing bodies. As outlined in chapter three, the UNCRC states that children and young people have the right to be consulted over matters which

impact upon their lives (Muscroft, 1999; Alderson, 2000b). This section examines the extent to which participants felt their opinions were listened to by teaching staff in everyday settings. Outside of structures such as the school council some teenagers felt that, in general, teachers listened to their opinions and concerns, as Janna stresses:

“It’s a good ... good school. It’s um ... It does listen to young people even though most people wouldn’t think it does, but it does do it”
(Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).

For several participants, the school set a better example of good participatory practice than they had previously experienced:

Chloe: *But um ... like sometimes um ... people go to the head of year and like say stuff and sometimes it doesn’t um. get taken into consideration but most of the time if you do like complain about something it will get um ... um ... something done about it.*

Katie: *Yeah. But at our other school nothing was really done. If you like complained about the toilets or something ... something that needs to be done they wouldn’t do it ... but here it’s better*
(Discussion with Chloe & Katie, 3rd July 2002).

The opportunity to consult with teachers is, therefore, dependent upon the ethos of individual schools. One limitation of this study is that participatory practices in different schools could not be evaluated. Nevertheless, participants were able to draw upon their own diverse experiences to illustrate differences between schools. Moreover, within a relatively large secondary school the opportunities available for voicing opinions varied between different individuals. Some felt that teachers had little time to take on board everyone’s point of view, as Rammstein Nut notes:

“Our teachers try to listen to our views on certain things but sometimes they just have too many people to deal with” (Diary extract, Monday, Rammstein Nut, aged 14).

There were inevitable instances where teenagers believed that individual teachers were not good at listening to their views, as Bob highlights:

Susie: *Do you feel listened to at school?*

Bob: *Umm ... most of the time. Like in [teacher] lesson ... (Pause) umm ... he like ... he doesn’t listen to you ... if you ask a question he tells you to put your hand up and when you put your hand up he tells you to put your hand down and stuff, and then he just chucks you out even if you haven’t done anything and that’s just not funny ‘cos you have to stand outside*
(Discussion with Bob, 4th July 2002).

Funda and Nikki further this point by suggesting that some teachers had favourite students whose opinions were more likely to be acknowledged:

Funda: *I've got favourite teachers ...*

Nikki: *Yeah so have I*

Funda: *They listen to you. Miss [Teacher] does. She's definitely the best teacher but some of the teachers ...*

Nikki: *If they don't like you from the beginning of the year they won't like you at the end ...*

Funda: *Yeah*

Nikki: *... they don't change their opinion of you. They just keep it*

Funda: *And I don't think that's fair. They all say ... the teachers think they're always right and if you try and say 'no' and give your opinion it's like 'don't talk back to me ... blah, blah, blah'. You just get shouted when you don't exactly set off to talk back to them you try and say something*

Nikki: *Yeah. They like say you should treat teachers how you want to be treated but they don't treat you the same no matter how you treat them*

Funda: *It needs to work both ways (Discussion with Funda & Nikki, 2nd July 2002).*

Funda and Nikki highlight the need for respect and egalitarianism in school to avoid undermining teenagers' status. Nikki and Funda continue by suggesting that there is little room for free thinking and discussion within school. They also felt as 'louder' teenagers, they were less likely to be listened to and instead felt they were seen in a derogatory light. This mirrors Holland's (2001) reflections on the greater credence often given to the voices of 'sensible' children in the research scenario. Funda and Nikki believed that the listening ethos upheld by some teachers was not always put into practice. Concurrently, Rammstein Nut illustrated that quiet teenagers who voice their opinions less explicitly are not necessarily less active citizens:

Rammstein Nut: *Yeah ... um ... I don't really like to um ... make my opinion, you know, 'cos um ... I don't know ... I don't like talking out, you know ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Rammstein Nut: *... go in front of the class and stuff like that but if it's on something ... I'm interested in history a lot at the moment with the war and I like to take my opinion in class, you know, give my views of it (Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002).*

On the whole, opinion was divided over whether teenagers felt listened to by teachers at school. This very much depended on individual experiences in different lessons. The informal experiences of being listened to are, I believe, essential in creating environments within schools which both uphold the teachings of citizenship and encourage teenagers' active engagement.

Without such an ethos schools could endanger feelings of despondency amongst teenagers (Alderson, 2000b). The next section of this chapter explores a more formal mechanism for the expression of teenagers' views within school.

6.3.2 The School Council

Education on democracy can only be taught through praxis and not as an abstraction (Hart, 1992; Alderson, 2000a). Practising democracy within schools is, therefore, fundamental to effective learning (Owen, 1996). Furthermore, as Alderson (2000b) states:

“School councils are a key practical and symbolic indicator of respect for children’s rights” (p.124).

Although some schools still have young representatives on governing bodies (Edwards and Fogelman, 1991), many teenagers' experience of practising democracy is through a school council (Weller, 2003; Wyness, 2003). Such a forum has the potential to provide teenagers with a stake in their school, often creating a more effective learning environment and involvement in the polis of their school (McColloch, 2000; Crick, 2002). Some schools have also discovered that developing active school councils can have a positive impact upon students' behaviour more generally (Alderson, 2000b). As a result of the introduction of compulsory citizenship education, schools will now be assessed by OFSTED on the effectiveness of their council (Wolchover, 2002).

In 1999 the NSPCC conducted a sample evaluation of schools in England and Wales to assess, in part, the role that school councils can play in providing children and young people with a stake in school decision-making (Baginsky & Hannam, 1999). In the majority of schools, young people were able to contribute to the agenda of meetings. In just over half of the councils, however, some restrictions were placed upon the subjects discussed by, for example, individual members of staff (Baginsky & Hannam, 1999). In some cases school councils only explored more trivial issues which, Davies et al (1999) believe, have the potential to be more harmful than productive. Other schools provided opportunities for representatives to be involved in more substantial decision-making, for example, employing new members of staff (Baginsky & Hannam, 1999; OFSTED, 2003a). Overall, such councils were seen to be advantageous as they provided young people with a voice and

helped to improve relations between staff and students (Baginsky & Hannam, 1999). Limitations of time and resistance from teachers were outlined by staff as potential difficulties in developing effective school councils, whilst students felt that forging trust relations between staff and students was essential (Baginsky & Hannam, 1999).

In 2002 the *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement* (IEA) conducted the International Citizenship Education Study in 28 countries. The research revealed that many of the fourteen year old respondents surveyed felt they had good opportunities to participate at school (Kerr et al, 2002). Either through formal or informal means, many participants believed they could bring about change, particularly when part of a group (Kerr et al, 2002). Engagement in the school council, Kerr et al (2002) suggest, can have a significant impact upon both a teenager's citizenship education as well as their future political participation. Despite this, for many young people, the school council had little real impact upon their citizenship education as participation was indirect and only achieved through their class representative (OFSTED, 2003a).

Whilst the school council is ideologically good practice, Janna, her class representative, had not been inspired to participate:

Susie: *Are you involved in the school council?*

Janna: *I am yeah. I don't go though (Laughs). I'm meant to go every Tuesday or something but I just forget. They don't put any reminders up or anything. Umm so ...*

Susie: *What were the meetings that you have been to been like?*

Janna: *I've been to one. A whole year at school and I've only been to one council meeting! (Laughs). Not very good! Um ... (Laughs) ... (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).*

Janna felt she needed more guidance and encouragement as class representative. She was not always aware when meetings were taking place as the council did not meet on a regular basis. Her own disengagement ultimately impacted upon the engagement of, and perceptions of, the school council's effectiveness by other teenagers (Weller, 2003). This echoes Kerr et al's (2002) observations that not all young people wish to participate in this format. Kerr et al (2002) fail to acknowledge that what motivates individuals to participate can change rapidly and are often dependent on factors such as peer pressure, efficacy and the nature of subject matter discussed.

Alderson's (2000b) comprehensive survey of school councils suggested that less than one fifth of young people found the forum to be effective. Several participants in this research believed the school council was effective in two key ways. In the first, teenagers believed that the school council provided a much needed forum to voice their opinions in addition to raising awareness of their perspective(s) as teenagers. This is fundamentally important to the creation of engaging citizenship lessons. Teenagers are likely to become disengaged or disillusioned with citizenship as a subject if they do not experience real examples within school (Alderson, 2000b). Secondly, several participants felt that within the context of wider decision-making, teenagers' views should be taken seriously. The school council, therefore, has the potential to bridge gaps and counter adultist assumptions that experiences of their own past youth gives them an insight into the lives of teenagers today. Many felt they were 'growing up' in a very different world:

Susie: *Do you think the school council is quite effective?*

Janna: *Oh yeah, 'cos then [teacher] gets to hear our views on what we think is good for the school because as we know ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Janna: *... 'cos we're like part of it. It's hard for him to ... be in our shoes even though he has been, you know it's hard for him to like the same stuff we like. It's hard for him to imagine what it's like for us and stuff (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).*

Several participants cited examples of how the school council had brought about tangible benefits. Loki and Agnuz highlighted one such example:

Loki: *We did ask for some pool tables, didn't we?*

Agnuz: *Oh yeah*

Loki: *We asked the teachers um ... the student council asked the teachers if we could have some pool tables er ... we got them (Discussion with Loki & Agnuz, 3rd July 2002).*

Not only does Loki cite a positive outcome of the school council but he makes reference to the school council being synonymous with the teenagers in the school, quite distinct from a collaboration between staff and students.

Many of those involved in the in-depth element of the research had not used the school council. Some simply had had no reason to raise an issue or request, whilst others were more sceptical of the school council's efficacy:

Susie: *Do you use the school council or anything like that?*

Kimbo: *No I don't use the school council*

Kat: *No*

Kimbo: *No 'cos teachers never listen so (Discussion with Kat & Kimbo, 4th July 2002).*

A further reason for some cynicism with the school council was that some felt other teenagers did not take its presence seriously, making what were deemed as 'silly' requests. As schools are so rigidly structured in a Bernsteinian sense, children and young people are rarely consulted over the curriculum (Sibley, 1995; James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; Prout, 2000). It is, therefore, hardly surprising that some doubt the effectiveness of the school council (Weller, 2003). Chloe suggests that this sometimes occurs when the class representative requests suggestions to take forward to the council:

"If she does like the boys just mess around and stuff and put stupid stuff down ..." (Discussion with Chloe, 3rd July 2002).

As a result of these 'silly' requests some teenagers felt that teachers would not take other issues seriously:

"People do ask for really stupid things. So they're not always sure whether you're being serious or something" (Discussion with Gumdrop, 2nd July 2002).

Constructing meaningful spaces of citizenship within a school is, therefore, challenging. Indeed, different individuals or groups of teenagers have opposing ideas on what is legitimate to discuss in the school council. There was no evidence to suggest that those who made 'silly' requests were those more likely to feel excluded from participatory practices. It may be that these teenagers also excluded themselves from this research. Nevertheless, the potential of the school council was broadly recognised. Kendal, Matt and Tommey also commented that the effectiveness of the school council relies not only on class representatives and teachers but with the participation of the whole school:

Susie: *Would you like to have your opinion listened to more on stuff that goes on?*

Kendal: *I would like to yeah*

Tommey: *Yeah it would be better*

Matt: *It would be better 'cos ... and what could be better ...*

Kendal: *'Cos like house captains and stuff go to the meetings. They don't really talk to the class about what's going on. It might be better if we all got involved in like what we could buy and stuff. I think the school could give us money to like buy stuff ... like it would be good if everybody had an opinion (Discussion with Kendal, Matt & Tommey, 4th July 2002).*

Furthermore, Malik (2002) calls for the (re)instatement of student governors, to work alongside school councils and to have greater influence over the running of the school. The practice of citizenship within school is subject to barriers and complexities ingrained in the education system, which relate to the construction of power relations between staff and students. Mechanisms such as school councils have done much to increase teenagers' stake within the school, but on an everyday basis teenagers' opportunities to shape their own experiences of citizenship and citizenship education are challenged. The school council is, however, only one way in which teenagers create spaces for themselves within school (Wyness, 2003). The final section of this chapter examines spaces of citizenship within school, but outside the classroom.

6.4 Practising Citizenship: Politics in the Playground

Teenagers' use of time and space within school is heavily structured and controlled by adults. During lesson time one member of staff is 'on call' patrolling non-classroom areas for truants. Jenks' (2001) exploration of embodiment highlights the temporal discipline of children's bodies within classroom spaces. Jenks (2001) draws upon Durkheim and Foucault to suggest that time spent within the classroom is subject to control and constraint. He purveys the timetable as a metaphor for modernity in the way it regulates children's bodies in time and space (Jenks, 2001). Such control is often lessened a little during break times when more choice over use of space is available (Christensen et al, 2000; Mayall, 2000). Time spent in school outside of the classroom would appear to equip teenagers with relative freedom. This section examines teenage geographies of hanging out in school, and explores the (de)regulation and conflict within and between such spaces of citizenship.

6.4.1 Geographies of Hanging Out

The consideration of 'geographies of hanging out', I believe, is of fundamental importance to the consideration of social exclusion and citizenship. Exploring the places which teenagers value, claim and shape either within school or in the wider community provides an insight into the complex power relations manifested in those arenas. Teenagers' spatial and friendship allegiances provided a distinct geography of hanging out during 'free time' at school. As Holloway & Valentine (2000b) describe, teaching areas are often designated

as 'out-of-bounds' during break times. Except in bad weather, members of the school are expected to spend break and lunchtimes outside the school building but within the school boundaries, unless they go home for lunch. Kitty Sandoral highlighted the regularity of socialising in the same places (figure 6.6):

"Anyway you get different people hang out in different places ..."
(Discussion with Kitty Sandoral, 2nd July 2002).

Janna highlighted the area in which she regularly hangs out:

Susie: *So do you hang out in any particular place outside around school?*

Janna: *Yeah you do. Yeah umm ... ours is kind of like the whole of the ... as you go round the main entrance ... ours is like the whole of that area ... the benches and the walls and the bars and the bike shed and stuff like that. That's where we mainly hang*
(Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).

The geographies of hanging out at school are often determined by the structure of friendship groups and the preferred activities of those groups (figure 6.7). Kendal, for example, spends much of his time taking part in sports with friends:

"At break and lunchtime I played basketball in Medina sports centre with my friends" (Diary Extract, Monday, Kendal, aged 13).

Such places are, however, subject to change, especially through the progression of the school year. As new cohorts join and leave the school, spaces within the playground become (re)territorialised to suit the needs of new social groups, as Rammstein Nut detailed:

"If it's in school it's mainly up at the grass ... er ... the bank. It used to be the wall but now my friends have gone so there's more people that have taken it over" (Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002).



Figure 6.5 Geographies of Hanging Out, Photographed by Agnuz



Figure 6.6 Hanging Out in the Basketball Court, Photographed by Kendal

The geography of hanging out around the school also changes throughout the year depending upon what activities are available. These variations are also determined by the season and weather, as Kitty Sandoral explained (figure 6.8):

“We don’t ... we hang out in the changing rooms more during the winter and stuff, but when it’s sunny like we sit on the field or ‘cos we’re normally doing something ‘cos Michelle’s really active, she’s always doing like basketball or football or something, so we’re always doing one thing or another at break or lunch ... Um ... that’s ... that’s the little sports hall ‘cos there’s a little one, and you’ve got the big one with the gym and everything. That’s where we go in break times and play basketball, and lunchtimes we go and play football or something” (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral, 2nd July 2002).



**Figure 6.7 Hanging Out in the Changing Rooms,
Photographed by Kitty Sandoral**

The rationale for the kinds of spaces chosen around the school reflect, for some teenagers, the desire to spend time away from adult surveillance. This may be particularly pertinent within a school setting where the panopticon of the teaching staff is ever present. Kaz, Kat and Kimbo discussed the areas that they hang out in to escape scrutiny:

Susie: *Do you hang out in particular places around the school as well?*

All: *Yeah*

Kat: *Do you know where the big bench is and the wall goes like that. That's where all of our friends sit and that*

Kimbo: *We either go down the field or down the green room. Just down by the tracks. Sit down and have a talk*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kimbo: *So no teachers can bother us (Discussion with Kaz, Kat & Kimbo, 4th July 2002).*

The geographies of hanging out during non-lesson time at school are distinctive. The actual spaces occupied and the (re)territorialisation by different peer groups demonstrates active citizenship in practice through the exclusion and inclusion of different teenagers. The next section of this chapter highlights the regulation of spaces at school during break times and the challenges that some teenagers present to these restrictions.

6.4.2 (De)Regulation

All spaces within the school are highly regulated and whilst many teenagers carve out specific geographies of hanging out, away from adult gazes, their freedom to use the school space is limited. As previously acknowledged, teenagers must spend their break and lunchtimes outside except when eating in the canteen. Janna does not agree with such regulation:

“At break we all bundled inside ‘cos it was very cold and windy but most of the teachers tell us to go outside! Which is really cruel” (Diary extract, Thursday, Janna, aged 13).

Learning spaces and leisure spaces appear to be delineated within the school. For those choosing not to eat in the school canteen, a prefabricated building has been created in the playground, set aside from the school:

“At lunchtime we went into the mobile cabin to have lunch because it is better than eating outside in the cold” (Diary Extract, Monday, Chloe, aged 13).

Nevertheless, these regulations are challenged by some. Bob noted how he and his friend persistently challenge these rules, attempting to hang out within the school building, thereby redefining the intended and segregated learning / leisure spaces:

Susie: *Is that like where you normally hang out at school?*

Bob: *No, normally I just run around inside the school building ... In school I just stay inside the school building and get told off all*

the time, at lunch and break 'cos ...

Susie: *You're not allowed to stay in at lunch and break then?*

Bob: *Yeah. We don't ... me and my best friend, he like doesn't like it outside I just ... we just go wherever like ... he goes where I want and I go where he wants.*

Susie: *Oh that's nice.*

Bob: *Like we've basically been best friends since play school and umm. whenever I'm not in he doesn't really hang out with anyone else. He just walks around on his own ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Bob: *'Cos he doesn't really have many other friends except for me*

Susie: *So do you get moved on a lot by the teachers then?*

Bob: *Yeah. Then we just walk off and ignore them most of the time.*

Susie: *What kind of places? Anywhere inside school or any ...?*

Bob: *Yeah, normally we come up the history, maths block or down the drama studio or hang out in the library and like ... umm ... they said that I was going to be suspended for ten days if I went in the library at lunchtime.*

Susie: *Why is that?*

Bob: *Because ... umm ... I got chucked out and kept going in there every day and asking if I was allowed back in there (Discussion with Bob, 4th July 2002).*

Rammstein Nut echoes Bob's experiences, highlighting the sometimes nomadic nature of hanging out especially when trying to challenge the spaces in which they can hang out:

"I try to stay indoors sometimes and we always get kicked out by teachers ... or we just move somewhere else around the school ..."
(Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002).

Furthermore, certain spaces within the school building can offer some kind of immunity against having to go outside. One such space is the library, a much cited location for remaining indoors. Not unlike Jenks' (2001) observations of children's re-regulation of their classroom activities, pretending to work whilst covertly writing notes to one another, the library, a seemingly work-related space, became an indoor place in which to socialise. Rammstein Nut, however, highlights that simply hanging near the library is often not seen as a legitimate reason for staying inside:

"Hung around near the library at school for a while until we got kicked out" (Diary extract, Monday, Rammstein Nut, aged 14).

The period between the end of break or lunch times and the start of lessons signifies a challenging time in teenagers' use of space within the school for, having left their geographies of hanging out, they enter more highly regulated space. This control, Katie believed, is significantly linked to trust:

“When we are waiting to go into class at the end of lunch he [teacher] just locks the door and says: ‘you can’t go in because you all can’t be trusted without a teacher’. That’s more or less what he says. It gets on my nerves” (Diary Extract, Wednesday, Katie, aged 13).

Some teenagers challenge teachers’ authority by questioning their use of space in and around the school during break times. Examples of teenagers’ challenges to regulation within school highlights a number of citizenship-related issues, including those of trust and respect between the teacher-pupil relationship and, moreover, teenagers’ spatial autonomy, agency and decision-making abilities. The final element of this chapter looks at inter-peer group conflict.

6.4.3 Conflict

The political geographies of the playground are shaped by conflicting interests between the teenagers themselves. Not unlike Willis’ (1998) examination of countercultural groups within schools, specific places were important signifiers of status within the school or within peer groups and were often determined by safety and/or identity (Weller, 2003). The ‘smokers’ or ‘chimney boys’, as described by Loki, hang out away from the adult gaze behind a tree in the playing field farthest from the school building. In doing so, the ‘chimney boys’ demonstrate their agency, opposing the structures and rules of the school. In detailing the activities of the ‘chimney boys’, Loki presents them as ‘other’. Moreover, Loki and Agnuz opt to spend time in areas away from the smokers with whom they have come into conflict and by whom to some extent they feel threatened:

Susie: *Do you usually go to the same places round school?*

Agnuz: *Yeah*

Loki: *Yeah we’ve got our own little places. We ... we hang around the back of the school. We hang around on the grass. We go down to the other field. We play football and stuff like that. We just round the back ... and then you’ve got smokers hedge down the bottom of the field. We don’t go down there ... everybody just smokes. Um ... and then you’ve got the tree they smoke behind there. We don’t go there ...*

Susie: *Is that the farthest bit from the school?*

Loki: *Yeah the bit down there by the hedge ... They go down there and there’s a tree at the front. They go behind there and they used to throw stuff at us when we used to play near there ... they used to throw mud (Discussion with Loki & Agnuz, 3rd July 2002).*

Here, Loki and Agnuz’s example illustrates the power relations between one dominant and one resistant group of teenagers (see Sharp et al, 2000), which

ultimately led to Loki and Agnuz excluding themselves from one area of the school. Whilst Hey's (1997) ethnography highlighted the conflicts and tensions amongst girls' friendship groups, this research did not highlight tensions based upon gender. Rather, conflict was often centred upon age (Tucker & Matthews, 2001), as Bob suggested:

Susie: *How about in school, are there any places you don't feel comfortable in?*

Bob: *Sometimes I don't feel comfortable in the year 11 base [common room], um ... year 10 base because ... um ... there's a load of year 10's that don't like me for some reason (Discussion with Bob, 4th July 2002).*

Furthermore, Rammstein Nut also chose to hang out by the 'fatwall' primarily because she felt safe and comfortable there with her older friends:

Rammstein Nut: *Oh yeah. We used to ... er um ... when my friends ... most of my friends are in the 11th year and they've all left and we used to hang out by this ... the wall near the bus shelter but they've all gone now so we ... I just sit with some of my 9th year friends and we sit up on the grass. It's like a little refuge thing ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Rammstein Nut: *... 'cos with the 11th years I felt really safe and now I'm with the 9th years I just, you know, don't feel secure. With the 11th years they'd all protect me and that ... 'cos they were like my best friends. But they've all done their GCSEs now and left. Except for about two of them (Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002).*

Teenagers often reinforce adult gradations of age (Alderson, 2002; Mayall, 2002). Indeed, Corsaro (1997) notes that peer culture is both influenced by, and embedded in, broader adult cultures. This ultimately impacts upon who individuals construct as 'other'. Many of the participants interviewed in this research were amongst the youngest in the school and often noted conflicts with older children. Furthermore, 'sameness' and 'difference' (see Tucker, 2003) was often centred around identity group cultures. This will be examined further in chapter seven.

Teenagers challenge one another's hegemony in particular places of 'hanging out' (Weller, 2003). The political geographies of the playground are, therefore, highly dynamic and subject to constant change as peer groups reorganise and teenagers become more established within the school (Weller, 2003). Examining teenagers' often political geographies of hanging out highlights hidden geographies of citizenship, by illustrating young

people's active roles in making decisions over spaces of inclusion and exclusion (Weller, 2003). Schools are fundamentally influential in fostering social connections, and, therefore, are implicit in shaping identity and impacting upon social, economic and political life for young people (Wyn & White, 1997). Teenagers' agency is, however, persistently understated in schools and wider educational institutions (Mayall, 2002).

6.5 Conclusions

This chapter set out to examine teenagers' experiences of citizenship within school, both through the introduction of formal citizenship education and through their everyday experiences with teaching staff and other peers. This chapter therefore addressed research question two,

Will the implementation of citizenship education influence the political actions of teenagers, allowing greater meaningful inclusion in decision-making and citizenship?

It would appear that, whilst citizenship education has increased teenagers' awareness of issues relating to citizenship, many are not engaged or interested in the subject to date. One of the key themes to arise from this chapter is that of relevancy. Many participants valued subject matter that was of relevance to their current lives, as well as, to their future status. This is essential, I believe, to ensuring that teenagers' current status and place within society is not undermined. Citizenship education needs to promote more than just '*helpful involvement*'. Furthermore, relevancy was also of importance to participants in relation to the transition from childhood to adulthood. Several valued such education particularly in relation to explaining age-specific legislation and key legal landmarks. Nevertheless, there was a certain degree of disaffection with the subject matter. Many participants believed that citizenship education had greater value for their future lives, thus echoing the notion of 'citizens-in-the-making'. Significantly, there was an important relationship between the way teenagers felt they were treated within such lessons and their engagement with the curriculum. The older the participants felt they were viewed by teachers, the more engaged they were with citizenship. Respect for teenagers' status and a more egalitarian approach in the classroom has the potential to strengthen spaces of citizenship within schools and wider communities. Furthermore, such an approach may help to

challenge a deeper, ingrained education culture which, I believe, does not fully appreciate children and teenagers as citizens-in-the-present. More broadly, there were diverse understandings of the transferability of citizenship as a curriculum subject to the wider world. For those who could not envisage the relevancy of the subject to their communities, this may be a reflection of young teenagers' exclusion from mainstream politics, inciting attitudes such as "*what's the point in learning about voting when we can't do it?*". Others upheld the importance of being informed.

The second key factor influencing the 'effectiveness' of the citizenship curriculum relates to implementation and delivery. Many teenagers valued participatory methods of teaching. Within schools children and teenagers have little opportunity to shape their curricula. Alderson (2000b) suggested that children and young people become democratic citizens through practice. The school council provided a valuable space of citizenship for many teenagers, producing tangible and very real outcomes. It also allowed teenagers to voice their opinions, ensuring that teachers were able to make decisions based upon consultation rather than assumption. It was, at times, challenging to maintain an effective school council. Poor examples of citizenship in practice within schools, Alderson (2000b) suggests, has the potential to disengage teenagers. Participants also provided their own examples of citizenship in practice through their own micro-geographies of citizenship and exclusion within the playground. Through the distinct and explicit geographies of hanging out at school, exclusions and contestations of over school spaces were highlighted. These challenges and conflicts occurred between teenagers as well as with members of staff. Furthermore, many carved out spaces beyond the adult gaze.

As a result of this analysis I would argue for a more cumulative notion of citizenship where children, young people and adults alike are represented as full citizens who, throughout their life, learn, develop and exert different forms of citizenship in different spaces. As Kingston (2002) argues, with reference to post-16 citizenship education:

"However little they [sic] might know of how their country ticks, many teenagers are doing quite a lot of what could be described as citizenship" (p. 50).

It is to the consideration of teenagers' own engagements with citizenship,

outside the classroom, that the following chapter now turns.

7

Creating Spaces: Radical Citizenship in Rural Communities

7.1 Introduction

I commenced in-depth discussions with participants by asking a seemingly meaningless and unrelated question in order to establish rapport - “*Did you watch Big Brother last night?*”. All participants replied positively and we engaged in dialogue over who would be the next to be evicted! Amidst discussions that the increase in television viewing has contributed to a decline in conventional civic engagement is the notion that (electoral) politics needs to adapt in order to counter voter apathy (see Putnam, 2000). Turner (2004) suggests that more people cast votes for the 2004 Big Brother eviction by telephone and text message than were placed in the last general election at polling booths. Many of these participants were teenagers. This example illustrates that, despite the notion of teenage apathy, many young people are engaged in alternative forms of (electoral) politics. This chapter explores the often unconventional and relatively undocumented spaces and arenas in which teenagers contribute to shaping their rural communities.

In order to examine spaces of citizenship outside of school and within the wider community, this chapter responds to research question three:

How, and to what extent do teenagers recondition rural spaces through their own interpretations and acts of citizenship?

This chapter, therefore, looks past formal citizenship education within school and beyond children or young people-centred political institutions, such as youth forums, to explore the ways in which teenagers act as political agents and indeed citizens of their own spaces and communities. I commence by

exploring geographies of hanging out within the community in private, public and commercial spaces. This is followed by a more in-depth exploration of participants' interests and their subsequent impact upon social capital. An examination of the notion and examples of 'claimed spaces' are then developed. In the next section, participants' creativity and citizenship in shaping rural spaces is outlined through examples of rural revitalisation and the phenomenon of skate park developments. Finally, this chapter explores citizenship and identity through examining teenagers' perceptions and spaces of belonging in relation to rurality; to diverse group identities; and to alternative communities, such as those in cyberspace.

7.2 Hanging Out in the Community

This section begins by charting teenage geographies of hanging out within rural communities in order to highlight participants' use of private, public and commercial spaces. Exploring teenage geographies of hanging out allows the examination of teenagers' political actions within places valuable to them. Subsequently, participants' interests and responsibilities are explored particularly in relation to their impact upon social capital and participation. Finally, the numerous ways in which many teenagers shape and claim everyday spaces within their communities will be highlighted as an important introduction to the notion of creating spaces of citizenship within rural landscapes.

7.2.1 Geographies of Hanging Out

In the first questionnaire, participants described the places in which they regularly hang out. The limitations in requesting responses of this nature in the form of a survey must be acknowledged. Participants may, consciously or unconsciously, alter or hide the actual spaces they socialise in for a number of reasons. For example, they may wish not to disclose spaces that they value outside the adult gaze. Here, my position as an adult researcher and 'outsider' may have impacted upon the extent to which respondents were willing to provide me with glimpses of their worlds. The questionnaire was, however, valuable in providing a basis for later in-depth discussions and photography. Figure 7.1 outlines examples of the arenas noted in the questionnaire, and, whilst they are loosely categorised into a typology, the blurred boundaries between such spaces must be recognised. Indeed, these

distinctions are not discrete, as 'claimed spaces', examined more closely later in this chapter, were often 'public spaces' and some 'public spaces' were occasionally more private than, for example, 'commercial spaces'.

Where do you hang out?	Number of times cited by participants	Examples
Private spaces	91	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own home • Friend's homes
Public spaces	177	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach • Park/green • Woods • Recreational ground • Skate parks
Commercial spaces	166	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town • Cinema • Leisure centres • Cafes • Pubs/clubs
Claimed spaces	92	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streets • Benches • Other school's grounds • Bus shelters • Graveyards

Figure 7.1 Where Do You Socialise with Friends?

The survey revealed that public spaces are the most commonly frequented arenas by teenagers closely followed by commercial spaces. Tranter & Pawson (2001) outline streetscapes as well as more wild settings as arenas in which children play and 'hang out'. Unlike the geographies of hanging out within school, outlined in chapter six, participants often had several regular locations within their local and wider communities. These different spaces were based upon a broader range of opportunities and activities than hanging out within the school (Matthews et al, 2000; Tucker & Matthews, 2001).

Participants' or friends' homes were important places especially for those living in more isolated areas. Within the home, teenagers' bedrooms were significant spaces of both privacy and identity. Rammstein Nut, lives in a remote area and describes her room as a 'refuge':

"I feel most comfortable in my room of all places as it's where I spend nearly all my time!" (Diary extract, Sunday, Rammstein Nut, aged 14).

Furthermore, Bob's week-long diary also detailed the time spent in his room. Bob lives in a town where the majority of other teenage residents attend a different high school. He stays in his room most days after school, reading, watching television or videos. Like Rammstein Nut, isolated teenagers have less opportunity for social networks and so spend more time in their rooms:

"I don't go out after school because I have no friends in [town] but there's plenty to do in [town] when my friends come round" (Diary extract, Bob, aged 13).

Hanging out in the home is not just for those who are isolated from other teenagers. Funda describes her friend's house (figure 7.2), isolated from adult gaze, as a secluded space for hanging out:

Susie: *Where's that?*

Funda: *Um ... it's [Boy's name] house ...*

Susie: *Oh right*

Funda: *... and 'cos he's got a massive, massive house we're all allowed up there so it's like a good place to be 'cos it's like it's a house far away from everything else and no one can hear if we get up to anything like ...*

Susie: *(Laughs)*

Funda: *... music and what not* (Discussion with Funda, 2nd July 2002).



Figure 7.2 Hanging Out at Friends' Houses, Photographed by Funda

Secluded, private spaces are particularly important to Funda and her friends. She notes how the nocturnal activities of teenagers in her local town are under the surveillance of regular police patrols. To avoid such surveillance

Funda often socialises in private spaces.

Although individual teenagers hang out in a wide variety of places, many had a particular favourite or regular space. Katie, for example, spends her time along the sea front (figure 7.3).



Figure 7.3 Hanging Out along the Sea Front, Photographed by Katie

Meanwhile, Chloe carves out her own space in a bus station (figure 7.4):

“I’ve taken one [photo] of the bus station because I seem to spend most of my time there with my mates and they like come out with us”
(Discussion with Chloe, 3rd July 2002).

Everyday spaces are, therefore, utilised for socialising within rural communities. Many such places are significant sites for groups of teenagers to gather in prior to deciding the day’s activities. These regular meeting places are also important in establishing and maintaining social networks as well as countering isolation:

“Where we know [town] quite well, we have different meeting places round [town] where like a whole twenty of us’ll meet up and go wherever we’re gonna go from there, so there is a couple of ... um ... the green is one of them. We all meet up there sometimes and ... there’s a couple of car parks like the central car park in [town]. We meet up there. Umm outside [store] or somewhere like that you know, just like places where everyone knows where it is because you meet up there all the time” (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).



Figure 7.4 Hanging Out in the Bus Station, Photographed by Chloe

Regularly socialising in the same spaces helps participants to shape their communities. Kendal, for example, stated that he met his friends on a daily basis at his local skate park and, as will be revealed later in this chapter, had been actively involved in campaigning for the facility. Hanging out was not, however, always so static. Many participants spoke of a travelogue of socialising, starting in one place and moving round to others:

Kitty Sandoral: ... when I'm in [town] with my friends we tend to go to places like [name] rec and stuff. We just go sit on the swings and just like places like that. I mean we ... well we tend ... there's a back ... you can walk down a lane from up by [shop], we walk down there and we go and sit by the river down there

Susie: Oh right

Kitty Sandoral: ... 'cos I mean it's by the road but you've got the river there and there's a pipe which we sit on which goes across the river so we sit there sometimes and um ... also down ... down, further down the river by ... up from [shop] ... up from the path there's a ... there's like seats up there and stuff. So we just go and sit up there in the woods and that ... I don't think there really is a place that's ... where we all go all the time. It's like Gumdrops said it depends on who I'm with and what we're doing and stuff like that but we just tend to drift really (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral, 2nd July 2002).

Kitty Sandoral highlights that geographies of hanging out are shaped by friendship patterns. Several of the diary entries suggested that friendship is often in a state of flux. On different days participants spent time with various groups of friends. The spaces in which they socialised were often dependent

upon which group of friends they were with at the time. Nevertheless, frequency and regularity were common themes in the majority of participants' geographies of hanging out. Furthermore, several teenagers also noted the importance of 'commercial spaces' in creating new friendships and overcoming exclusion. One of the most frequently cited commercial spaces was 'Head-hunters', an outdoor laser quest facility (figure 7.5):

"It's a good place where you can meet new people and stuff and like if you don't like have one team of your own then you can have another team against you that you don't know and you meet up with them. Like I've found some new friends there. They were on the opposing team and like some of ... some of them are my best friends. So it's really good. (Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002).

For Rammstein Nut this 'commercial space' has played an important role in countering her isolation. She lives in a small hamlet with few people of her own age. 'Head-hunters' provided her with the opportunity to spend time in the countryside, of which she is so fond, whilst concurrently overcoming the greatest problem that living in a rural area creates for her. This activity was cited by several participants and in many ways manifests many traditional portrayals of rurality, such as hunting. Furthermore, 'Head-hunters' reconstructs the spatial freedom (albeit within the confines of the laser quest combat area) that the countryside was seen to have afforded children and teenagers in the past.



Figure 7.5 Hanging Out at 'Head-hunters', Photographed by Rammstein Nut

Hanging out within rural community spaces is particularly important to those who felt frustrated in chapter five. Participants spend a considerable amount of time in outdoor, public spaces. Although this sometimes creates the kinds of tensions noted in chapter five, the teenagers' presence helps to keep rural communities alive. The next section of this chapter furthers this debate by exploring the ways in which participants' interests contribute to the building of social capital and spaces of citizenship.

7.2.2 Interests, Social Capital & Responsibilities

Bound to the notion of teenage apathy is the concern that young people are increasingly disengaged from political and community issues (Pretty, 1998). To some extent, findings in this research reinforce this idea with few participants involved in formal voluntary work. Putnam's (2000) seminal work on social capital in American communities explores changes in civic engagement. One such measure of engagement, Putnam (2000) suggests, is the individualisation of leisure time, with trends inferring an increase in home-based leisure pursuits such as watching television. Putnam (2000) suggests that many young people are, however, more engaged in voluntary work than their parents' generation. Participants in this research, I argue, demonstrate alternative forms of collective or communal engagement and citizenship through, for example, hanging out with friends, skateboarding (which can also be done individually), organised sports and youth clubs. Figure 7.6 highlights the multitude of activities in which respondents were involved. The most popular activities, 'hanging out with friends' and 'skateboarding or cycling', were amongst the least individualised activities.

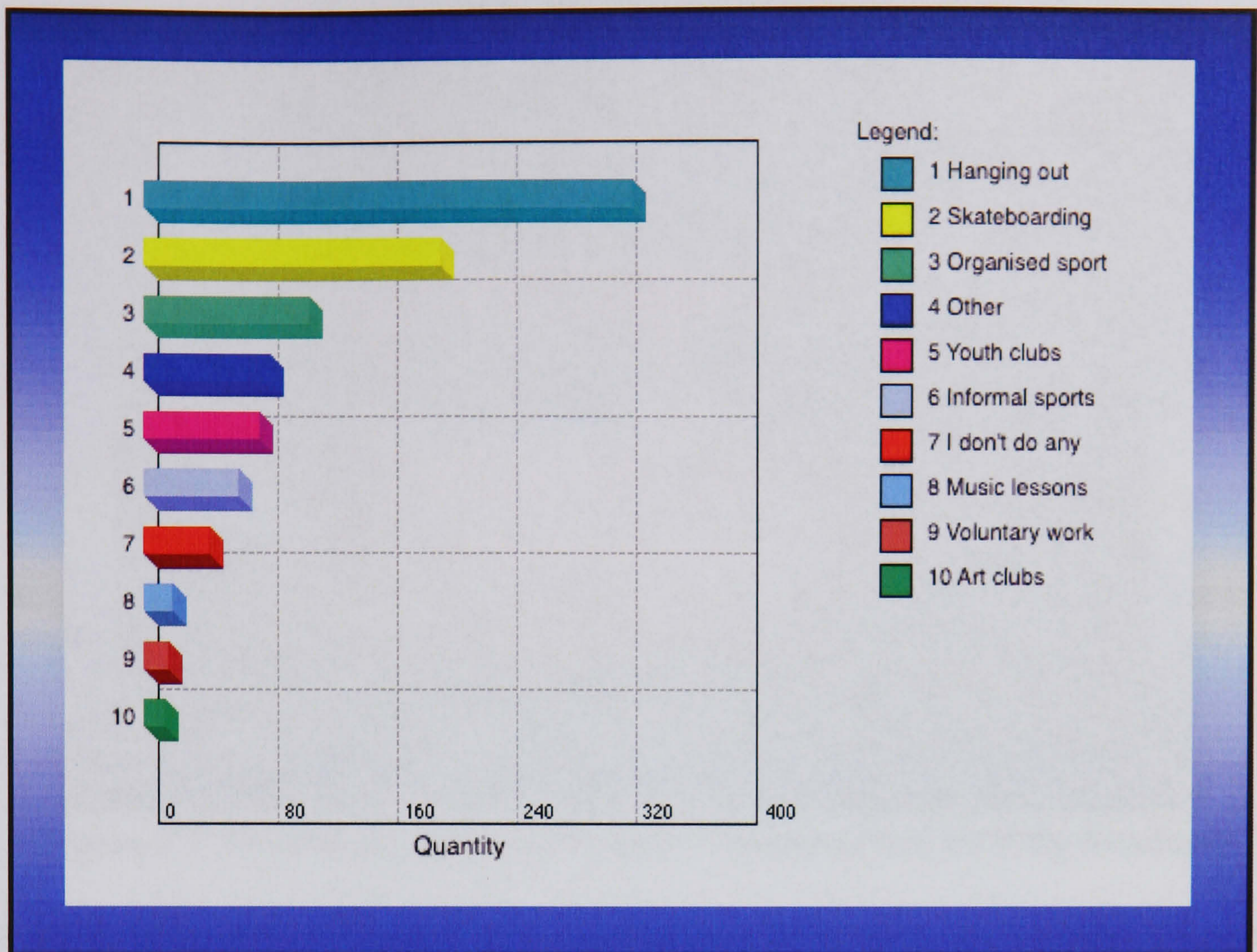


Figure 7.6 What Kinds of Activities do you do in your Community?

Several teenagers participated in team activities in a more conventional sense. Kitty Sandoral regularly plays in a local marching band:

“I do a lot of music stuff ‘cos I play the clarinet and stuff. I need to get my grades up. I’m on about grade 5 or 6 at the moment so I like play in music centre wind band like at Medina on Saturday mornings and stuff like that” (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral, 2nd July 2002).

Kitty Sandoral outlined that attending the band meetings was not only beneficial to her musical attainment but also gave her the opportunity to widen her social networks. Despite participating in this more traditional activity, Kitty Sandoral and her friends find ways of carving out their own spaces of citizenship during their time with the band. Kitty Sandoral highlighted two particular ways in which this was achieved. The band spends a considerable length of time travelling during the summer vacation, and so band members made additions to the minibus to make it more ‘homely’ (figure 7.7):

“That’s a picture inside a minibus ‘cos we like it ‘cos it’s got comfy seats and stuff, and we started making it like a bit more homely with curtains ... and we’ve put loads of stuff ‘cos we’re in there so much ... like in the summer ...” (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral, 2nd July 2002).



Figure 7.7 The Marching Band Minibus, Photographed by Kitty Sandoral

Furthermore, Kitty Sandoral and her friends challenged the rigidity of band rehearsals by establishing a secluded space away from adult gaze in which to hang out during practice:

"Yeah I mean we go and sit down there and stuff, but like at band ... they've got long grass at the back of the Jubilee hut where we go to play and we just go and sit in the long grass because you can't be seen and they call it WI meetings (Laughs) 'cos you just ... like sit and talk up there and stuff" (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral, 2nd July 2002).

Many other teenagers involved in more in-depth elements of the research were members of sports teams, dance groups and theatre companies, as Crateser highlights:

"Today after school I went to football training for my team [town] 2000" (Diary extract, Friday, Crateser, aged 13).

Although Crateser is actively involved in his local football team he does not equate this to community participation. In his diary he explicitly stated that he had no interest in his community. My own categorisation of participation was not synonymous with the views of some participants. Crateser's diary entries challenged my perceptions of what defines a space of citizenship. Indeed, Lister (1997b) highlights that individuals do not always recognise that their actions are political. Nevertheless, it is fundamental that teenagers' individual

motivations are acknowledged in order to evaluate what constitutes citizenship. This is, of course, no more complex than the examination of adult perceptions of, and motivations towards, participation and citizenship. Moreover, Crateser's statements challenge whether it is legitimate to 'label' an activity an act of citizenship when it is perhaps not intended to be.

Funda draws on a very different example to highlight how traumatic events can bring teenagers and the wider community together through an alternative mutual interest:

"... we did get involved like when someone ... a girl in [town] got attacked. I think everyone got involved in that ... involved in that because like everyone ... everyone knows everyone and everyone knew the people that did it and everyone got involved in that and tried to help her out but that's about the only thing" (Discussion with Funda, 2nd July 2002).

Funda's observation suggests that, whilst her town conforms to stereotypical ideas of rural life where '*everyone knows everyone else*', these bonds are only temporary. Social cohesion only occurred, in Funda's point of view, as a response to the violent act committed on both the girl and, more broadly, the social space of the town.

When asked to name something that would make their community a better place, many participants requested tangible outcomes such as a new facility. Several teenagers, however, outlined wider issues, calling for greater social cohesion, as Kendal highlights:

Susie: *... if you could suggest one thing to make your community better what would it be?*

Kendal: *More events on our ... so it gets everybody closer together ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kendal: *... everybody grows closer and becomes more family. That would be better. 'Cos there aren't too many ... there aren't that many events. There are more people going ... you'd have more friends. Better to get everybody closer* (Discussion with Kendal, 4th July 2002).

Kendal highlighted the need for collective participation in order to build greater friendship networks, which he hoped would be akin to bonds within a family. Janna furthered this by highlighting an issue particularly prevalent in rural areas. She requested a new space, in which a diverse range of people could socialise, fostering 'bridging' social capital (Putnam, 2000):

“Umm ... somewhere to interact with people that are different to us. Like different skin colours, different age group, different backgrounds. Somewhere where we can swop stories or just hang out. Get to know different people - would be a good place” (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).

‘Bridging’ social capital refers to the formation of connections and bonds between those from different backgrounds of, for example, ethnicity or social class (Putnam, 2000).

Fundamentally, participants called for a greater voice in local decision-making to counter many of the frustrations outlined in chapter five. Just under three quarters (72%; n=425) wished to have the opportunity to voice their opinions on local issues, which suggests that a sizeable proportion of respondents had no desire to be involved. The questionnaire did not enable participants to elaborate upon their answers, but in-depth discussions with a sample of these respondents did suggest a level of despondency. The belief that those in power would not meaningfully act upon the requests of young people deterred several teenagers from taking an interest in participation. The difference between boys’ and girls’ responses was not statistically significant. Furthermore, whilst these figures imply intended participation rather than actual participation, it is fundamental to consider the often unrecognised ways in which many teenagers already actively contribute to shaping their communities.

Much of this thesis has justifiably argued for teenagers’ rights to citizenship. As chapter three outlined, citizenship also comprises of responsibilities. In the second questionnaire participants were asked to detail any responsibilities they felt they had in their communities. The most common response was respecting the environment (16%: n=172). This included keeping areas tidy, safe, and free from vandalism:

“Don’t vandalise things. Look after town” (Female, aged 14).

Several teenagers (9%) suggested that their responsibility was to be a citizen and to help and to respect others:

“Look after people and the environment” (Female, aged 14).

“Being a helpful citizen” (Male, aged 15).

A few respondents (7%) believed it was their responsibility to behave well,

abide by laws and not to be violent:

“Not getting into trouble” (Female, aged 15).

Other responsibilities outlined by a small minority included improving local life, having fun and taking part in sports events. Only 7% explicitly stated that they did not have any responsibilities in their communities. Whilst this question was challenging to answer, many respondents were able to outline the contributions that they felt they should be making to their communities. Moreover, through interests and responsibilities, teenagers do actively make decisions over their local communities and environments. The next section of this chapter explores specific spaces which participants have both carved out and claimed.

7.2.3 Claimed Spaces

Many teenagers displayed what Faulks (2000) refers to as a postmodern or cosmopolitan approach to citizenship. This suggestion is not bound to closed political boundaries but is pluralistic in nature. Concurrently, local boundaries shape the everyday spaces of citizenship and belonging for the teenagers, of which many are tied to the local. This does not, however, conflict with Faulk's (2000) notion of a postmodern citizenship, but rather he upholds that in the immediate future citizenship will be acted out at the local level. Painter & Philo (1995) examine the exclusion from citizenship of those who seek 'safe havens' away from public space to express their identities comfortably. In these terms many teenagers 'claim spaces' away from adult surveillance in order to assert their autonomy and are often seen as a threat to adult dominated public space (Matthews et al, 2000), thus mirroring Painter & Philo's (1995) constructions of 'underground geographies'.

Claimed spaces were hugely important to teenagers' geographies of hanging out and citizenship. Claimed spaces, I suggest, are those, which groups or individual teenagers have adopted as regular meeting places within their rural communities, and commonly include benches and bus stops (figure 7.8). Such places are often simple features of the natural or built landscape, as Nikki highlighted:

Susie: *How about are there any places that you've like claimed as your own?*

Nikki: *Yeah we either go up near the pavilion or we sit down by the swings and that's like where we were but now all the like younger people have started coming over as well. It's just not the same.*

Susie: *Do you know why you chose those places?*

Nikki: *Er ... I think it's just like 'cos it's quite close 'cos where I ... most of the people who go to [park] live in [town] anyway. It's somewhere in the middle of us lot*

Susie: *Yeah*

Nikki: *So it's easier to go there* (Discussion with Nikki, 2nd July 2002).



Figure 7.8 Hanging Out at the Bus Stop, Photographed by Matt

As chapter five noted, many teenagers are frustrated at the general lack of affordable and accessible facilities in this area and many do not have the means to travel. These everyday places, therefore, become highly significant to teenagers' lives. Furthermore, as Nikki suggests, there is often competition for, and conflict over, particular sites by different groups of children and teenagers (Tucker & Matthews, 2001).

Some teenagers, for example, talked of carving out typically rural places in a manner often portrayed in literature. Rammstein Nut, a self-confessed tomboy, lives in a rural area with few neighbouring young people. As chapter two identified, the construction of rurality affords limited space for girls to adopt feminine identities. Instead, some girls assume the 'quasi-male' identity, of a tomboy (Jones, 1999). Although Rammstein Nut enjoys some

spatial freedoms typically associated with 'growing-up' in a rural area, she also experiences much isolation. Despite this, she makes her mark upon the rural landscape:

"I've made lots of treehouses and stuff (Laughs) ... and bases ... to pass my time ... Yeah. There's a caravan site ... it's like really boring but I've made some like bases and hideouts ... around. When my friends come round we can ... we go down there" (Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002).

Although demonstrating a seemingly small impact upon her community, Rammstein Nut's example demonstrates active decision-making over micro-spaces. This adoption of highly localised spaces is a relatively dominant theme within teenagers' discourses of hanging out (Tucker & Matthews, 2001). Loki also develops the notion of claiming specifically rural spaces. Unlike Rammstein Nut, however, Loki lives on a deprived council estate suffering multiple deprivation (Neighbourhood Statistics, 2000). Loki frequently spoke of conflict with other residents and the police and described where he lived as a mixture of rural and urban. Loki feared 'perverts' and highlighted encounters with abandoned syringes left in the woods around his neighbourhood. His father, recognising the local problems, often took him away from the estate in an attempt to prevent him from getting into trouble. Together they pursued relatively rural pursuits such as fishing and shooting:

"I go fishing with my Dad and I've got lots of little secret spots ... and I go shooting. Um ... around [estate] the only place is the field so I've got a little tree ... it's got a base in there ... hammock sort of thing and that's ours ... and that's it" (Discussion with Loki, 3rd July 2002).

Through engagement in rural pursuits, Loki's father attempted to reconstruct a pure and idyllic childhood for his son, away from the estate. Furthermore, Loki drew attention to the absence of space on the estate, noting that there is only one area where he and his friends could create a space for themselves. The rural spaces that Loki visited with his father, therefore, became the arenas over which he had control, particularly as they were set aside from the police and neighbourhood surveillance on the streets of the estate.

In seemingly organised activity spaces such as youth clubs, some teenagers carve out and claim their own spaces. Gumdrops goes to a youth club twice a week. Whilst there, she and her friends have created their own space within the building, seeking solace in a small area of corridor away from adult surveillance and the noise of the rest of the club. After the club closes

Gumdrop and her friends move location to their regular hangout outside the building (figure 7.9):

“We just wanted somewhere where we could sit that was like ... ‘cos it’s quite hectic in youth club ‘cos there’s lots of people ... lots of stupid boys and um ... (Laughs) so we just want to go somewhere quiet where we can just sit and chat and the corridor’s quite good for that” (Discussion with Gumdrop, 2nd July 2002).

The places in which teenagers hang out are perhaps, to them, the most important spaces of citizenship. It is in these spaces that teenagers’ political agency is demonstrated on a variety of scales. Such spaces are often dynamic and temporary, demonstrating the production and reproduction afforded to spatiality (Merrifield, 2000). The next section of this chapter explores, in more detail, examples of teenagers’ creativity and participation in shaping their rural environments.



Figure 7.9 Claiming Spaces, Youth Club, Photographed by Gumdrop

7.3 Creating Spaces in the Community

This next section explores examples of active citizenship within rural communities in order to move beyond participation in terms of hanging out to that which leaves a lasting impact upon the wider community. Price (2000) details the achievements of two boys, who took local decision-makers to the High Court in order to save their football field from redevelopment. In the first questionnaire, skateboarding and the development of skate parks was the most frequently cited form of participation. Other examples included the development of play areas, sports facilities, parks, youth clubs and more general improvements to existing facilities. The first component of this section highlights teenagers' short-term participation in single events (although many of these experiences have had lasting impacts). The second element examines more long-term participation through the development and maintenance of skate parks. Furthermore, the contestations and difficulties inherent in creating these spaces of citizenship are also illustrated.

7.3.1 Revitalising Rural Communities

Over one third (36%: n=133) of respondents in the second questionnaire had participated in their communities. The most popular form of involvement (22%) was in a local campaign. Several teenagers (8%) had been involved in planning a local event, for example, painting a mural; helping to maintain local rock concerts; or involvement in a bid for money to improve the local environment. Only a few respondents (7%) were involved in voluntary work. This ranged from fundraising to helping out at a local youth club. There was a statistical difference (at the 95% level of significance) between girls' and boys' involvement in local campaigns or projects (figure 7.10). Boys were more likely (44%) to participate in their communities than girls (26%). In chapter four, Foster's (1997) critique of contemporary citizenship as a patriarchal construct was outlined. Furthermore, Foster (1997) suggested that the assignment of women to the private sphere renders their true access to formal (public) civic institutions problematic. In this research boys did not necessarily have greater opportunity for participation in civic institutions. Instead, they tended to be involved in local campaigns, such as skate parks, whilst girls were more likely to engage in voluntary work.

(n=133)		Gender (%)	
		Girls	Boys
Have you been involved in a local campaign, project or event?	Yes	26	44
	No	74	56

Figure 7.10 Gender Differences in Participation

Matt and Kat live in an isolated village ranked amongst the top 30% of wards in terms of multiple deprivation in England (Neighbourhood Statistics, 2000). There are, however, large disparities within the ward, which comprises of one relatively affluent area and one more deprived estate. Furthermore, there are few facilities for teenagers. Matt highlighted an important space where teenagers regularly hang out (figure 7.11):

“Went down the busie in [village] and played out with my friends. Later on went back down busie” (Diary extract, Monday, Matt, aged 14).

The ‘busie’, a disused bus stop, was mentioned every day in Matt’s week-long diary as an important space for gathering and socialising. Kat reinforces the significance of the space:

“The ‘busie’ is a good place. We all hang out ... and say how we feel about people. It is the only thing we can really do because there is nothing to do in [village]. We have some fields but no park or anything like that” (Diary extract, Tuesday, Kat, aged 14).

Moreover, the ‘busie’ was a symbolic site of citizenship for Kat as she had taken on an important role in both saving ‘the busie’ from demolition by the Local Authority, and using a council grant to reshape the space:

“The bus shelter was going to get knocked down because everyone was writing horrible words in it and none of the people round the estate really liked it so we made the decision that we were going to keep it tidy and we were going to paint it so all the graffiti [was covered up] and so the council gave us money to buy the spray paint ...” (Discussion with Kat, 4th July 2002).

The ‘busie’ demonstrates not only teenagers’ engagement with citizenship at the local level but illustrates ways in which very real and positive attitudes by local decision-makers can promote teenagers’ participation in their communities (Weller, 2003). This is particularly valuable in an area where there has been notable conflict between the activities of some teenagers and

other local residents (Weller, 2003). In Kat's village, involving children and teenagers in local decision-making has now been taken a step further with the establishment of a local forum where regular dialogue may well lead to further improvements in the village's facilities (Weller, 2003).



Figure 7.11 Creating Spaces, the 'Busie', Photographed by Kat

On the other side of the Island, Kimbo and Kaz discuss a similar space to the 'busie', one which is of great significance to many local teenagers and one in which they have actively participated in saving, in collaboration with local decision-makers. The bike shed (figure 7.12) is situated in a small town, featuring in the top 25% of wards suffering multiple deprivation in England (Neighbourhood Statistics, 2000). The space was not only a social arena but, again, a place in which they had participated as active citizens saving the facility from permanent closure and raising funds:

Kimbo: *The bike shed is like ... on Wednesdays there's like food there and people go down there to play pool and stuff.*

Kaz: *It's like a youth club*

Susie: *Oh right, yeah*

Kaz: *Everyone just goes in there and chills*

Kimbo: *Yeah I've been involved with the bike shed. We had to do this thing 'cos it was going to get shut down ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kimbo: *... so it got shut down for a little while but it's open now. We like decided everything. They used to build bikes there and that but they don't no more*

Kaz: *Yeah I used to always like get on TV ...*

Susie: *Really*

Kaz: *Yeah, Children in Need ...*

Susie: *Oh excellent! So when you were making decisions over the bike shed did you have quite a lot of control over it or ... did you have what you and your friends wanted?*

Kaz: *All the people that go there, like the children and that have more decisions than what the adults do, so they get control of it basically. But we do have adults help to supervise it ... (Discussion with Kaz & Kimbo, 4th July 2002).*



Figure 7.12 The Bike Shed, Photographed by Kaz

For Kat and Kimbo the bike shed was a cause about which they felt passionate, and so had been actively involved in saving and maintaining the space for future use. Such contributions not only impact upon Kat and Kimbo's lives and experiences of citizenship but upon the wider community. The 'busie' and the bike shed are, however, specifically teenage spaces of citizenship, despite their wider impact. Janna told of her involvement in a bid for a regeneration grant for her seaside town. Again, Janna lives in an area suffering from multiple deprivation, within the top 20% of deprived wards in England (Neighbourhood Statistics, 2000). Janna was specifically asked to represent local children and young people in her town in meetings regarding the bidding process. She explained that, whilst the proposal was unsuccessful, local decision-makers were keen to find other funds to resolve some of the issues and ideas raised during the public consultation. Janna participated in a more mainstream space of citizenship within the realms of adult decision-making. In this space she generally felt listened to, although she acknowledged that not all of her ideas were considered:

Susie: *Do you think your ... your opinions were listened to?*

Janna: *Er yeah they were. 'cos ... um ... I actually I told them so, and people asked questions about them so I reckon people did listen but not much was done about it, even though they did listen.*

Susie: *Did you have a discussion or did you fill in a questionnaire or something ...?*

Janna: *Er ... not actually it was a ... I was invited to a big meeting ...*

Susie: *Oh right ...*

Janna: *... like with lots of important people and stuff. The mayor and stuff. It was ... it was quite nerve racking but I'm like used to speaking out loud 'cos I'm into drama and um ... it was ... I reckon they did listen they just didn't take, perhaps everything into consideration that I had said (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).*

In addition to Janna's involvement in public consultation, she is also her class representative on the school council. Janna, therefore, has much experience of engaging in more formal spaces of citizenship. Nevertheless, she also exerts her political agency in more radical forms of civic engagement:

Janna: *Oh there was this huge ... there's been ... recently there was this huge thing about umm ... a local ... I don't know what you would call it ... umm ... a Winter Gardens [theatre] do ... like a gig every month ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Janna: *Umm ... 'Battle of the Bands' they did and stuff like that, and then about a couple of weeks ago there was like 'oh no we're gonna shut it down'*

Susie: *Really?*

Janna: *There was a huge protest saying, you know, that there is actually nothing to do, and they complain that people my age go out and get drunk ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Janna: *... but what do they expect us to do when there's nothing else to do*

Susie: *Yeah*

Janna: *Do you see what I mean?*

Susie: *Yeah*

Janna: *So when they were closing that down there was a huge protest and a lot of people turned up to ... I think to say that they didn't think that it was a good idea to close it down. Luckily they haven't! (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).*

Formal and informal spaces of citizenship are not mutually exclusive and the boundaries between such spaces are often dynamic. Kat, Matt, Kaz, Kimbo and Janna all cite examples of the ways in which teenagers individually and collectively shape and revitalise their environments despite not being full citizens in terms of electoral politics. Much of this participation has some degree of collaboration with local decision-makers. Bob Stevens, however, introduced a link between the aforementioned 'claimed spaces' and spaces of citizenship. Bob Stevens and his friends have built temporary bike ramps at the bottom of his street (figure 7.13). He argued that, whilst there has been conflict over the space with other local residents, the users demonstrate responsible behaviour. In return they expect respect from other residents, although this is not always given:

Bob Stevens: ... we have to make our own ramps

Susie: Is that your road where you live?

Bob Stevens: Yeah. My house is just there.

Susie: How do like other people in the road feel about you making ramps at the end? Are they quite happy?

Bob Stevens: There's this person here that always complains. He phones the police up. [My friend] ... he jumped into this ... umm ... daffodil thing and there was like a bottle, and it broke on his foot ... (Discussion with Bob Stevens, 3rd July 2002).



Figure 7.13 Bike Ramps, Photographed by Bob Stevens

Bob Stevens' example details an attempt to revitalise his community by providing a facility for local teenagers. The bike ramp that he created was neither praised nor respected by some of the other local residents. The next section of this chapter is dedicated to exploring the significance of the development of skate parks and skateboarding in creating spaces of citizenship within rural communities.

7.3.2 Skate Parks

I discovered, whilst piloting the first questionnaire, the importance of skateboarding to many participants. One explanation for the strong skateboarding culture on the Island is its relationship to the more established surf culture. Such a link is reinforced by Borden (2001) who notes that skateboarding in the 1960s and 1970s was principally undertaken by surfers. Significant both as a sport and a group identity, the presence of skateboarding within communities on the Island concurrently created both spaces of

citizenship and arenas of conflict. Acts of involvement such as campaigning for skate park facilities often go unrecognised in statistical analysis and, therefore, exacerbate the notion of teenage apathy. Giddens (2000b) notes changes in voluntarism from traditional recognitions to those based on self-help. One example which reflects this shift is the popular involvement in developing skate park facilities. Primarily carried out by boys, skate parks are one way in which many participants exercised their political agency within a contemporary space. Skate parks are designated sites where ramps have been constructed in order to carry out stunts. Over the past few years there has been an increase in the number of sites constructed particularly by local authorities, some of which view skate parks as a remedy to the much disputed 'youth problem'. Kendal has actively campaigned for a skate park in his town (figure 7.14), raising both finances and awareness. Since it has been built, Kendal has been helping to maintain the skate park's web site:

Kendal: *We all helped the skaters and stuff. We helped to raise money and stuff*

Susie: *How did you do that? How did you go about that?*

Kendal: *We just like ... we got jars and stuff and put them in shops ... like in the skate shop in [town] put a jar in there for people and we just ... people signed petitions to like ... we went round shops signing petitions so we could get it done. Hopefully we're getting another bit done on the skate park ...*

Susie: *Really?*

Kendal: *Yeah so that's quite cool. At the moment me and my dad are like doing a web site for it ... we've just recently had a competition down there and so there's some pictures on that*

Susie: *... Who started it all off?*

Kendal: *What the ...*

Susie: *The skate park*

Kendal: *Someone called [Female name]. I don't know her second name*

Susie: *Is that like somebody independent? It wasn't the council or anything like that?*

Kendal: *No ... she just ... well it was just her and a bunch of skaters that just wanted to build a park so she just ... I think she got a lottery grant ... (Discussion with Kendal, 4th July 2002).*

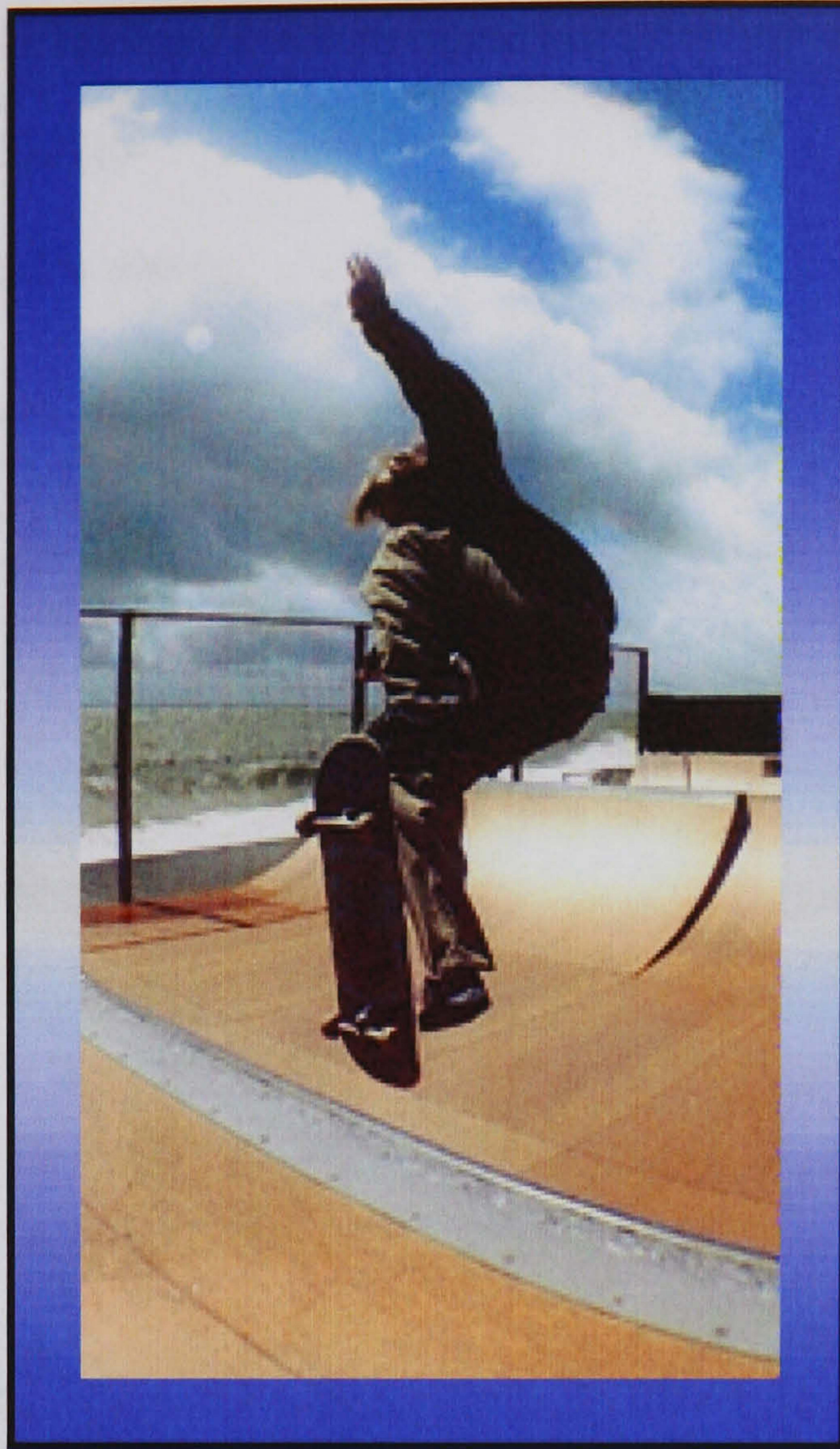


Figure 7.14 Creating Spaces, the Skate Park, Photographed by Kendal

Kendal's commitment to his local skate park is long term and he demonstrates both his rights and responsibilities as a citizen by continuing to campaign for the maintenance of the park. Kendal has not only actively contributed to shaping his local environment but has also encouraged others to be involved. Matt, a friend of Kendal's, is keen to see a skate park in his village and is also prepared to participate in its development. Matt, however, presents a challenge to the bounded nature of citizenship within a skate park. Not unlike children working on an environmental quality consultation project in California, who demonstrated their autonomous capacity as political actors by reconstructing knowledge they had gathered during the consultation to tear down a fence surrounding their apartments (Salvadori, 2001), many skateboarders like to skate on the street. This is often against the wishes of other local residents. Affording teenagers the opportunity to pursue their interest only within bounded spaces can lead to further conflict (legalizeskateboarding, 2002). When skating on the street, Loki is often challenged by some local residents and questioned why he is not skating in a designated skate park. Loki imitated a 'typical' objector:

“Yeah, it’s like ‘Well go over the skate park. You’ve got a perfectly good skate park there. Why do you skate here?’” (Discussion with Loki, 3rd July 2002).

Kendal reinforced Loki’s views:

“When I went skating I went to my usual skate spot which is down at the sea front in [home town]. The sea front has a dry paddling pool which is really good for skating in because you can jump into it. The front has a really long curb that you can grind and a couple of benches and ledges. I love the sea front, and I don’t want to have it taken away because a new law might come in which says ‘if you skate anywhere apart from designated skate spots you will get a fine and your board confiscated!’ I think this is stupid because soon we will not be able to skate anywhere apart from skate spots” (Diary extract Tuesday, Kendal, aged 13).

Some teenagers struggled against regulation in public space by exercising their ‘right to dissent’ through street skating. Matt’s photograph (figure 7.15) illustrates the reconstruction of space in his village through skateboarding using street signs, bus stops and walls (Weller, 2003).



Figure 7.15 Reconstruction of Village Space, Photographed by Matt

In many ways, this alternative reconstruction of public space presents another act of citizenship challenging the use of public spaces within rural communities. In between the development of formal skate parks and informal street skating lies the creation of informal skate park areas where skaters have built home-made ramps. Kendal illustrated the dynamic nature of local spaces:

"I hung out at [village] skate park. It is a playground which has been converted into a park by the local skaters. There are loads of home-made ramps 'n' rails which are really cool and skatable" (Diary extract, Saturday, Kendal, aged 13).

Kendal's example shows the temporal nature and interchangeability of 'creative spaces' and 'frustrating spaces', and highlights Lefebvre's (1991) notions surrounding flows and collisions between different spaces, which when combined produce 'present space' (Merrifield, 2000).

As a legitimate space of citizenship, skate parks have not only become an option for mitigating the problems of isolation and lack of facilities outlined in chapter five, but local decision-makers' resolution to build them has demonstrated a highly essentialist understanding of teenagers' needs. As previously stated, participation in skate parks and skateboarding more generally is dominated by boys. Many girls discussed the lack of facilities relating to their interests (see Morrow, 2003) and their exclusion from such masculinised spaces. Kat, Kaz and Kimbo discussed the neglect of both girls and young children:

Kat: *Like 'cos most things, say the skate park, that's really for boys so there's nothing like for girls to do ...*

Kaz: *Yeah*

Kat: *And all the little kids they can't really go in the skating ramps 'cos it's too dangerous for them*

Kimbo: *'Cos they might hurt themselves* (Discussion with Kaz, Kat & Kimbo, 4th July 2002).

This is not to say that girls do not skate but serves merely to illustrate the stereotypes placed upon teenagers. The rights and responsibilities inherent within citizenship are multilayered within the context of skate parks. As skaters, Kendal and Matt have demonstrated the ways in which many participants take great responsibility over their skate parks, although they are afforded few rights outside that arena. Locally, skate parks have attracted much attention because several have been built and later vandalised. The following web board discussion highlighted conflict within the community:

First contributor: *All very well having a skateboard park but are you going to look after it? We got one for the kids at Moa place [town]. Do the kids look after it? No they don't. Smash bottles. Fence has been ripped apart. And still the Kids came down the bay with there [sic] skateboards damaging the seats and kerbstones* (iweight web forum, Adult, 2nd July 2003).

Second contributor: *In general skate parks are looked after very well indeed by skate boarders/bladers etc. who actually use the parks. The problems that arise around these areas are 90% or more associated by people that do not skate nor do they congregate in these areas when these parks are being used as is intended. Being an island there are limitations to facilities that are available for everyone that lives here, there is always the chance that someone will not use facilities as they are intended. Please do not blame without proof (iwight web forum, 2nd July 2003).*

The first contributor blames skateboarders for not respecting the facility, perhaps reinforcing the notion that all teenagers skate. The second contributor retorts by suggesting that skateboarders do take responsibility for such parks and that conflict lies with those who do not use the park for its intended purpose. Skate parks and related skateboarding serve as an important example of the way in which teenagers actively contribute to shaping their communities, whether this is seen positively or negatively. When skate parks are built for the purposes of solving the 'youth problem' and regulating teenagers' use of space, their status as an arena for citizenship is brought into question. Nevertheless, spaces such as skate parks illustrate the often hidden geographies of citizenship, not just in terms of practical participation but on a much deeper level of identity and belonging. These complexities of social identity are not only mapped out on many spatial scales, but are influenced profoundly by locality, peers and family networks (Weller, 2003). The next element of this chapter investigates citizenship and identity.

7.4 Citizenship & Identity

The final section of this chapter explores teenagers' identities in relation to citizenship. As Isin & Wood (1999) suggest, "As group markers the difference between citizenship and identity is that, while the former carries legal weight, the latter carries social and cultural weight" (p.20). Three key areas of discussion arose in this research relating to identity and citizenship. For the first element of this section I explore teenagers' conceptions of rurality and some of their challenges as political actors to the notion that they live in rural communities. Subsequently, I examine the myriad and often contested group identities which illustrate teenagers' sense(s) of belonging in unconventional spaces of citizenship. Finally, I investigate the alternative forms of community, belonging and citizenship that teenagers engage in to overcome some of the difficulties of living in rural areas.

7.4.1 Identifying with Rurality

This research is set against the backdrop of the idyllic portrayal of rurality. A key element in the discussion of spaces of citizenship within rural communities is teenagers' identification with rurality. Vanderbeck & Dunkley (2003), in their study exploring young people's ontological or personal narratives in the US, suggest that little focus has been placed upon young people's narratives of the rural-urban divide or continuum.

As chapter four detailed, my conceptions of rurality are based, in part, upon indices and classifications devised by organisations such as the Countryside Agency (which defines settlements of up to 10,000 as rural) and also by my own experiences of 'growing-up' within the case study area. Most teenagers had lived on the Island all of their lives and some regarded small towns as very much urban, quite distinct from the countryside (Barker & Weller, 2003a). Bob lives in a seaside town of 6549 inhabitants (Census, 2001) and strongly believes where he lives is urban:

Susie: *So do you feel like where you live is the countryside?*

Bob: *It's er an urban area.*

Susie: *Yeah. Yeah. and if I said to you, like umm ... (Pause) describe the countryside, what kind of words come to mind?*

Bob: *Well, there isn't really any countryside in [place name] (Discussion with Bob, 4th July 2002).*

For Bob this classification of his home town as urban is based upon his past experiences. He previously lived in a small village surrounded by fields. Despite this, Bob also talks of the 'mainland' and bigger towns where the opportunity for interaction with other children and teenagers is greater. Bob's ideas of rurality were upheld by many other participants. Rather than conceiving of rurality through the lens of public narrative, many participants defined their communities through ontological narrative. Chloe lives in the principal town on the Island (10,754 inhabitants - four main wards, Census, 2001) whilst Katie lives in a small port (4836 inhabitants, Census, 2001). Both consider their communities to be urban, although they feel onlookers from the mainland would brand their towns as rural:

Susie: *So do you ... do you like feel where you live is like the countryside or urban?*

Katie: *Mine's quite urban actually 'cos ...*

Chloe: *Urban*

Katie: *Port and stuff*

Chloe: *Urban. I know most people from the mainland would say it's the countryside but it's quite urban ...*

Katie: *Yeah* (Discussion with Chloe & Katie, 3rd July 2002).

The majority of participants talked of a betweenness of place. For some, their communities consisted of a mixture of rural and urban depending upon what scale was defined, for example at the neighbourhood or county level. Loki lives on a council estate in the principal town. He described where he lives as mixed:

"It's mixed. There's tons of big fields" (Discussion with Loki, 3rd July 2002).

Janna's description related to a patchwork of rural and urban making up the Island:

Janna: *It's a bit of both actually, isn't it?*

Susie: *Yeah*

Janna: *'Cos there's lots of fields and stuff and then there's a town, and then there's a field and there's a town, it's like separated by different bits* (Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002).

Part of the explanation for this betweenness of place was related to participants' constructions of rurality. Apart from those teenagers living in remote villages or hamlets, most participants defined rurality in terms of nature, either by fields and woodland or by the presence of animals. Moreover, some respondents outlined specific areas of the Island they believed to be

the countryside. The common theme through the majority of participants' understandings and representations of rurality was the distinction between occupied and unoccupied spaces. Rural related to notions of wilderness and emptiness and communities were placed upon a level relating to these two themes as Matt, Kendal and Tommey highlighted:

Susie: *Do you like consider where you live to be rural or urban?*

Tommey: *It's a bit of both where I am. It depends what parts you go to*

Susie: *Yeah*

Tommey: *But I dunno it's probably more rural*

Kendal: *Yeah [town] rural*

Susie: *Yeah*

Matt: *And [village] definitely more rural. There's two houses!*
(Discussion with Kendal, Matt & Tommey, 4th July 2002).

Matt, Kendal and Tommey compare a small town and a village with around half the inhabitants placing them on differing levels of rurality. Not unlike the findings of Vanderbeck & Dunkley (2003), the placing of settlements on this continuum was also defined by their location in relation to other towns and villages.

Teenagers' challenges to institutional definitions of rurality demonstrate one of the ways in which teenagers construct their communities and surroundings as spaces of citizenship. As Creed & Ching (1997) suggest, spaces can be characterised both as rural or urban and such definitions are determined by an individual's experiences and social networks. Participants' understanding of rurality brought into question my own definitions. Just as their personal experiences shaped their perceptions of what constitutes a rural area, so had my own encounters. My position as an former resident and now a (happy) city dweller, impacted upon both my geographical gaze and my understandings of the area and their lives. Despite the active construction of their communities as rural, urban or mixed, teenagers did not identify themselves specifically in terms of rurality, but rather in a set of diasporic, alternative identities (see Davies & Marken, 2000; Morrow, 2001; Morrow, 2003), as the next section of the chapter examines.

7.4.2 Carving Out Diverse Group Identities

Integral to the consideration of teenagers' citizenship is the relationship between space and identity. Cogan (2000) notes that identity is a central element of citizenship. Teenagers revealed the dynamics of spaces of

citizenship through complex and often contested identities. Since the French Revolution, citizenship has been bound to cultural discourses of the nation-state. Such a union, Faulks (2000) argues, is not so relevant within postmodernity. In contradiction to Helve & Wallace's (2001) summation that children's identities are principally state-based, the opinions and experiences of participants were rarely expressed in terms of the nation-state (or European Union), except with respect to disillusion with, for example, the Government. (Weller, 2003). Instead, participants related to the local. Morrow (2000) suggests the creation of alternative communities by teenagers is, in some cases, a reaction to the exclusion that they feel from the wider world. Belonging was often identified in terms of difference between teenagers, which reinforces Brown's (1997) notions of dynamic social identities in a radical citizenship (Weller, 2003). Putnam (2000) also highlights the increase in small group membership in the US, terming the increase as the 'quiet revolution'. Bob, a skater, describes the signatures of local youth subcultures by explaining his interpretations of the social groups, the tensions and divisions:

Bob: *Townies just sit on the bins outside McDonalds, and wear Adidas and Nike and stuff like that all the time.*

Susie: *Is there quite a lot of rivalry between the skaters and the townies?*

Bob: *Yeah*

Susie: *Are there any other groups there?*

Bob: *There's the BMX'ers and the Goths*

Susie: *So there's lots of rivalry between all those groups?*

Bob: *No. Umm ... the skaters get on with the Goths and the BMX'ers, so it's just there's Townie Goths that like walk round pretending ... going 'Oh yer I'm a Goth' but they're wearing Adidas and all that ... and there's townies that wear Adidas on skateboards, which gets on my nerves and there's townie BMX'ers as well. Townies just act like they're like us and that's why they get on my nerves (Discussion with Bob, 4th July, 2002).*

Bob's example contests both adult constructions of social networks and political identities as well as demonstrating the complexity of teenagers' identities (Weller, 2003). Importantly, Bob highlights that such subcultures are not always distinct and indeed boundaries between and within groups are blurred. 'Townies' step across into the world of skateboarders and BMX'ers, and by doing so demonstrate the dynamic move in and between identities, often complying to acceptable lifestyle choices (Wyn & White, 1997; Weller, 2003). Concurrently, group rivalry can render such identities discrete. Kitty Sandoral discusses some of the tensions between different groups of

teenagers relating much of the conflict to difference:

“And they don’t all get on with each other and there’s a lot of like ... that’s what it’s like everywhere. ‘Cos it’s just different people are into different things and they just think ... there’s a lot of people rivalry and a lot of people think different things and stuff like that. So it would be better if we were all more together” (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral, 2nd July 2002).

Belonging to a group is a process of inclusion and exclusion. Some young people become members of one group as a safety measure against other groups (Haydon, 2002). Haydon (2002) labels these different groups as ‘tribes’ suggesting that this is a phenomenon of the cities and towns. I would suggest that teenage sub-groupings are equally predominant in rural areas and are often more visible within the landscape. Moreover, groups are not synonymous with gangs. Being part of a group entails adopting an identity but does not necessarily involve hanging out with everyone else who has a similar identity. For example, not all skaters hang out together.

Place is highly significant to the development of identities (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003). All such groups, Kitty Sandoral suggests, have specific geographies within the community and spaces in which they exert their own forms of citizenship. These are marked by signatures such as clothing, music and the activities that different groups pursue:

Kitty Sandoral: *They’re [townies] more into like ... it’s different types of like shops and where they hang out and who they hang out with and they’re more affective ... affected by what they look like and who they hang out with more than what they want to do and stuff. They’re the sort of people which you do tend to see down [town] esplanade wearing very short skirts and high heels and basically just acting like prostitutes and smoking and drinking and stuff, they’re sort of townies. And the footballer boys who just tend to think of like ‘oh I have to look like a certain footballer’ to fit in sort of thing. That’s what I mean by townies.*

Susie: *So what kind of places do townies hang out in then?*

Kitty Sandoral: *I figured it out ... um ... all the surfers and skaters go to [town] to get stoned at the weekend, and all the um ... townies go to [town] to get drunk and stuff ...*

Gumdrop: *... and [town] as well*

Kitty Sandoral: *Yeah ‘cos they’ve got all the night clubs and stuff and they like listen to different types of music* (Discussion with Gumdrop & Kitty Sandoral, 2nd July 2002).

‘Townies’ are not necessarily an urban identity transposed onto rurality, for that would infer a too literal interpretation of the grouping. Instead, many participants described townies in terms of their identification with global brand

names. 'Townies' were for teenage participants in this research the most ostracised group as many felt they build their identity upon fashion brands and consumerism. This identification is in itself a derivative of citizenship commonly associated with radical citizenship (Isin & Wood, 1999). Furthermore, Kitty Sandoral constructs most of the groupings she discusses as 'other' and does not place herself within any group other than her local marching band. Whilst many boys identified themselves within groups of skateboarders or BMX'ers, girls were less likely to discuss belonging along these lines other than hanging out occasionally with members of certain groups. Instead, many girls discussed friendship bonds and breakdowns principally with other girls both inside and outside of school. This builds upon Morrow's (2000) study in which girls tended to refer to close or best friends, whereas boys were more likely to list several or many friends.

Conflict over difference was, however, more apparent between groups of teenagers and other local residents. Many groups explicitly consist of young people. The greatest conflict has arisen between skateboarders and other members of the community, and as a result the legitimacy of skateboarders' activities have been questioned and they have become synonymous with deviant youth:

"I'm constantly hearing out where I live in [town], people are moaning and groaning endlessly about the kids hanging around down there by the West Wight sports centre ... umm. you know, they're on skateboards 'cos there's a great little sort of, terracey car park there, so you can, you can escape from level to level and have a great time. But clearly, for some reason, even people that don't live there, that drive past, it irritates the hell out of them" (Presenter, Isle of Wight radio phone-in, 6th June 2003).

This, one contributor on a local web discussion suggests, is unjust:

"It is commonly presumed that skaters are the scum and the reason for most youth crime. It is not considered that skaters are actually pursuing a sport/hobby and are trying to improve their own skills at something. Instead when 'people' decide to throw the blame, they should consider the persecution skaters get from the non-skateboarding community of the same age. Perhaps it should be considered what these adolescents do to entertain themselves in their spare time?" (iwight web forum).

These diverse groups and spaces of citizenship represent the somewhat disputed notion of 'radical citizenship', common in late modernity with the fragmentation and eclecticism of society (Isin & Wood, 1999). Isin & Wood's

(1999) discussion of the proliferation of group identities highlights that not only do experiences within groups vary greatly along social fractures such as gender and sexuality, but that in many cases such groups are actively seeking connectedness and solidarity. Whilst participants highlighted examples of fragmentation along new citizenship identities, many teenagers are forming groups which unite particularly along the lines of common interests. Indeed, Smith et al (2002) discovered a similar, hidden geography of shared interest groups in rural New Zealand. Such localised citizen identities, therefore, have some degree of replication globally. Moreover, as Isin & Wood (1999) note:

“While academic and non-academic populism emphasises fragmented identities, the new social movements can be seen as efforts to redefine and reconstitute identity through political and discursive struggles over group rights and values” (p. 154).

Watt (1998) suggests that postmodern discourses provide a more appropriate lens through which to examine the fragmented and ruptured identities described by many teenagers than writings concerning subculture(s) prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s. I would critically question Watt’s (1998) argument that the postmodern notion of placelessness, where teenagers inhabit an ‘in-betweenness’, means that many do not identify with physical arenas such as the neighbourhood. Findings in this research highlight the importance of such spaces. It is, I believe, the interpretation of such spheres that is fundamental, particularly in relation to the alternative social groupings that participants outlined. Concurrently, several teenagers did draw attention to new places of interaction. It is to the attention of such arenas that this chapter finally turns.

7.4.3 Alternative Communities: Overcoming Rural Issues

The use of the internet by children and teenagers has stimulated a plethora of debate for many academics (see Bingham, Valentine & Holloway, 1999; Valentine & Holloway, 2001; Holloway & Valentine, 2003). Cyberspace presents an interesting challenge to the concepts of ‘citizenship’ and ‘community’ in that interactions and exchanges take place in non-physical space. For the teenagers highlighted in chapter five, who are frustrated by physical isolation, cyberspace provides a seemingly viable alternative. In open discussion several teenagers, principally girls, drew attention to the importance of internet chat rooms, messenger services and text messaging to maintain friendships over physical space. Messenger services allow

participants to chat only to chosen friends. Chloe and Katie illustrate the significance of messenger services in maintaining friendships across the Island, as well as providing them with something to do:

Katie: *There's not much to do in [town] ...*

Chloe: *No*

Katie: *... so I just like go on the internet most nights ...*

Susie: *... do you use chat rooms to communicate with people that way?*

Chloe: *I don't use chat rooms as such but we have like a messenger service ...*

Susie: *Oh yeah, yeah ...*

Chloe: *... we use them to talk to our friends.*

Susie: *So you chat with friends.*

Chloe: *Yeah*

Susie: *Is that 'cos ... um ... do you chat with friends on the Island?*

Chloe: *Yeah*

Susie: *Is it 'cos they live in different places or ...?*

Chloe: *Yeah*

Katie: *Yeah*

Chloe: *I speak to my friends from [town] ...*

Katie: *Yeah. It's easier*

Susie: *Is that all 'cos you're quite spread out?*

Katie: *Yeah*

Chloe: *Yeah. Not all ... you can't like everyday or every weekend phone them or go and see them so it's um ... a really good way of communicating 'cos most people nowadays have it*
(Discussion with Chloe & Katie, 3rd July 2002),

The school in which this research was undertaken has an intake of students from across the Island. Friendships and social networks created during school were sometimes not easily transferable to the wider community, in terms of face-to-face interaction. Some teenagers spend up to two hours travelling home after school, primarily due to unintegrated transport. Technological forms of communication and interaction are, therefore, important not only to sustaining friendships but also to creating new bonds. For teenagers living in isolated rural areas the internet and text messaging allowed the distance between location and social interaction to be compressed (Laegran, 2002). This is reinforced by Valentine and Holloway's (2001) notion of 'extensibility', where isolation is overcome through technology:

Kitty Sandoral: *But a lot of ... texting and stuff it's good 'cos you can keep in contact with them. I was having a conversation with my friend who lives down in Devon and I only see her like twice a year ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Kitty Sandoral: *... and we write to each other and stuff like that but we can keep contact like ... if she's watching an interesting*

programme we can like 'oh turn the TV on' and stop and have a conversation about television

Gumdrop: *Yeah that's the thing about texting it's like instant so it's like if you're on holiday or something or doing something you can text away and say 'I'm blah, blah, blah, I'm blah, blah, blah' Do you know what I mean?* (Discussion with Kitty Sandoral & Gumdrop, 2nd July 2002).

The information age has, therefore, reshaped citizens' relationship with rights and responsibilities (Giddens, 2000b), creating a global citizenship. Freie (1998) argues that community in cyberspace is implicitly counterfeit and refers to users as 'netizens'. Such networks, used to overcome geographical and emotional problems of isolation, are criticised, by Freie (1998), for being undemocratic, exclusive and creating distanced relationships. Communities in cyberspace are principally commercial enterprises unlike democratic systems within what Freie (1998) terms genuine community, which is inclusive in that everyone has a stake in society. The extent, however, to which this stake is equal is highly contentious. Cyberspace, Freie (1998) continues, is also inherently exclusive. Whilst prejudices based upon class, gender or race may not be so prevalent, exclusion is founded upon access (Freie, 1998). The internet is centred only upon the communication aspect of community. Emotions and gestures are hard to convey, Freie (1998) suggests, in a way which harbours genuine community. Nevertheless, for some the internet has opened up new avenues of participation and citizenship. Whilst numerous web forums exist relating to Island issues, including those for teenagers, Richard uses a forum on the Local Government website to voice his opinions and to interact with adults:

"I think this web board is a good way to communicate to the adult population, to be listened to. Most teenagers are judged on their appearance and this is why a lot of them are ignored or they are considered incompetent of understanding etc." (iwight web forum, Richard, aged 17, posted 12th February 2003).

Rather than the creation of pseudo-citizens, where identities are fluid and sometimes false, Richard believes the use of the internet through media tools such as web forums allows teenagers to contribute to local debate without being judged by their appearance. Indeed, age is often not disclosed. Odone (2002), in her examination of 'idle hands and idle minds', suggests that children and young people are losing the ability to interact socially as a result of their fascination with cyberspace. I believe this research critiques, to some extent, this so called shift in the interests of teenagers. For the majority of

participants in this research, cyberspace was one aspect of a multifaceted life of communication and participation and one which helped to overcome some of the difficulties of living in a rural area.

These three key areas of citizenship and identity highlight what Isin & Wood (1999) refer to as a 'radical democratic citizen' composed of multiple layers of belonging and identity. For young teenagers this is still problematic because, whilst this chapter demonstrates the eclectic ways in which teenagers exert their citizenship and political agency as individuals and within groups, this is still outside mainstream democratic systems. These actions, therefore, are largely unrecognised by local decision-makers as active contributions to community life. As outlined in chapter four, the first response I received from a local councillor, with regard to a dissemination report (Appendix E) that I sent him summarising the findings from chapters five and seven, not only reinforced the negative stereotypes often placed upon rural teenagers but also failed to acknowledge positive contributions. Herein lie the messy distinctions between spaces of frustration and creativity.

7.5. Conclusions

This chapter explored teenagers' own acts of citizenship, thus responding to research question three,

How, and to what extent do teenagers recondition rural spaces through their own interpretations and acts of citizenship?

The engagements with citizenship outlined in this chapter were commonly at the micro-level. Participants detailed, through the everyday places in which they hung out, their political actions as shapers and creators of local spaces. This is significant in an environment which, in chapter five, was portrayed as situating young teenagers as 'out-of-place'. This is not to say that the kinds of places that participants claimed and shaped were not under the watchful eye of the rural panopticon, but that these sites were important places for meeting and establishing links with friends. This, in a sense, defies the Putnamesque notion that individualisation is fostering an increase in solitary pursuits (Putnam, 2000). Rather, the spaces in which participants spent their 'free-time' were complex and dynamic, and ranged from collective socialisation to spending time alone at home.

Through the shaping of micro-geographies, many participants challenged the notion of teenager apathy, and instead established themselves as committed political actors through developing and redeveloping areas within their communities. Much of this political action centred around creating spaces for their own age group, whom they felt were afforded few facilities. Through campaigning for skate parks, revitalising new spaces to hang out and maintaining old facilities, several participants demonstrated a somewhat radical approach to citizenship. Several participants also outlined the construction of citizenship identities along new lines of distinction, thus challenging the notions of, for example, 'rural' that I had assigned to them. These groupings centred around lifestyle choice and were themselves fractured and dynamic. Teenagers not only constructed their own forms of 'othering' between and within such groups but also questioned their status and legitimacy.

The spaces which participants occupied were not uncontested. The example of the popular phenomenon of skate boarding presents an interesting paradox. Whilst campaigning for and developing skate park facilities was a prime example of active citizenship, the subsequent development of other skate parks in the area was seldom informed by consultation with teenagers. Indeed, many participants, particularly girls, saw the emergence of local-authority developed skate parks as both a misguided solution to the 'youth problem' and, moreover, essentialising teenagers' needs and interests. For some skaters, the bounded nature of a skate park contested the legitimacy of access to other more public spaces and questioned the skate park as a meaningful space of citizenship.

Despite the negative images portrayed in chapter five, the sum of these different individual and collective political actions, if they are understood as acts of citizenship, have the potential to alter the place of teenagers within society. The most important spaces of citizenship for participants in this research were at the local level. This is not to say that reference was not made to the consideration of a more global arena. For example, global networks of technology were highlighted as an important means of overcoming some of the problems of physical isolation. Furthermore, many participants called for a greater stake in local decision-making. Reflecting back upon the anti-war protests in March 2003, which were organised by

children and teenagers (see Phipps, 2003), it is possible to relate these actions to those described by teenagers in this research. These actions indeed both challenge and quash the notion of teenage apathy and should reinforce the need, I believe, for a broader societal acceptance of teenagers as active citizens.

8

Conclusions

8.1 Resetting the Scene

This research has been a considerable journey of learning and often surprise. My own understandings of rurality and teenagers' (or, as I originally defined them, young people's) lives have been challenged and stretched. Following Philo (2003), I frequently recollected and pondered upon my own experiences and memories of growing up in a rural area. Similarities between many participants' experiences and my own childhood and teenage years on the Island were revealed. Nevertheless, and wholly expected, there were also many disparities. I greatly admire those who have been creative in their acts of citizenship and who have challenged ingrained systems in an attempt to change their communities. In addition to the feelings of many participants, I am also frustrated at the continued neglect of teenagers' voices. My research philosophies, following in the footsteps of past and present advocacy geographers, attempted to provide a connection between the participants and local policy-makers. Encounters with such decision-makers frequently created frustrating spaces of (non)citizenship for myself. In the quest for socially relevant research, it was often challenging to maintain the notion that *'I can make a difference'*, or even whether it is within the bounds of the researcher to do so. It is difficult to evaluate the extent to which decision-makers within the local communities (less so within the school) that I studied acknowledged the findings disseminated to them. The research received interest from the local MP and some councillors, albeit sometimes a misinterpreted response! This was, at times, an uphill struggle, which enhanced my empathy towards the participants.

This study was set within one county in England. Some of the diverse experiences revealed may be unique to the area. It should also be acknowledged that the case setting is an Island which in itself encapsulates

specific local contexts. Other rural, or indeed urban areas, may be situated within different local social, political, economic and cultural circumstances. Widespread exclusion and stereotyping of teenagers as (a) social group(s), coupled with the neglect of their active engagement with citizenship, is likely to be apparent in other locales, albeit refracted and interpreted in different ways through individual biographies. At the same time, the case study area exists within national social, political and economic policy contexts; for example, those relating to rural needs and issues, social exclusion, and education. At a broader spatial scale the area also exists within global systems. In terms of this research the international influence of the UNCRC and global networks of communication and power are of particular significance. This final chapter is concerned with relating the key findings from this thesis to wider contexts. This is not to universalise the diverse lived experiences of teenagers, but to illustrate the range of possible challenges facing those in rural areas in relation to exclusion, participation and citizenship. I have brought together a unique synthesis of the studies of social exclusion and citizenship at an important time in both the examination of the 'other' in geography and the wider social sciences, and placed this union within the context of significant educational policy developments. I believe that I have successfully responded to Panelli's (2002) call for new foci in relation to rural research with young people by meaningfully placing teenagers at the centre of the research process, by contextualising the diversity of young people's lives, and by highlighting the ways in which teenagers carve out spaces and identities. This chapter, therefore, contextualises the principal findings from this thesis, highlighting the key areas in which I contribute new knowledges to geographical inquiry by exploring teenagers' experiences of exclusion from spaces of citizenship within rural communities. Many of the findings in this research are by no means constrained to rural areas.

8.2 Key Findings

The majority of teenage participants in this research felt marginalised from a variety of social and political spheres within their rural communities. The overwhelming majority felt excluded from spatial governance by virtue of their age and subsequent positioning in society. Few teenagers identified a sense of belonging in relation to the conventional construction of community. Many felt teenagers were often stereotyped as troublemakers. Several believed that local decision-makers neglected the needs of *young* teenagers by not

providing suitable and accessible facilities. Moreover, few had been afforded opportunities to participate in local decision-making, and where avenues had been provided the methods of consultation used were limited and rarely meaningful. Local decision-makers play an important role in shaping teenagers' lives. There was, however, a feeling of resentment between many teenagers and local decision-makers. Despite the lack of participatory opportunities available to teenagers in this rural case study, many participants wanted to be involved in the political mainstream.

In relation to the introduction of citizenship education, the key themes arising from this research are 'relevancy' and 'participatory learning'. Whilst citizenship education has raised teenagers' awareness of many issues, a significant proportion of respondents were not engaged in the subject. Many believed that citizenship education should be made more relevant to both their present and future lives. To do so recognises the important contributions that many teenagers make in shaping their schools and local areas. Importantly, this research highlights a relationship between the way teenagers felt they were treated in such lessons and their engagement with the curriculum. The older the participants felt they were viewed by teachers, the more likely they were to be interested in citizenship education. Many participants also highlighted the importance of participatory learning in shaping their engagement with the subject and the need for opportunities for practising citizenship within school.

Finally, this research has highlighted the myriad ways in which teenagers exert their own practices of citizenship both within school and in their wider communities. Through the shaping of micro-geographies many participants challenged the notion of teenage apathy and, instead, established themselves as committed political actors. Many examples of this political action centred around creating spaces for teenagers. Through campaigning for skate park facilities, revitalising new spaces to hang out in and maintaining old facilities, many participants demonstrated a more radical or postmodern approach to citizenship. Many participants asserted themselves as political actors by questioning my definitions of rurality and by drawing my attention to new citizen identities based upon lifestyle choices and interests. These 'new' citizen identities challenge the emphasis in much research on traditional classifications such as gender. Many teenagers also constructed

their own forms of 'othering' and exclusion within and between different groups. At the national and global level, the anti-war protests organised by children and teenagers in 2003 also highlight significant examples of active citizenship, although these actions are often at odds with the kind of citizenship prescribed in the curriculum. Furthermore, these actions challenge the notion of teenage apathy and highlight the need for a broader societal acceptance of teenagers as active citizens. The remainder of this chapter is concerned with the broader implications of this research.

8.3 New Teenage Geographies

In contemporary geography's pursuit to explore 'otherness', it is essential to explore the lives of *young* teenagers. Such a group are the neglected 'others' of children's geographies and the broader social sciences, sitting uneasily between childhood, youth and adulthood. Valentine (2003) highlights that research within children's geographies frequently concentrates on two age groups, with children categorised as those aged five to sixteen, and youth comprising of those aged sixteen to twenty-five. Indeed, research with young teenagers is often subsumed into children's geographies. Furthermore, De Waal (2002) argues that the UNCRC primarily focuses upon the needs and capacities of those in middle childhood. Whilst many issues crosscut the (flexible) boundaries between these 'age' groups, I argue that this has been detrimental to the examination of those who are increasingly independent. For example, discourses which highlight the increasing amounts of time that children in the 'West' spend under the supervision of adults in privatised spaces such as the home or commercial play spaces are of little relevance to many of the experiences highlighted by teenagers in this research. The collective time spent hanging out in local spaces questions the placing of young teenagers within the framework of *children's* geographies. Furthermore, these narratives defy the Putnamesque notion that individualisation is fostering an increase in solitary pursuits (Putnam, 2000). Rather, the spaces in which participants spent their 'free-time' were complex and dynamic and often centred around collective socialisation. This research critiques the absence of teenage geographies by highlighting how neglecting the transitional period between childhood and youth fosters a feeling of being out-of-place, particularly when such an age group is excluded from both the facilities and services created for either children or youth. In these terms many young teenagers are not only excluded from spatial governance within

their local communities, but from everyday spaces and amenities.

Placing emphasis upon the experiences of young teenagers does not fall foul of biological reductionism but, instead, recognises that young teenagers inhabit and negotiate sets of local, national and global contexts. These contexts are often regulated and influenced by systems which are not necessarily the same for children and older teenagers. Within the context of education policy, for example, the lives of young teenagers are shaped by the considerable amount of time that they spend in compulsory secondary schooling, working for exams, training to be 'citizens', and planning for their futures. At the same time, it is apparent that many teenagers move between and within discourses of childhood, youth and adulthood, often having to negotiate a place for themselves in different categories in different places. This transitional period significantly influences everyday geographies of exclusion and citizenship. Whilst I believe this research has been important in establishing young teenagers' geographies, it may have benefited from a wider exploration to include older teenagers to further examine how experiences of exclusion and citizenship change over time. Furthermore, Valentine (2003) suggests that much youth-centred research has failed to detail the connections between home, school and community, focusing instead on isolated issues such as unemployment. This research has successfully responded to such calls by synthesising and examining the linkages between the places of importance to teenagers in relation to citizenship and exclusion. In particular I have highlighted new knowledges relating to spaces of citizenship within schools, an arena which Valentine (2003) argues has been particularly neglected by geographers. Nevertheless, this research may have benefited from a greater consideration of teenagers' experiences within the home. In particular, exploring the relationship between parenting practices and the development of teenager's independence may have shed greater light on the opportunities afforded for teenagers' participation.

Within many rural areas the lived experiences of many teenagers appear to be dynamically positioned between the representations of an 'idealised childhood' and a 'threatening youth'. Participants perceived that they were expected to conform to and be grateful for the idealised representation of a rural childhood, whilst simultaneously being stereotyped as threatening and

placed under surveillance and control. The exclusion of young teenagers as a social group in rural areas is, in part, related to this challenging positioning, thus exhibiting aspects of both the Apollonian and the Dionysian child. I believe this research provides a bridge between geographies of childhood and wider social, political and cultural, *adult-centred* geographies by demonstrating the experiences of those in the transition between childhood, youth and adulthood. Many of the issues raised may also be played out in other 'non-rural' settings. Whilst the research with 'others' is essential to the exploration of neglected voices and wholly worthy of study, it is important not to segregate children's geographies from mainstream socio-spatial and political inquiry. It has also been valuable to draw upon '*New Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship*' to demonstrate the connections between women's use of public space as examined by feminist researchers (see, for example, Bondi & Domosh, 1998) and young teenagers' exclusion from everyday spaces of mainstream political life.

This study has also emphasised the power relationships within and between groups of teenagers. Importantly, I believe, I have gathered a wealth of information concerning teenagers' complex notions of identity, which call into question the conventional subdivision of social groups utilised in much research. Many aspects of identity and othering were related to different cultural and interest groups. These groups reflected local reconstructions of global youth identities. For example, identities centred around 'townie' youth cultures are common in other areas of England (Haydon, 2002), whilst groups such as skateboarders exert global identities. Such group identities may be referred to in different terms and may occupy different spaces in other locales, but in essence they have global connections through music, clothing (see Swain, 2002) and shared experiences, many of which are connected along global lines of communication. Within school settings, Valentine (2003) suggests, young people must exert both individuality whilst at the same time conforming to peer culture. This research has demonstrated the complexities in this statement by revealing the multilayered nature of peer group cultures. Moreover, these cultural, lifestyle and interest groups have blurred membership boundaries. Individuals or collectives may buy into more than one group, but often with implications for how they are viewed, included or excluded by others. This demonstrates an individualised consumerism, where an individual can buy into different lifestyle choices. Beck's (1992)

writings on individualisation help to account for the greater identity and culture choices faced by teenagers. Adopting such identities, Beck (1992) suggests, is risky as it can lead to marginalisation. This research certainly highlights that particular groups of teenagers, especially those identifying with skateboard cultures, are particularly marginalised by their spatial and lifestyle choices. At the same time, some teenagers choose not to be labelled by one lifestyle or interest, and instead belong to a variety of communities, negotiating different identities at different times. The complex constructions of identity revealed in this case study have significant implications for the delineation of teenagers along traditional boundaries for researchers and policy-makers. Whilst categories such as gender, ethnicity and class remain important, an understanding of this alternative context of identity has been essential to exploring teenagers spaces of citizenship for they so frequently determine their engagement. This study was not able to examine the potential implications of ethnicity in the creation of such identity groups. During the fieldwork period, only 0.5% of the school's population were from minority ethnic backgrounds. Whilst this reflects the situation in many areas of rural England, an examination of urban group identities and citizenship education may prove worthwhile. Nevertheless, Local and National Government needs to recognise the interests, needs and aspirations of teenagers as fractured along traditional lines as well as dispersing amongst new identities.

Finally, this research has established new teenage geographies through both fostering consultation and negotiation with young research advisors as well as learning from participants. Through the adaptation of children-centred methods, I have developed techniques to suit the eclectic interests and abilities of young teenagers. Whilst valuable lessons can be learnt from children-centred research, school-based cultures of communication render methods commonly used in children-centred research, for example drawing, inappropriate or babyish for young teenagers (Barker & Weller, 2003b). Through the implementation of innovative methods such as a phone-in discussion on local radio, I believe, I have demonstrated the potential for developing 'braver' methods, which have the potential not only to gather the views of participants but simultaneously to disseminate and promote voices. Nevertheless, it should be recognised many of these methods were not created and devised by participants from the outset but were developed by myself through participants' suggestions and comments. Whilst this research

does not fully fulfil the ideals of teenage-centred research by allowing participants to determine the research agenda, I believe that I have fostered an ethos of negotiation and continuous dialogue which listens to the needs of teenagers within the research process (see Pretty et al, 1995). It is fundamentally important to recognise that the methods used in this research are not just teenage-specific. Indeed, I believe that more adult-orientated research can learn a great deal from the ethos of children-centred research. Furthermore, by responding to the way in which participants want to be represented, as teenagers, and want to participate in the research process, through a variety of methods which do not patronise their diverse abilities, I have challenged the tendency to fear aged-based analysis in children and young people's geographies. I argue that children-centred research based on the rejection of developmental notions of age-based competencies and the promotion of diversity has often been cautious with regard to, for example, the use of the term 'teenagers'. Instead, all-encompassing terms such as 'youth' and 'young people' have been adopted. I believe these categorisations have a tendency to neglect the experiences of young teenagers who are often situated between childhood and youth.

8.4 New Geographies of Rurality

In pursuit of a postmodern analysis this study has placed emphasis on and highlighted the diversity of teenagers' lives in rural areas, often at the micro-level. This thesis, therefore, responds to the call for inquiry which focuses on the experiences of neglected 'others' in rural geographies (Philo, 1992; Little, 1999). As Panelli (2002) states, whilst it is both beneficial and essential to look at the diversity of experience, it is also important to conceptualise the generic issues which impact upon teenagers' lives. This is fundamental to recognising how shifting national and global contexts reconstitute rurality. A broader perspective does not need to essentialise participants' experiences, but instead can provide an analysis which may highlight the neglected needs and voices of teenagers, as well as defining a qualitative element applicable and accessible to rural policy-makers.

Rurality, as noted in chapter two, has often been defined in terms of its relationship with community (see Valentine, 2001). In these terms community is often seen as a physical locality, for example a street, neighbourhood or village. Whilst participants did refer to their local area, the majority did not feel

a sense of belonging. Defining a sense of belonging is, however, somewhat problematic. It is often a schizophrenic notion, temporal and spatial in nature but nonetheless dynamic. At the micro-level, exclusions or a lack of belonging were often fluid and subject to change throughout the day as participants hung out with different people in different places. These geographies of hanging out, particularly within identity and lifestyle groups, fostered a different sense of community and belonging. Within these spaces many different groupings occupy dynamic sites of citizenship, creativity, resistance and struggle. This thesis, therefore, contributes to a re-examination of community by illustrating the presence of positive bonds and communal networks based upon interest or lifestyle identities, thus echoing Liepins' (2000) statement which highlights:

"... [the] transformative potential of 'communities of interest' which may be far removed from the conventional associations made with rural communities in past literature" (p. 28).

In a sense these identities are both based around individualisation and collectivity. Identity, Wenger (1998) believes, comes about through practice, with individuals defining themselves through participation, familiarity, past experiences and future plans. Communities of practice, Wenger (1998) suggests, are those in which individuals are able to demonstrate competency, have full membership and understand and engage with one another:

"membership in a community of practice translates into an identity as a form of competence" (p. 153).

This conceptualisation of communities of practice is particularly relevant to the findings in this research. Place, however, remains important, as noted in Entrikin's (1991) writings, but it is the local micro-spaces and the wider global, technological spaces that are of particular significance. These affiliations satisfy more cosmopolitan notions of democracy and citizenship. Furthermore, the cultural contexts of community (Panelli, 2002) must also be considered alongside teenagers' lived experiences. Idealised notions of rural childhood and, moreover, discourses of threatening youth shape the spaces that teenagers are afforded in their communities. Alienation from traditional senses of community may encourage many to find belonging in alternative forms, thus appropriating and delineating different kinds of rural space.

In response to Vanderbeck & Dunkley's (2003) suggestion that there has been little work on young people's ontological narratives of the rural-urban continuum I have begun to uncover the complexity of teenagers' interpretations. Indeed, I believe this is an important area of research which requires further work. During this process my own understandings of rurality and '*what makes an area rural*' were challenged. Interpretations of rurality were often founded upon personal experiences and familiarity. In the same way that my background influenced my understandings of rurality, so did the past experiences of participants. It is beneficial to draw upon Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad to conceptualise these clashes between my representations of space (and indeed that defined in other research) and the representational spaces experienced by participants. Furthermore, it is evident that whilst teenagers' interpretations are diverse, some reinforce the rural-urban dichotomy that researchers seek to move on from. Fundamentally, it is also apparent that many feel a sense of betweenness, living in areas which are not quite urban and not quite rural. I have, therefore, added a further dimension to academia's struggle with rurality by highlighting a diverse range of interpretations which collectively suggest that rurality is simultaneously a physical place but is also placeless.

Whilst the narratives of many teenagers challenge the notion of the rural idyll by highlighting the feelings of isolation, exclusion and frustration, idyllic representations of rurality are fundamental in shaping teenagers' lived experiences in terms of their future expectations and the way many are treated and viewed by adults. As Lawrence (1996) suggests, understandings of rurality are both shaped from within and from without. The rural idyll, therefore, remains an arena for which many teenagers feel they ought to be grateful. Researchers should be cautious of moving away from inquiry which does not at least recognise the esteem in which rurality is still held within significant swathes of (British) society. Since the beginning of this study I have witnessed a proliferation of media discourse which has promoted the quality of life in rural areas as superior. I believe this study would have benefited from gauging teenagers' reactions to such idealised media discourses. Moreover, wider rural transformations, particularly the commodification and increased popularisation of the countryside, render the promotion of teenagers' frustrated voices harder to accomplish. Driven by economic, social and cultural forces, for example, the house price differentials between rural and

urban (particularly London) living mean that families can move from their three bedroom semi in the once desirable suburbia to their 'lord of the manor' style house in a rural area of England (see Viner, 2002). It is therefore, questionable whether rurality means the same thing to parents and teenagers, in terms of their lived experiences. At the same time there was evidence to suggest that some teenagers imagined a future rurality that reinforced their parents' own ideas. For example, whilst the difficulties of being a teenager in an isolated area were highlighted, this did not mean that some teenagers did not think it would be a good place to bring up their own children. This provides interesting, if not challenging reading for policy debate.

Furthermore, the Public Attitudes Survey 1997 (Countryside Commission, 1997) suggested that sense of freedom was a key attraction (for adults) to rural areas. The basis for many constructions and representations of rurality are adult-centric, focusing upon notions which do not necessarily ring true for younger people. Attractions such as sense of freedom are, for many teenagers, thwarted by regulation, surveillance and pronouncements of (in)appropriate behaviour in (un)suitable spaces. This is not to say that those in other non or less rural areas do not face similar challenges, but that poor rural services, a lack of independent mobility and idealisation of their life worlds exacerbates these issues.

In order to satisfy Massey's (1994) call for "*a progressive sense of place*", it is also important to note that the everyday rural geographies upon which I have drawn also exhibit distinct networks to the wider global world, which are essential for overcoming rural exclusions and challenges. Whilst Freie (1998) referred to cyberspace as a counterfeit community, I would argue that for many teenagers the value and use of elements of the internet allows them to sustain their local friendship communities, which are otherwise problematic to maintain. This compression of time and space provides an alternative to physical isolation and the problematics of establishing independent mobility. Technology is significant in the reshaping of rurality from both outside and within, potentially providing teenagers with both a local and global sense of place (Massey, 1994). Moreover, technology also provides some with the opportunity to engage in adult systems of citizenship. I believe this study would have benefited from a more detailed exploration of citizenship in cyberspace. In particular, an examination of interplay between teenagers' and adults' engagement with such forms of participation would have provided a

more indepth analysis of power relations within this sphere.

As Johnston et al (2000) suggest, 'nature' and 'rural' are instruments of social power which together control and regulate both the contesting expectations of teenagers, as well as their access to and identification with rural community spaces. This research has provided an in-depth insight into the neglected interpretations and lived experiences of young teenagers.

8.5 New Geographies of Exclusion

This study has not only provided a critique of idyllic representations of rurality but has served to challenge the popularity of the quantification of social exclusion in wider policy contexts. Whilst rural poverty and social exclusion have more recently been acknowledged in the policy agenda, this has often been in terms of statistical analyses of issues such as income, employment and crime. It is apparent that such quantification, for example in terms of income, not only neglects young teenagers' own experiences but that other political-economic contexts, such as an area's economic base, also excludes them from the bigger picture. It is, therefore, questionable whether teenagers may be considered as the new '*Exclus*', through their exclusion from social and political life. Despite the theorisations of Levitas (1998) and Williams (1998), this research challenges definitions of social exclusion, suggesting that contemporary discourse places too much emphasis upon family income and employment. Whilst these indicators are important in the contextualisation of teenagers' lives, they place children and teenagers as dependants within the realms of the family and do not sufficiently explore the exclusion of young teenagers as individuals or as a social group. This research has responded to the critique of such indicators by detailing the everyday dynamic experiences of social exclusion faced by many teenagers in different ways in rural environments. Few studies have highlighted social exclusion in rurality and have certainly not contextualised this within the lives of young teenagers.

Furthermore, the perpetuation of idyllic representations of rurality masks more hidden deprivation and exclusion. This deprivation should not just be analysed in terms of material and economic indicators but also in relation to fluid lived experiences which crosscut cultural, social, political, spatial and age-based boundaries. This research has highlighted such issues in one

area of rural England. At the micro and local level, participants outlined the problematic delineation of public and private space and its impact upon restricting the freedoms so commonly upheld in the rural idyll. Furthermore, many cited examples of their exclusion from everyday spaces within their communities. Ultimately, the construction of stereotypes of threatening youth impacts adversely on inclusion of teenagers as a (diverse) group within social and political life. This research may have benefited from a wider exploration of the construction of these stereotypes. This thesis has, however, provided a multi-method exploration of teenagers' experiences of such issues which ultimately reconstructs a more inclusive definition of social exclusion, focusing upon spaces of citizenship and exclusion. In the consideration of the broader contextualisation of this research, it is useful to look to Sharp et al's (2000) notions of dominating and resisting power. Sharp et al (2000) suggest that 'dominating power' refers to control or coercion, whilst 'resisting power' is concerned with the repulsion of dominant forces. These power relations are not simply two-way exchanges but instead may be regarded as a complex network (Foucault, 1977; 1979; 1980; Sharp et al, 2000). I believe I have made a valuable contribution to rural geography by demonstrating the complex power relations inherent in many rural communities. I have achieved this by highlighting teenagers' exclusion from and within spaces of citizenship, but also the diverse ways in which many challenge, reconstruct and subvert the control, regulation and surveillance placed upon them. In adopting a self-selecting sample of teenagers I may have failed to reach those most likely to be excluded from such realms.

Young teenagers' competency needs to be central to the understanding of social exclusion. Exclusion is often fuelled by discourses surrounding the 'best interests of the child' and 'best interests of the community'. This research has revealed little evidence to suggest that policy-makers are willing to recognise either teenagers' competencies as decision-makers or the interdependencies between teenagers and other groups within society. Within rural areas, teenagers' frustrations are also fuelled by the neglect many feel that national policy-makers give to their collective needs and interests. Moreover, it should also be acknowledged that teenagers are active constructors of 'othering' and exclusion. In this research different individuals and groups questioned the status of other teenagers and the legitimacy of their activities in certain spaces. At the same time, many also dichotomised

the young and the old, often stereotyping the latter as, for example “*old, fat, rich men*”, whilst more easily being able to establish diversity amongst the young. This age-based facet of social exclusion, I believe, is highly significant and one which has attracted little attention. Nevertheless, Sharp et al’s (2000) understandings of the entanglements of power provide a valuable means for understanding the flows of dominating and resisting power between teenagers and adults, and within groups and subgroupings of teenagers themselves.

Drawing upon Sharp et al’s (2000) notion of dominating power, it is apparent that many teenagers are controlled not only by the complex stereotypes afforded to them in rural areas, but by the regulation and surveillance that they face within their communities and institutions such as schools (see also James, Jenks & Prout, 1998). Many teenagers demonstrated resisting power, creating spaces out of an absence of place, exerting citizenship where they were not afforded it, through clothing, music and lifestyle choices, and creating spaces of citizenship and belonging via sometimes self-directed regeneration projects. This kind of resisting power, Sharp et al (2000) suggest, is a struggle. Teenagers struggle against an adult-dominated society and against resentment and disillusion fostered through a lack of belonging. At the same time, different groups dominate different situations and spaces either within school or within the community. Some may control areas where adults fear to tread. Moreover, local decision-makers may also resist the power that teenagers try to exert. These are not simple power exchanges (see Foucault, 1977; 1979; 1980) but may be seen as a complex web of interactions.

This thesis also contributes to understanding the synthesis of global and local dangers, not in the conventional terms of parental fears (Valentine, 1997b) but in terms of the threat that teenagers are perceived to pose. As a result, many are excluded from and regulated in particular spaces because they, or their activities, are not seen to be legitimate. Indeed, with hindsight, it would have been advantageous to examine teenagers’ opinions *vis-à-vis* the reason why many adults fear groups of teenagers in public space. These stereotypes are frequently upheld in the media. For example, the recent television series ‘*Brat Camp*’ on Channel 4 detailed the experiences of a group of teenagers experiencing problems with alcohol, substance abuse or

aggressive behaviours. The teenagers were sent by their parents to an American camp in rural Utah in order to find new ways to deal with their problems through hiking and camping. Here American attitudes towards 'problem teenagers' has infiltrated homes in England. These global images have exacerbated moral panics surrounding the threat of youth, which are further reinforced through curfews, the tagging of deviant youths, and CCTV in public spaces. The moral panics of parents and wider society in the 'West' all seek to ostracise teenagers as a collective.

8.6 New Geographies of Citizenship

Despite the positive contributions that the UNCRC has made in raising the global awareness of both children and teenagers' rights and diverse needs, many teenagers in this study felt alienated by the construction of teenagers as troublemakers. Indeed, many believed they were denied rights because of the age-based stereotypes in society. Furthermore, others were unaware of the rights that they do have. Here, citizenship education has great potential to fill in these knowledge gaps and to provide a forum for discussion on the legitimacy of age-based legislation. This research was designed to coincide with the introduction of citizenship education and indeed provides one of the first teenage-centred insights into its effectiveness and implementation as a policy. Further work, however, is needed to explore the experiences that teenagers have within different schools. Fundamentally, I have outlined the need to upgrade the status of teenagers, particularly within the classroom. Teenagers' participation and education rights are often ignored within school, where they are treated as morally inferior (Mayall, 2000; 2002). In many ways children and young teenagers are still considered in Kantian terms as passive citizens as opposed to active citizens who have the right to vote (Schapiro, 1999). Kant did not intend passive to refer to a lesser status but used the term to suggest that such citizenship was a temporary status (Schapiro, 1999). Nevertheless, I would argue that the connotations associated with being passive do not favour the acts of citizenship in which many teenagers are actively engaged. This idea of passive citizenship is, however, upheld in the idea that citizenship is tied to participation in the labour market. Consumerism is often viewed as one way in which children and teenagers are afforded citizen status. Through increased spending power and strategic marketing campaigns, teenagers have become valuable contributors to the consumer economy. Nevertheless, defining citizenship in

terms of consumerism neglects the exclusion, surveillance and control that many face in shops, malls, villages and town centres. I believe that this study would have benefited from exploring whether teenagers feel that consumerism provides them with citizen status. As Aitken (2001) suggests, middle class consumption patterns have reconstructed the street, denying free public access with spaces being controlled and monitored.

As Mayall (2002) observes, those in compulsory schooling are constructed as learners not workers. Citizenship education, therefore, reinforces a non-citizen status (Mayall, 2002). I call for a cumulative notion of citizenship where children, young people and adults alike are all represented as full citizens who, throughout their life, learn, develop and exert different forms of citizenship in different spaces. This study has highlighted the positive outcomes that raising teenagers' status can have upon their engagement with citizenship. When deficit models of childhood and citizenship are disregarded in the classroom, this has a positive impact upon engagement with the subject. For example, when teenagers feel that they are treated like adults or perhaps as equals, and where they are afforded the opportunity actively to make decisions over their learning, they are more likely to be engaged in citizenship education. I witnessed positive examples of this practice, although it must be stated that this is often due to the practices of individual teachers rather than a whole school or nationwide education culture. Alderson (2000b) suggested that children and young people become democratic citizens through practice. Poor examples of citizenship in practice within schools has the potential to disengage teenagers (Alderson, 2000b). This has important implications for the way in which education policy constructs future curricula. Nevertheless, the response of some teenagers to educational policy on citizenship is also influenced by other macro systems. For example, on deciding the merit of studying citizenship, concerns were raised over its potential imposition on other curriculum subjects and achievement within exams. This illustrates the broader political and educational contexts in which teenagers' lived experiences are informed and constrained.

The adult-centric nature of liberal democracy excludes children and young teenagers from direct representation. Individualisation, Thomas & Hocking (2003) suggest, has further excluded children from mainstream political life.

Children and teenagers have no direct link to mainstream politics except through their parents. Cosmopolitan democracy, however, moves away from the idea that citizenship relations are principally state-based, instead focusing upon the local-global nexus (Habermas, 1996; Held, 1996; Held & McGrew, 2000). In this thesis I have drawn attention to the advantages of a more cosmopolitan approach to citizenship education, which recognises the globalised world as dynamic and encapsulates many diverse identities whilst also focusing on the manifestations of these issues at the local level (Osler & Starkey, 2003). Furthermore, this research endorses Osler & Starkey's (2003) criticism that a curriculum built upon the idea of citizens-in-the-making is likely to create further resentment. Nevertheless, Osler & Starkey's (2003) propositions for a cosmopolitan citizenship education are centred around notions of respect and peace, and fail to recognise differing and opposing ideas of 'the good' or indeed that active citizenship can be seen as "*oppositional and disruptive*" (Lister, 1997b: 33). I argue that this research has provided insights into teenagers' experiences, exclusions and engagement with citizenship which are of value to the refinement of current citizenship education policy.

This thesis also highlights the desire of many teenagers to be involved in the political mainstream. Local decision-makers play an important role in shaping teenagers' lives, and whilst some have, to some extent, responded to calls for opportunities for children and teenagers to be consulted, within this local context opportunities for participation were sparse. Where they were available, inappropriate methods were often adopted and participants seldom received feedback. Many teenagers perceived these consultations to be meaningless and unlikely to result in any real action. This study is limited in its National examination of participatory opportunities for young teenagers. Nevertheless, at the level of this case study it is clear that the adoption of the principles of the UNCRC or indeed the philosophies of the '*New Social Studies of Childhood*' would be beneficial to decision-makers' understandings of teenagers' diverse needs and interests. In summary, many participants described frustrating spaces of exclusion, of non-belonging, of not being heard, of superficial consultation, of little status and of stereotypes. I would hope there are more inclusive and effective participatory practices in other areas, but this is doubtful within the broader context of Local Government participation strategies. The guidelines in the Government's

Green Paper, *'Every Child Matters'*, may go some way to aid the development of more meaningful participatory practices (DfES, 2003b). Moreover, Thomas & Hocking (2003) argue for the electoral franchise to be extended to those aged fourteen to seventeen, thus equalling the age of criminal responsibility. I suggest that as local areas are of fundamental importance to many teenagers, a practical starting point might be to provide the opportunity for participation in local elections. This is not to suggest that this is the only form of action that should be taken or that all young teenagers would wish to participate in this way. Instead I believe it would not only attempt to increase teenagers' perceived and actual status, but would also help to counter the growing resentment towards local decision-makers at the lack of opportunity for meaningful participation. This must be coupled with recognition of other forms of participation which involve the widespread acknowledgement of different understandings of politics (see O'Toole, 2003) and citizenship.

I believe the key message in this thesis is that, despite the construction of those under eighteen as citizens-in-the-making, many teenagers are actively engaged in unconventional practices of citizenship which are often unrecognised and castigated by decision-makers and by broader society. Promoting such practices is challenging in a societal system that represents teenagers as apathetic because they do not necessarily conform to conventional understandings of politics and citizenship. Many teenagers exert their citizenship at the local or even micro-level, either through the carving out of spaces to hang out in, both at school and in the local area, where facilities are not available, or through the regeneration of local areas. At the meso-level the anti-war demonstrations organised and mobilised by children and teenagers challenge the notion of apathy and demonstrate alternative spatial strategies of resistance and campaign. Indeed, these actions both challenge and quash the notion of teenage apathy and highlight the need, I believe, for a broader societal acceptance of teenagers as active citizens. As Beck (1992) suggests, societal changes coupled with the decline in affiliation to the nation-state have resulted in new social movements. Such acts of citizenship, both at the local and State level, not only challenge adult constructions of childhood but, I argue, challenge dominant norms of appropriate citizenship for the young. Children and teenagers on the anti-war demonstrations were threatened with truancy records for the day (Birkett, 2003). This ultimately throws into question the rationale behind, and the future efficacy, of the

Government's policy on citizenship education. Indeed, rather than the rhetoric of 'active citizenship' (see QCA, 2000), it would appear that both the State and society would prefer only 'helpful involvement' from children and teenagers. The Government's quest to reduce teenage apathy, I believe, is also cautious of the opposing outcomes. As Aitken (2001) outlines, children are still expected to adhere to developmental norms as 'human becomings'. To critique the rationale of citizenship education would be to suggest that it is not only about creating future responsible citizens but is also about institutionalising, controlling and moulding the kind of citizenship in which teenagers may legitimately become engaged, and is certainly not synonymous with Brown's (1997) radical notions of agonistic and antagonistic citizenship. In these more critical terms, citizenship education may be seen as an extension of the State panopticon.

8.7 A New Geographical Synthesis

Essentially, I believe that this research has founded new geographical knowledges through the unique synthesis of concepts which draw together young teenagers' experiences within differing temporal logics of citizenship. What is evident is that, whilst much time is spent within school, the periods that teenagers spend hanging out in and shaping local spaces, whether for better or worse, are what motivate, interest, enrage and excite teenagers (Weller, 2003). Adapting Dillabough & Arnot's (2000) call:

"It is time to change the ways in which we struggle for democracy in education - to abandon the 'lion's skin' and construct new definitions of citizenship which are based upon the needs of contemporary women" (p. 38).

I believe that creating curricula that value and respect teenagers' needs and aspirations, in addition to developing opportunities for teenagers actively to engage with local decision-makers over the issues that are of importance at present, are important steps towards societal respect for teenagers' current personhood, thus inciting confidence that their political actions matter. It is important also to view teenagers as experts of their own citizenship (Weller, 2003).

To achieve a meaningful and effective citizenship education, I believe, requires a fundamental shift in societal discourse, which moves beyond the recognition that teenagers are a diverse and competent social group. Such

positioning, whilst wholly worthy in promoting children and teenagers' neglected voices, is now perhaps at risk of reinforcing the adult-child dialectic, separating out and placing together their voices and experiences (Weller, 2003). This is not to neglect that, as a social group(s), teenagers hold some unique characteristics, but at the same time citizenship must move beyond legal and economic terminology, to integrate teenagers as far as possible into the political mainstream, where the diverse thoughts, voices, experiences and competencies of society as a totality are recognised (Weller, 2003). Such a move needs to be coupled with a multi-agency appreciation of the importance of teenagers' lives in the present (Roche, 1999; Weller, 2003) rather than as citizens of the future.

Appendix A

The Introductory Leaflet



WHAT DO YOU THINK?!



Dear Student,

Hi! My name is Susie Weller and I used to be a pupil at Medina. At the moment I am doing a university project and I am hoping that you might be able to assist me with it?

What is the project about?

Have you ever been asked **your** opinion about something concerning your local community, or the kinds of activities on offer to you? Last term I collected nearly 500 questionnaire responses from you and your fellow pupils at Medina. The results were really interesting and I found out some important issues that some of you have concerns about. I'd really like to find out more about how you feel about where you live; the kinds of activities you do; the kinds of activities you feel excluded from; and whether you feel people actually listen to your opinion. I would also like to find out about the kinds of things you do in PSE, particularly relating to citizenship.

Why is the project important?

I believe that very often the views of young people are ignored and that adults make important decisions about their communities with consulting young people. Many of you mentioned this in the questionnaires. I grew up on the Isle of Wight and remember many of the experiences that you wrote about. I am hoping that we can work together to find out about these important issues and hopefully raise greater awareness of them on the Island.

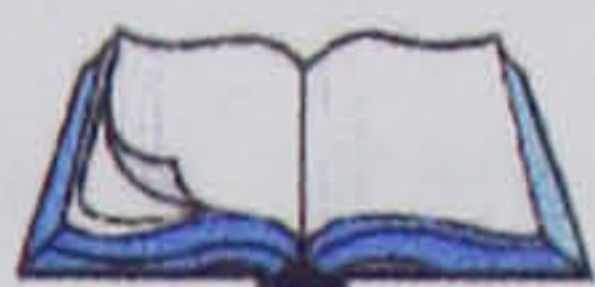
What will the project involve?

I would really like us to work together as researchers, and I have a few ideas about the way we could gather young people's views and opinions. What do you think?

- (1) I thought it would be interesting (and hopefully fun!) if I gave you all a disposable camera to take photos of different places in your community that are important to you: places you hang out with friends in; places that you feel excluded from; places that you and your friends have claimed as your own; or places that you have helped to create, for example, a skate park. Afterwards we could talk about these different places and you could have a set of photos to keep.



- (2) To go with the photo project I think we could find out some useful information by completing short diaries over the period of a week. They wouldn't be long diaries but they would allow you to write down a few issues you've thought of relating to your community and your experiences there. After the diary and photo project I would like to interview each of you so that you all have the opportunity to have your say.



- (3) I am hoping that Isle of Wight radio will be able to hold a discussion on the lives and experiences of young people. I think it would be really useful as lots of young people would be able to phone in and state their opinion on, for example, what needs improving on the Island.



Important info!

Anything you tell me, or write down, or take photographs of during this project will be confidential. I won't use your real name on any of the information you give me, or show anyone any of the photos with you or your friends in that you don't want me too. I hope you feel you will be able to be open and honest with me about your experiences.

I don't want you to feel under any pressure to take part in the project. You will be free to join in any part of the project, and you can decide to leave at any stage.

If you have any questions please contact me by phone: (01895) 203215 or by email: susie_weller@hotmail.com



Please can you complete the following slip to let me know if you would like to participate:

Best wishes

Susie Weller



Please place the completed slip in the envelope provided. Thank you!!

- I would like us to work together on this project.....
- I would NOT like us to work together on this project.....

Name: _____ Class: _____

Appendix B

Questionnaire One

Questionnaire: Listening to Young People's Views



what Do You Think?!

For
Office
Use
Only

This questionnaire is designed to find out what *you* think about:

- Where you live.
- What kinds of activities you do.
- What kinds of activities you feel excluded from.
- Whether you feel people listen to your opinion.
- Your views on citizenship education.

This questionnaire is part of a project which aims to show how important it is to listen to young people's views.

Whatever you write will be confidential, and your responses will not be identifiable as yours.

Section One - Your Community

(1) Do you live in a ... Town Village Other _____

(2) How many years have you lived there?

- All your life 1 year or under 2-4 years
5-7 years 8-10 years 11-13 years 14-16 years

(3) Please tick the most appropriate answer to the following.

Agree Don't Know Disagree

I like living in my village/town.

I feel I belong in my community

There isn't much to do where I live

There should be more things for
young people to do where I live.

I never get asked my opinion on
what happens in my community.

(4) Do you feel that where you live is the countryside?

Yes No

Questionnaire: Listening to Young People's Views

(5) What places in your community do you socialise with friends? _____

(6) Are there any places you don't feel comfortable hanging out with your friends? Yes *if yes, please go to Q7*

No *if no, please go to Q8*

(7) What kind of places do you feel uncomfortable in?

(8) Do you hang out in places you know/think you shouldn't?

Yes *if yes, please go to Q9*

No *if no, please go to Q10*

(9) What kinds of places are these and why do you feel you shouldn't be there? _____

(10) What would you change about where you live?

Section Two - Hobbies & Interests

(11) What kinds of activities do you do in your local community?

I don't do any Skateboarding /Cycling

Organised Sports Sports I Organise Myself

Youth Clubs Hanging out with friends

Organised Art Clubs Music Lessons

Voluntary Work Other (Please State) _____

Questionnaire: Listening to Young People's Views

Section Three - Your Opinion

(12) Have you ever been asked your opinion on an issue relating to your community? Yes if yes, please go to Q13

No if no, please go to Q14

(13) What kind of issues were you asked your opinion on?

(14) Have you ever been involved in a youth council / forum?

Yes if yes, please go to Q15

No if no, please go to Q16

(15) Did you feel that the points you raised were considered seriously at the forum? Yes No

(16) Who do you think makes the important decisions about your community? _____

(17) Would you like to have you say about issues which affect you in your local community? Yes No

(18) Have you ever been involved in activities/campaigns relating to creating spaces for young people, e.g. campaigning for a skate park; or protesting about environmental issues?

Yes if yes, please go to Q19

No if no, please go to Q21

(19) What was the activity/campaign? _____

(20) Was it successful? Yes No

Questionnaire: Listening to Young People's Views

Section Four - Citizenship Classes

(21) Do you have lessons on citizenship in PSE/ Tutor periods?

Yes No

(22) In your tutor periods or other lessons can you remember learning about the following things, and do you think they were useful things for you to learn now?

	I have learnt about it	I have found the topic useful
Human rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being involved in your local community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(23) Do you feel that learning about the above topics has helped you to be more interested in what goes on in your local community?

Yes No

Section Five - Background Details

(24) Are you ... Female Male ...?

(25) How old are you? _____ Years

(26) Are you....? White Black Caribbean

Black African Black Other Indian

Pakistani Bangladeshi Chinese

Asian Other (Please State) _____

Thank You For Your Time

Appendix C
Questionnaire Two



Uxbridge, Middlesex
UB8 3PH. UK
Tel (01895) 203215
Fax(01895) 203217



What Do **YOU** Think?!

Hi!

My name is Susie Weller and over the last year I have been working with students at Medina on a university project to find out the views of teenagers on the Island. You might have filled in a questionnaire last year. I'm now continuing with the project and I'm really interested what you think about the citizenship lessons you've been doing in tutor time. I think it is very important that teenagers get to voice their opinions, and I'm really interested to hear your views on how useful citizenship lessons are to you.

All your responses are completely confidential, so please don't worry about giving honest answers

So that no-one will see your answers before they reach me, after you have finished your questionnaire please fold it in half and seal it with the sticky label provided.

Thank you for all your help - Your opinions are very important

Best Wishes

Susie

Section One - Citizenship Classes

(1) Do you generally feel happy about going to school?

Yes

No

(2) What topics have you been studying in citizenship (in tutor time) in year 10?_

(3) Are you enjoying citizenship lessons so far?

Yes, if yes please go to Q4

No, if no please go to Q5

(4) What do you enjoy about citizenship lessons? For example, what have been your favourite topics & why? _____

(5) What don't you enjoy about citizenship lessons? _____

(6) What is your favourite way of being taught? Eg. Using videos, internet, reading from text books, taught by teacher _____

(7) What issues would you like to be taught about that you haven't already studied? _____

Section Two - Now & in the Future

(8) When do you think the topics you learn in citizenship will be useful to you?

Now, as a teenager, please go to Q9

In the **Future**, please go to Q10

Both Now & in the Future, please go to Q9

(9) Which topics have been useful to you as a teenager? _____

(10) How do you feel you are treated when you are taught citizenship?

- As a child
- As a young person/teenager
- As an adult
- Other (Please state) _____

(11) Have you been involved in any of the following:

- A local campaign eg. skate park, please go to Q12
- Voluntary work, please go to Q12
- Planning/Helping out at a local event/activity, please go to Q12
- Other, please go to Q12
- None of the above, please go to Q15

(12) What was the project/campaign about? _____

(13) Do you think that some of the topics you are learning in citizenship have helped you with the project/ campaign?

- Yes**, if yes please go to Q14
- No**, if no please go to Q15

(14) In what kind of way do you think citizenship lessons have helped? _____

(15) Has taking part in citizenship lessons made you think about taking part in a campaign/ community project or to volunteer in the future?

- Yes**
- No**

Section Three - Rights & Responsibilities

(16) What do you think your **responsibilities** are:

At home _____

At school _____

In your community _____

(17) What **rights** do you have as a teenager? _____

(18) What does the word '**citizenship**' mean to you? _____

(19) If you could give one message to the Prime Minister, Tony Blair about your views on citizenship education what would it be? _____

Section Four - Background Details

(20) Are you..?

Female

Male

(21) How old are you? _____ Years

(22) Are you.....? (please tick appropriate box)

Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix D

Dissemination Report One

'What Do You Think?!'

Teenager's Experiences & Opinions of Citizenship Education



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Introduction

Over the past two years I have been working with teenagers on the Isle of Wight in order to explore their views and experiences of citizenship education. This report forms part of a wider doctoral research project exploring teenager's experiences of social exclusion and citizenship. The work, carried out with around 700 teenagers at Medina High School, focused on the periods before and after the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in September 2002.

Initially, 500 teenager's from years 9, 10, & 11 completed a questionnaire survey, an element of which explored some aspects of citizenship they had already studied as well as their views on the introduction of compulsory citizenship lessons. Twenty teenagers from year 10 then completed week-long diaries and individual and group discussions to investigate these issues further. Finally, a second questionnaire involving just over 175 teenagers in year 10 examined how participants felt about citizenship education five months after the start of the compulsory curriculum.

The teenagers involved chose either to use their real names or pseudonyms.

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Section One: Citizenship Classes

Prior to the introduction of compulsory citizenship education respondents were asked what citizenship-related topics they recalled learning in previous lessons and how useful they felt these subject areas would be to them. 48.6% of respondents recalled learning about human rights whilst around one third remembered learning about the Government, voting, volunteering and community participation. Human rights (23.8%) was deemed the most useful topic to learn whilst volunteering was regarded as the least useful (12.7%). In later discussions participants highlighted areas they would be particularly interested in. Janna outlines one such area:

"The world as a global community, that's quite interesting as well cos you know there's young people half way across the world, like in America who are probably saying exactly the same thing as I am whereas they have got the money and everything ... and they've got the things that I want around them but they want more. It would be quite interesting to see what they have and what we have in comparison. That would be quite good."

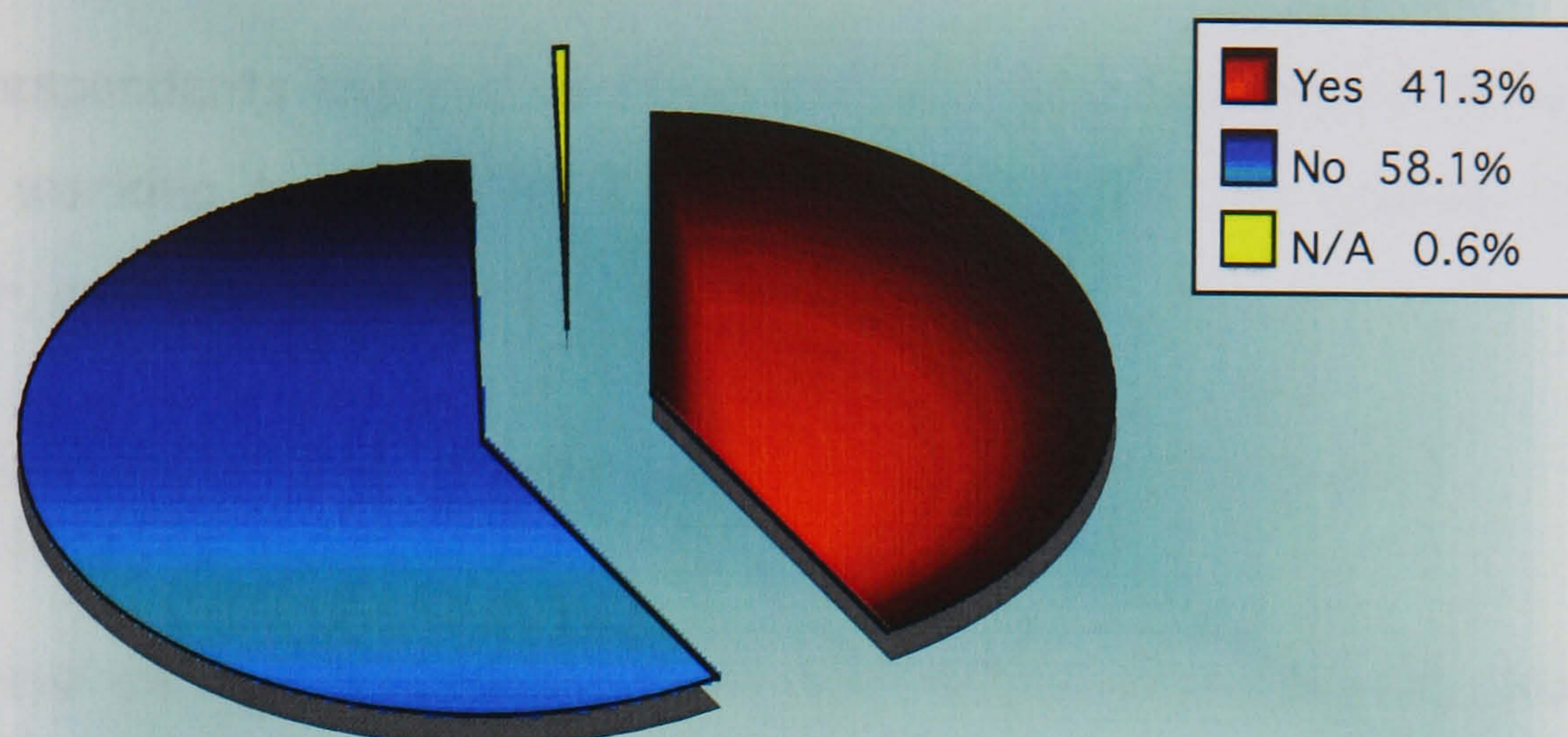
(Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002)

During the five months that participants had been taking citizenship lessons they recalled having studied variety of subjects:

- Alcohol, drugs, smoking and solvent abuse
- Crime and the law
- Sex education, contraception and pregnancy
- The Government
- Rights (including the rights of young people)
- Friendship

At the time of the survey many respondents (58.1%) stated that they were not enjoying citizenship lessons (Figure 1). This lack of interest was evenly spread amongst those who stated that they generally enjoyed school and those who do not enjoy school.

Figure 1. Are you enjoying citizenship lessons so far?



1.1 Good things about citizenship lessons

For those who were enjoying citizenship, subjects such as drugs, alcohol, and smoking (39%) were the most popular as one teenager stated:

"Alcohol - I can relate to the subject - its useful" (unknown)

Issues relating to crime and the law (21%) were also popular:

"Law is my favourite topic. It is interesting and teaches us useful information for later life" (Male, aged 14)

"Knowing my rights is my favourite because I didn't really know what my rights were" (Male, aged 14)

A small minority (9%) stated that they enjoyed everything. In terms of non-topic based enjoyment factors several respondents found citizenship lessons both informative and relevant:

"They are fairly relaxed and informative" (Female, aged 15)

"They're good for our age because we're starting to do these things"
(Male, aged 18)

"I enjoy the fact we get well educated by a good teacher and we learn things that may be useful" (Male, aged 15)

".. we cover issues that are relevant to everyday life" (Male, aged 15)

6% of respondents enjoyed voicing and discussing their opinions, whilst 4% enjoyed working together as a class believing that it brought the class together, as these respondents demonstrate:

"Talking with other class members helps us learn other information"
(Female, aged 14)

"We always discuss the subject thoroughly making sure everyone understands"
(unknown)

Specifically in terms of citizenship education respondents were asked to 'send a message to the prime minister' regarding their views of citizenship education. In total 8% responded with positive comments on the introduction of the subject:

"We should have more lessons" (Female, aged 15)

"That it is a good idea and should be kept for future pupils" (Male, aged 14)

"That it is very interesting and helpful to know what life will be like when you come out of school" (Male, aged 14)

"I think it is a good idea but there's a lot of room for improvement" (Female, aged 15)

1.2 Bad things about citizenship lessons

For those who were not enjoying citizenship lessons the most common reason related to boredom (49%). Several (12%) stated that they had already studied the subject matter:

"So boring and just don't really need to know what we learn because I already know it" (unknown)

Several criticised the format of the lesson complaining that they always have to fill in sheets, or copy down notes:

"Its so boring because you only listen. You don't interact and learn anything you haven't already" (Female, aged 14)

"It is not interesting and the lessons are all of the same format" (Female, aged 14)

A few respondents did not enjoy citizenship lessons for a number of other reasons including disruptive behaviour by other members of the class, and a lack of time to sufficiently cover topics.

When asked to 'send a message to the prime minister' regarding their views of citizenship education the majority of responses (30%) were either negative or suggested areas for improvement:

"Don't bother, no-one pays attention" (Female, aged 14)

"Less work, more group discussions" (Male, aged 15)

"We need to learn about real issues like war, violence" (Female, aged 14)

"Pupils should not be forced into doing it as a GCSE course" (Female, aged 15)

"That it is a waste of time and we shouldn't do it" (Male, aged 15).

1.3 Preferred teaching methods

Most participants preferred to be taught using a variety of methods. The most popular method was the internet (mentioned by 52% of respondents), followed by the use of videos (mentioned by 47% of respondents), and being taught by a teacher (mentioned by 37% of respondents):

"I like using the internet and watching videos and the teaching is good too" (unknown)

"I like the teacher because they can express their own way of learning and teaching" (Female, aged 14)

Other less popular methods included the use of text books (5%), group work (3%) and practicals (2%). In individual and group discussions several teenagers recalled useful and informative lessons they had had with external

visitors. Many teenagers felt participation and discussion were effective ways of learning and remembering information.

"I enjoyed the lesson on alcohol because we measured out the different units".
(Male, aged 14)

"Talking with other class members helps us learn other information". (Female, aged 14)

Funda and Nikki talked about their experiences in science lessons to demonstrate ways in which they enjoyed learning,

Funda: Our teacher he ... 'cos we only have him for one lesson a week he actually sits there and says 'what do you want to do next lesson as long as it's scientific' ... so we get to choose what we do and he'll make it scientific for us

Susie: Do you think you learn more doing it that way?

Funda: Yeah. Its more fun. It sits in your head more as well

Nikki: 'Cos when you're bored in a lesson ...

Funda: It goes in one ear ...

Nikki: ... you don't pay as much attention. Yeah it just goes in one ear and out the other. But if you're enjoying it you remember it. If you're not you just don't

...

(Discussion with Funda & Nikki, 2nd July 2002)

1.4 Further areas for study

Participants in the second questionnaire suggested four key areas they would like to study in the future:

- **Health (19%) including:**
 - Sexual health (Pregnancy, HIV/AIDs and STDs)
 - General physical health (Sport -football and first aid)
 - Mental health (Self harm, bullying)
 - Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, smoking)
- **Transition to Adulthood (6%) including:**
 - Careers/jobs after school
 - Money management and tax
 - Moving out and property
- **Legal Issues (5%) including:**
 - Global aspects
- **Other including:**
 - Child abuse, Community skills, Human rights, Immigration, Pornography, Relationship with friends, Revision, Vandalism

One key issue raised by several teenagers was relevancy. Although much of citizenship education is centred around creating future responsible citizens participants stated that it was essential that they learnt issues of relevance to their present lives. Several participants suggested that they would like to learn more about current affairs. Despite this many felt that citizenship education would be more useful to them in the future.

Section Two: Now & in the Future

Respondents were asked when they felt the topics they learnt in citizenship would be of use to them (Figure. 2). A minority of respondents (16.1%) believed that citizenship education would be directly useful to them now as teenagers. Most (62.6%) felt that the subject matter would be useful both now and in the future, whilst 20.6% believed they would only be of value for the future:

Rammstein Nut: *Future, cos um ... when I'm about 18 I'll have to find out about politics and elections and that sort of thing ...*

Susie: *Yeah*

Rammstein Nut: *... and court ... going to court and stuff ... community 'cos I'll be older and more involved hopefully. And also the EU ...*

Susie: *Why ... why do you think you'll be more involved in the community we you're ...*

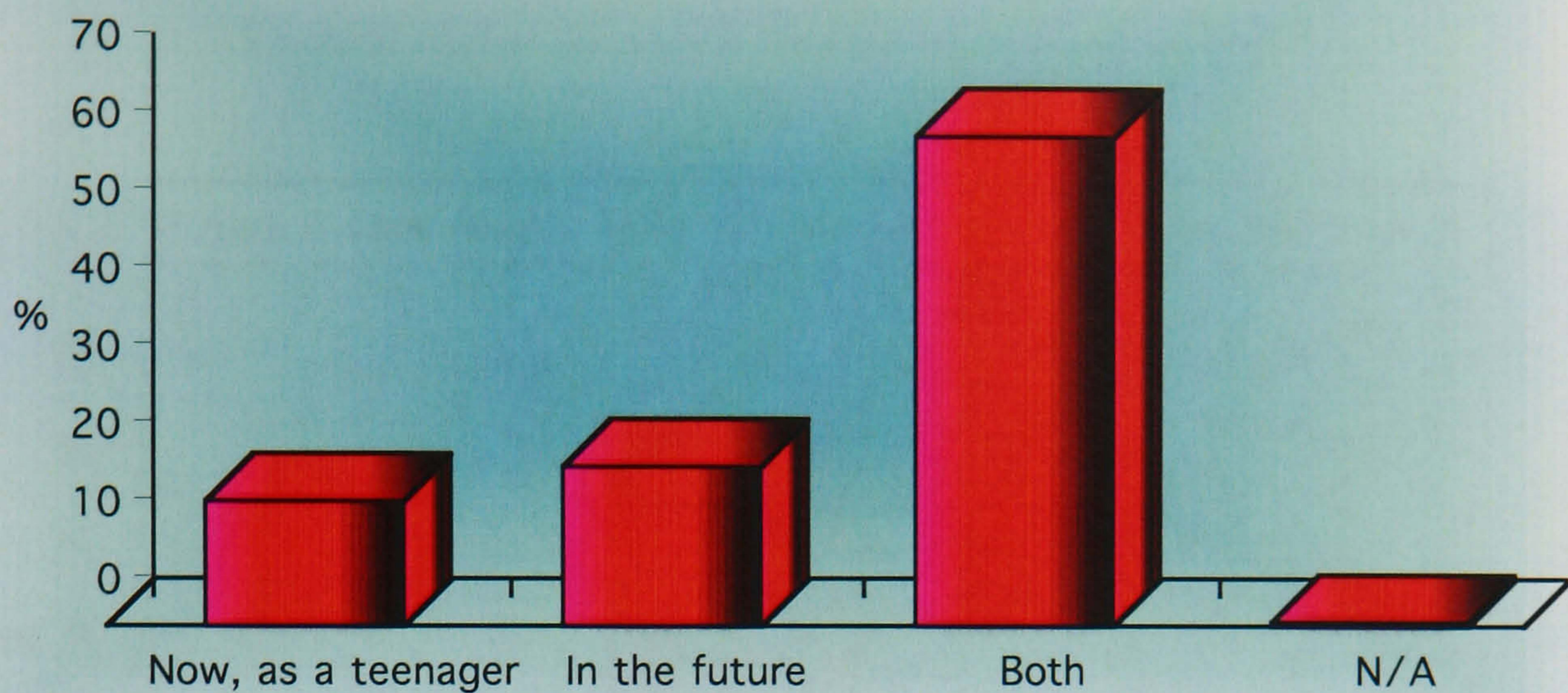
Rammstein Nut: *I'm not sure ...*

Susie: *... older?*

Rammstein Nut: *.. probably cos .. I don't know ... I'll probably be a parent ... so I'll have to be more, you know, involved with the community like primary school's the school in [village] and there's lots of things that go round with that ... assemblies and you know, like the whole community's based around primary really cos you know, its like a little youth bit ... and everything ... so everybody goes round that so that's really important.*

(Discussion with Rammstein Nut, 2nd July 2002)

Figure 2. When will citizenship be useful to you?



The majority (71%) of participants felt that alcohol, drugs and smoking were the most useful topics to learn as teenagers. Sex education (19%) and law and order (19%) were also deemed to be useful to participants now, as two respondents suggested:

"Sex, education, drugs and drink so we know what we're getting ourselves into"
(Male, aged 14)

"Law because I'm not from this country and didn't know what my rights were"
(Female, aged 15)

A minority (7%) believed that all the subject matter they had studied was of value to teenagers, highlighting the broader value:

"Making your mind up about things" (unknown)

2.1 How are teenagers viewed through citizenship education

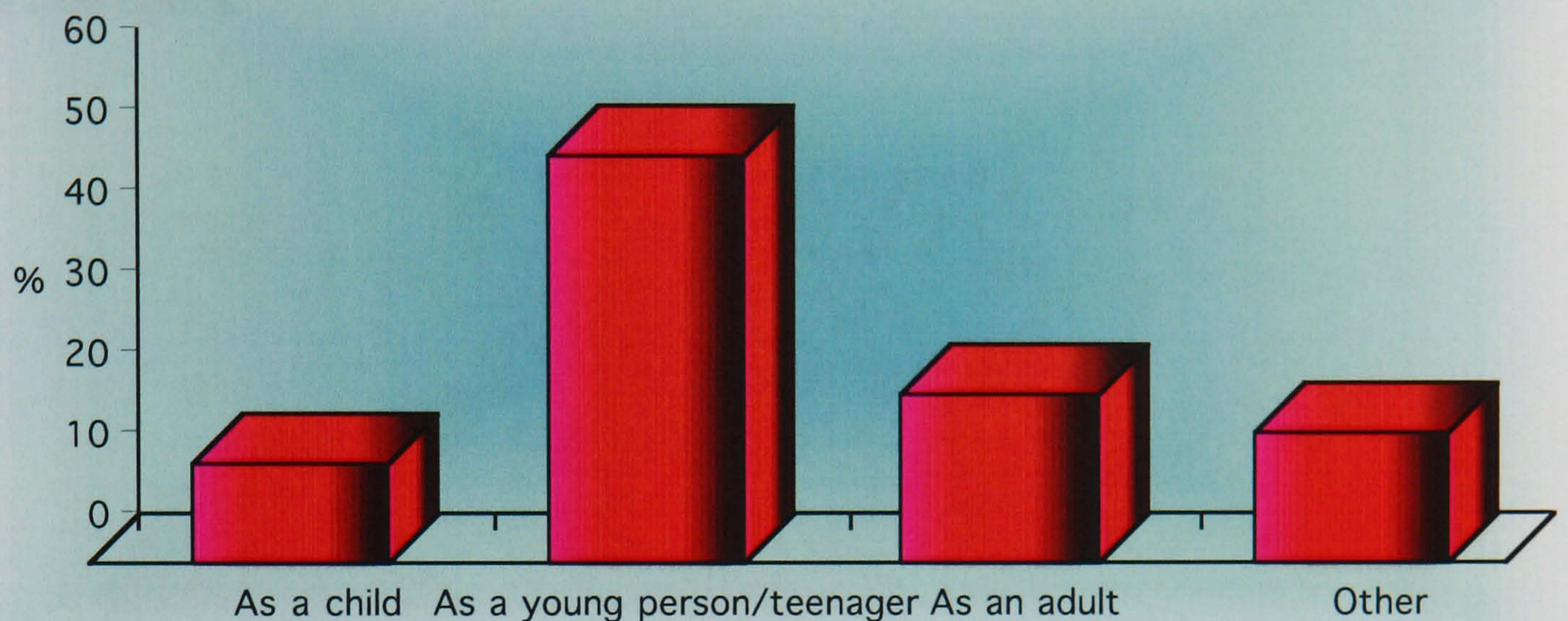
The survey asked teenagers how they felt they were treated within such lessons, as the development of citizenship education often assumes that teenagers are 'human becomings'. This was, for example, reinforced by one teenagers comment:

"As someone who needs to learn" (Female, aged 14)

Most (71.5%) of those surveyed (Figure. 3) felt that they were treated

either as young people or adults in citizenship classes with only 12.2% feeling they were treated like children.

Figure 3. How do you feel you are treated when taught citizenship?



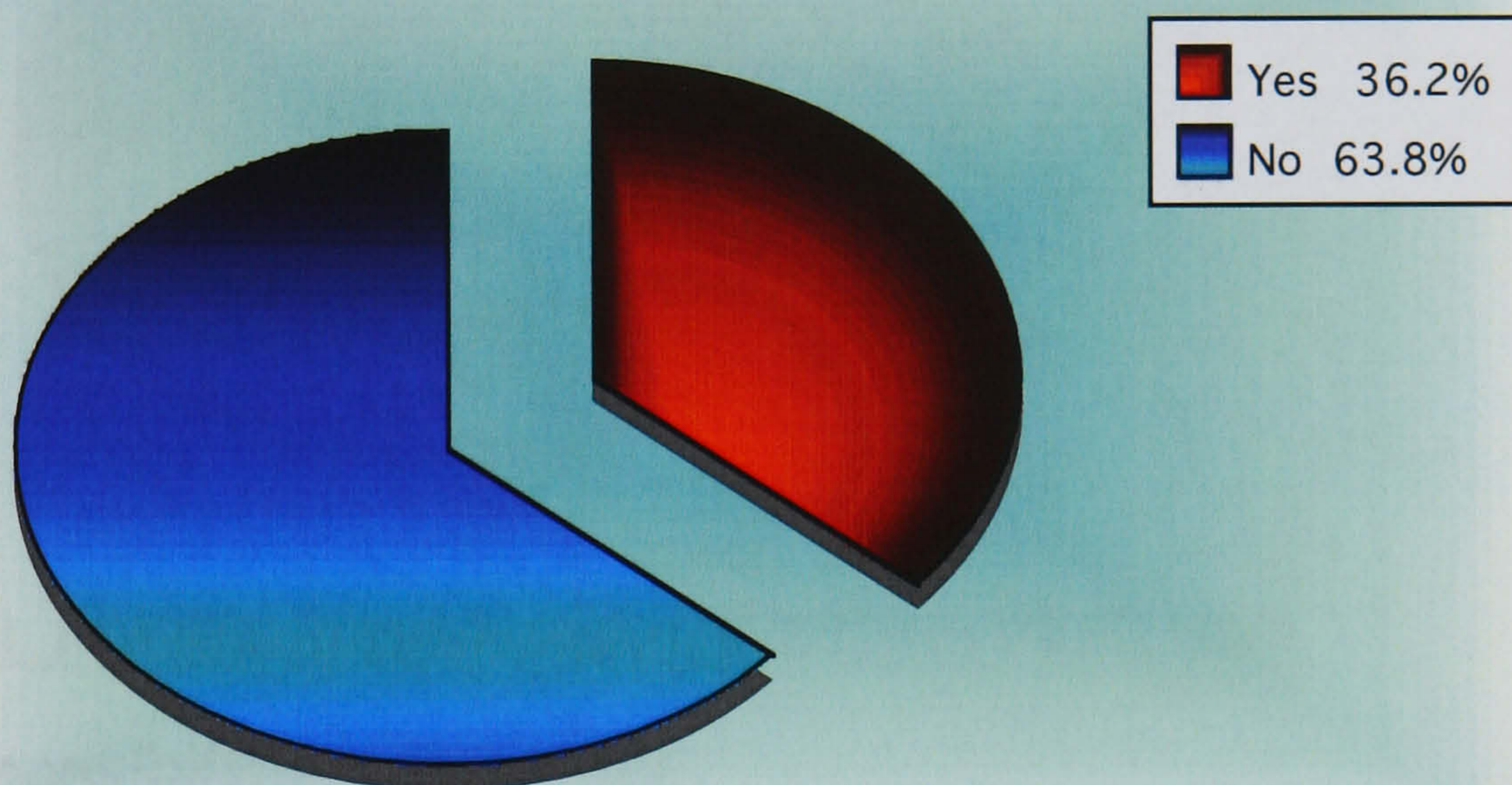
2.2 Participation

In the first questionnaire respondents were asked if they felt learning about citizenship would encourage them to be interested in their communities. From those who responded 30.5% felt it would make them more interested.

Overall 38% of respondents had participated in their communities in some way. The most popular means of involvement (20%) was in a local campaign. Predominantly such activity was in the form of developing a local skatepark and was overwhelmingly carried out by male teenagers. Several teenagers (9%) had been involved in planning a local event, for example painting a mural, helping to maintain local rock concerts, or involvement in a bid for money to improve the local environment. 8% of respondents were involved in voluntary work. This ranged from fund raising to helping out at a local youth club. On average boys were more likely (51%) to participate in their communities than girls (38%) although the former tend to be primarily involved in planning skateparks whilst girls are involved in a wider variety of activities.

Just over one third (36.2%) of those who had participated in a local project/campaign/voluntary work believed that the topics they had been learning in citizenship had helped them with their project or campaign (Figure. 4). Furthermore, those who had participated in a community activity were more likely to state that learning citizenship was more useful to them now as teenagers.

Figure 4. Has citizenship education helped you participate?



Eighteen respondents outlined the ways in which they felt citizenship lessons had aided their project or campaign. Some responses suggested that learning citizenship helped with practical issues, for example:

"What to let in a skatepark" (Male, aged 15)

"In law e.g. how we can campaign for a skatepark in a proper way" (Male, aged 14)

Lessons in citizenship were also valuable in developing wider skills which could be applied to local participation:

"I think it makes you more sensible" (Female, aged 14)

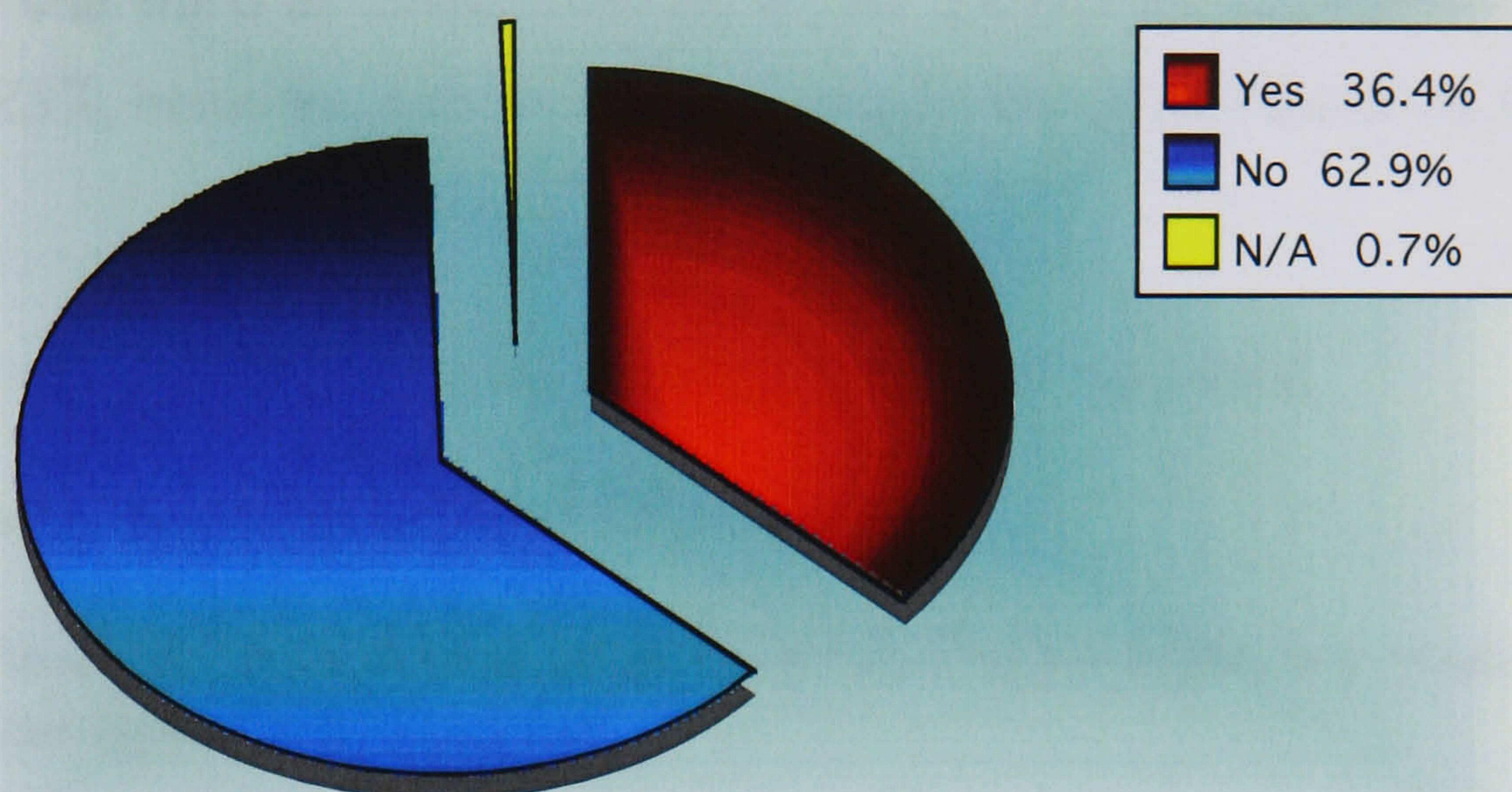
"Responsibility" (Male, aged 14)

"They've taught you about the outside world" (Male, aged 14)

"They make me more aware" (Female, aged 15)

From the entire sample population just over one third (36.4%) believed that taking part in citizenship lessons had made them think about taking part in a campaign / community project or to volunteer in the future (Figure. 5).

Figure 5. Will citizenship lessons encourage future participation?



Section Three: Rights and Responsibilities

3.1 Responsibilities at school

At school 51% of participants felt that they had a responsibility to complete their work, to learn and to do their best:

"To do well, work hard and attend" (Female, aged 14)

"Learning and letting others learn" (Female, aged 15)

Furthermore, 26% believed that their responsibilities lay with behaviour. These behavioural aspects included allowing others to work without disruption; respecting the school rules, uniform and building; being sensible and responsible for their own actions; and not truanting but arriving at each class prepared for lesson:

"To learn without being disruptive in class" (Male, aged 14)

"Setting examples for year nine" (Male, aged 14)

"To be responsible for my actions" (Female, aged 15)

A small minority (3%) felt that their responsibilities lie with looking after friends whilst 3% believed they had no responsibilities at school.

3.2 Rights

Just over one third of those involved in the survey did not respond to this question. 23%, however, felt that as a teenager they had few or no rights at all:

"Not many - not a child but too young to do adult things" (unknown)

"None. Thanks very much Mr Blair" (Male, aged 14)

"We don't have a lot because everybody thinks that all teenagers are trouble makers so we get less rights" (Girl, aged 14)

A small proportion (8%) disagreed stating that they felt they had a lot of rights.

In terms of specific rights for teenagers 7% responded by suggesting they had the right to an education, whilst 6% believed they had the right to be respected, and a further 6% stated they had the right to have their opinions listened to:

"Right to education. Right to be treated equally" (Female, aged 14)

"The right to get asked what we think, not just at school" (Female, aged 15)

"The right to our own opinion and beliefs" (Female, aged 15)

"Right to learn, right to be protected. Right to free speech. Right of opinion" (Male, aged 14)

3.3 Expressing opinions at school

In in-depth discussions several teenagers noted the effectiveness of the school council as a mean of participating in school life and citizenship. Janna stated that the school was good at listening to students and noted why the

school council is important:

Susie: *Do you think the school council is quite effective?*

Janna: *Oh yeah, 'cos then [teacher] gets to hear our views on what we think is good for the school because as we know ... 'cos we're like part of it. Its hard for him to ... be in our shoes even though he has been, you know its hard for him to like the same stuff we like. Its hard for him to imagine what its like for us and stuff.*

(Discussion with Janna, 5th July 2002)

Loki and Agnuz highlight one example of how the school council can respond to teenager's needs:

Loki: *We did ask for some pool tables, didn't we?*

Agnuz: *Oh yeah*

Loki: *We asked the teachers um ... the student council asked the teachers if we could have some pool tables er ... we got them.*

(Discussion with Loki, Agnuz & Bob Stevens, 3rd July 2002)

Some respondents had not found the school council effective,

Susie: *Do you use the school council or anything like that?*

Kimbo: *No I don't use the school council*

Kat: *No*

Kimbo: *No 'cos teachers never listen so*

(Discussion with Kat, Kaz & Kimbo, 4th July 2002)

Kitty Sandoral and Gumdrop suggested that not everyone was prepared to take the school council seriously which can deter other teenagers from participating,

Susie: *So do you find the school council effective?*

Gumdrop: *Um ... yeah I've never really asked for anything*

Kitty Sandoral: *Never asked for anything. We used to and you just like asked something and you'd get annoying people like [boy's name] going can we paint the playground a different colour?'*

Gumdrop: *People do ask for really stupid things. So they're not always sure whether you're being serious or something*

(Discussion with Kitty Sandoral & Gumdrop, 2nd July 2002)

Further Information

This report provides a summary of teenager's diverse views and experiences of citizenship education. Other aspects of this research project explore teenager's citizenship within their wider communities. For further details please contact:

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Appendix E

Dissemination Report Two

"What Do You Think?!"

Teenager's Experiences of Participation on the Isle of Wight



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Introduction

Over the past three years I have been working with teenagers on the Isle of Wight exploring their experiences of community participation. Such issues are particularly significant in light of the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in September 2002.

Furthermore, teenagers are often portrayed as apathetic, for example, not caring about their surroundings. This report highlights a selection of participant's views, concerns and ideas particularly in relation to participation in local decision-making. This forms part of a wider doctoral research project exploring teenager's experiences of social exclusion and citizenship.

The research was carried out with around 700 teenagers on the Island and used a variety of methods including large scale questionnaire surveys; individual and group discussions; photography and diary completion by participants; a phone-in discussion on Isle of Wight radio and web board discussions. The teenagers involved chose either to use their real names or pseudonyms.

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Section One: Being Left Out

1.1 Belonging & community

In December 2001 approximately 500 teenagers (aged 13 - 16) completed a questionnaire survey which explored their experiences of participation and exclusion in community decision-making on the Island. Only one third of respondents felt they actually belonged in their communities, with 40% undecided on the matter. In later in-depth discussions Chloe & Katie highlighted different areas of the Island which do not foster a 'sense of community':

Susie: Where you live do you feel there's like um ... a sense of community?

Chloe/Katie: No (Laughs)

Chloe: I live um ... down the road. Its like on the Fairlee estate ... down Fairlee Road and its like Pan's opposite ... there's no sense of community at all really.

Katie: Yeah. Cos I live in East Cowes but there's not that many people living there really compared to Newport, is there?

Chloe: ... mostly just old people

Susie: ... do you feel you belong to the community there?

Katie: Yeah. I sort of do

Chloe: I sort of do but not as much as I did when I lived in Freshwater ...

Katie: Yeah

Chloe: ... 'Cos that was like smaller and everybody knew everybody else

(Discussion with Chloe & Katie, aged 13, 3rd July 2002)

Chloe feels that some areas of the Island do have a 'sense of community' much like the idyllic view of rural life, where communities are close-knit and inclusive. An idea reinforced by Kimbo and Kat:

Susie: Do you kind of feel that you belong to that community?

Kimbo: I do really but 'cos I've like known everyone down there so long. There's like everywhere you go like 'all right', yeah so ...

Kat: Yeah same for me as well

(Discussion with Kimbo & Kat, aged 13 & 14, 4th July 2002)

Nearly one third of those surveyed described places in their communities where they did not feel safe. These included very public spaces such as outside shops, as well as specific areas/neighbourhoods. Even though Funda had spent most of her life living in London she and Nikki felt that the crime

rate on the Island was relatively high:

Nikki: Its supposed to have a low crime rate but I think its really high

Funda: I think its really high because ...

Nikki: I think its high. Its only a little Island

Funda: In Freshwater ... since I've been in Freshwater which is just over a year something has happened every week

(Discussion with Nikki & Funda, aged 13 & 14, 2nd July 2002)

Many teenagers outlined areas of contention within their local communities. Whilst these were over a variety of issues one key area of conflict lay with skateboarding as this entry on the 'iwight' web forum highlights:

"It seems the whole aim of the isle of wight council is to look after the interest of the older/elderly citizens and forget about the youngsters, so long as the youngsters are swept away during cowes week when all the rich visitors come, nobody knows any different. It even seems the council are trying to stop legitimate sports. I hear skateboarding is now banned from roads if performed 'dangerously'. I'd love to know how 'dangerous' is going to be defined, I'd also like to see what the teenagers who used to go skateboarding will do now? although I can probably guess. How are the youth supposed to get any experience of a 'life' at all when all the IOW councils resources are aimed almost completely at the elderly population".
(Entry on 'iwight' web forum, 12th February 2003)

This example represents one of the ways in which many teenagers feel marginalised and left out of their communities, primarily because of their age. Their activities and interests are seen to be in conflict with the rest of the community. As a result, young people often feel undervalued.

1.2 Challenging stereotypes

Further frustration arises when teenagers feel that they are being stereotyped. This occurred in two ways. In the first, some participants felt that because of their age they were blamed for local problems and often unfairly labelled as 'deviant' or 'trouble'. Some participants highlighted examples of police surveillance of their activities, especially skateboarders. Agnuz, Loki, & Bob Stevens discussed suspicious shopkeepers who monitored their behaviour particularly for shop lifting:

Susie: Did you say you had problems going in shops and stuff?

Agnuz: Well sometimes like you can be in a shop looking through stuff and people look at you as if you're nicking stuff ...

Loki: Yeah

Agnuz: ... and you're just looking

Loki: Its scares you. You're like er..

Agnuz: Like if you just pick up and look at a CD they'll like look at you.

(Discussion with Agnuz, Loki & Bob Stevens, aged 13-14, 3rd July 2002)

Many teenagers also felt stereotyped by local decision-makers who responded to what they perceived to be the needs of teenagers. The most common example was, again, skateparks. Many felt that these had been constructed in response to a lack of facilities for teenagers without recognising that young people are a diverse social group with many different needs and interests as Kitty Sandoral and Gumdrop emphasise:

Kitty Sandoral: Yeah it would be a lot better cos we'd have more things and stuff and people ... it's like adults design all these things but they don't really know what we want 'cos ...

Gumdrop: ... they think every single person under 16 wants to go to skateparks ... Yeah everybody wants to go to skateparks. Like not everybody's into skating

(Discussion with Kitty Sandoral & Gumdrop, aged 13 & 14, 2nd July 2002)

These sentiments were echoed by Chloe:

"The council seem to think we're like happy with the skate park but not everybody skates".

(Discussion with Chloe, aged 13, 3rd July 2002)

Many participants believed that it was essential to involve children and young people in planning processes in order to develop facilities and services which met *their* needs.

1.3 (Not) being heard

Only 20% of young people surveyed had ever been asked their opinion on an issue relating to their community. Of those 20% the matters discussed included: ideas for improving communities; crime & disorder; traffic & transport; and skate parks.

Despite the idea of teenage apathy, three quarters of teenagers surveyed would like to be able to express their opinions on local issues, as Chloe & Katie discuss:

Katie: *I think like more participation between the community and more opinions and stuff about what needs to be done ...*

Chloe: *Yeah. We need to be asked our opinions on things*

(Discussion with Chloe & Katie, aged 13, 3rd July 2002)

Only 12% of respondents had been involved in a youth forum/council. Very few teenagers were aware of the 'Wight2BHeard' youth parliament. A young people-centred phone-in discussion on Isle of Wight radio revealed that the youth parliament had had positive impacts on some teenagers lives. It does not, however, appear to have impacted upon many of the participants in this research. Indeed, several were sceptical that it would have any real effect:

"It can't be that effective cos nothing ever changes ... Yeah ... I don't actually think they'd listen. I think they'd just make out as if they're listening but not actually do anything about it". (Discussion with Nikki, aged 13, 2nd July 2002)

This cynicism was reinforced by past experiences of consultation as Kitty Sandoral highlights:

Kitty Sandoral: *I've done like a couple of surveys and stuff ... and people like drop things through your door and stuff like that. And I've done um ... like through school and stuff people just ask you your opinion on things.*

Susie: *Do you think your opinion has ever been listened to?*

Kitty Sandoral: *No (Laughs) they listen to you but they don't actually do anything about it. Do you know what I mean? It was a waste of time. I mean they come in and ask you something and then they just leave it at that. That's all that they do and they don't do anything about it ... follow it up or anything.*

Susie: *So is there anyone in particular you think who's kind of ignored you?*

Kitty Sandoral: *I did a survey for the council asking about what they ... if we could have anything new in Ryde what would they want and they didn't do anything I don't think. They just ... they did the survey I think and um ... I handed it in and all that stuff, and I didn't get any reply or anything and they didn't follow anything through.*

(Discussion with Kitty Sandoral, aged 13, 2nd July 2002)

Kitty Sandoral's experience is not uncommon. A lack of feedback renders

many teenagers feeling that either their opinion has been ignored or has not been taken seriously. Many would prefer to receive a response stating that it is not, for example, financially possible to fulfil their requests rather than no feedback at all.

Section Two: Participation

Overall 38% of respondents had participated in their communities in some way. The most popular means of involvement (20%) was in a local campaign. Predominantly such activity was in the form of developing a local skatepark and was overwhelmingly carried out by male teenagers. Several teenagers (9%) had been involved in planning a local event, for example painting a mural, helping to maintain local rock concerts, or involvement in a bid for money to improve the local environment. 8% of respondents were involved in voluntary work. This ranged from fund raising to helping out at a local youth club. This section outlines three examples demonstrating good participatory practice.

2.1 The 'busie'

Several teenagers from Chale talked about the importance of the 'busie' or bus stop (Figure One) as a place for teenagers to meet and socialise in. Kat begins the story of the 'busie' by highlighting this:

"The 'busie' is a good place. We all hang out ... and say how we feel about people. It is the only thing we can really do because there is nothing to do in Chale. We have some fields but no park or anything like that"

(Kat, aged 14, Diary extract, Tuesday)

Not only is the 'busie' an important place to hang out in but it is an arena in which teenagers have been able to participate as active citizens:

"The bus shelter was going to get knocked down because everyone was writing like horrible words in it and none of the people round the estate really liked it so we made the decision that we were going to keep it tidy and we were going to paint it so all the graffiti and so the council gave us the money to buy the spray paint."

(Discussion with Kat, 4th July 2002)



Figure One. The 'Busie', Photographed by Kat, aged 14

2.2 The bike shed

The bike shed in East Cowes was an important place for Kimbo and Kaz. It was not only a place for them to spend time socially but, again, an arena in which they had participated as active citizens saving the facility from permanent closure and raising funds:

Kimbo: The bike shed is like ... on Wednesdays there's like food there and people go down there to play pool and stuff.

Kaz: Its like a youth club

Susie: Oh right, yeah

Kaz: Everyone just goes in there and chills

Kimbo: Yeah I've been involved with the bike shed. We had to do this thing 'cos it was going to get shut down ... so it got shut down for a little while but its open now. We liked decided everything. They used to build bikes there and that but they don't no more

Kaz: All the people that go there like the children and that have more decisions than what the adults do so they get control of it basically. But we do have adults help to supervise it ...

(Discussion with Kimbo & Kaz, aged 13 & 14, 4th July 2002)

2.3 Skate parks

Skate parks are seemingly an ideal way of exercising political agency within

a contemporary space, relevant to many teenager's lives. Kendal has actively campaigned for a skatepark in Ventnor (Figure Two), raising both finances and awareness. Since it has been built Kendal has been helping to maintain the skatepark's website:

Kendal: ... we all helped the skaters and stuff. We helped raise money and stuff.

Susie: How did you do that? How did you go about that?

Kendal: We just like ... we got jars and stuff and put them in shops ... like in the skate shop in [town] ... put a jar in there for people and we just ... people signed petitions to like ... we went round shops signing petitions so we could get it done. Hopefully we're getting another bit done on the skate park ...

Susie: Really?

Kendal: Yeah so that's quite cool. At the moment me and my Dad are like doing a website for it ... we've just recently had a competition down there and there's some pictures on that.

(Discussion with Kendal, aged 14, 4th July 2002)



Figure Two. Ventnor skate park, photographed by Kendal, aged 13

These examples demonstrate just some of the ways in which many teenagers challenge the idea of teenage apathy. This form of participation, I believe, often goes unrecognised.

Section Three: Ideas for Improving the Island

3.1 More things to do

Overwhelmingly, three-quarters of teenagers surveyed said that there was not enough to do in their communities, with 89% calling for more activities/facilities. Whilst existing facilities were acknowledged, many felt that there was not enough to do during bad weather or in the evenings,

"If I could change where I live I would make more things for young people to do - youth club open more and at weekend ... I would make more places indoors for young people e.g. cafes aimed at young people ... I would make more open spaces - for recreation" (Gumdrop, aged 14, Diary Extracts)

Much discussion revolved around creating facilities not just for teenagers but ones which would have positive benefits on the whole community. Kendal, Tommey and Matt, for example, suggested that building a large sports facility encompassing a large sports hall, badminton and tennis courts and a 50 metre swimming pool would allow the Island to enter the Island Games, thus bringing revenue for the tourist and transport industries. Alternatively, many teenagers called for a large, centrally located, indoor skatepark. This again could be used for national competitions:

"What I would basically like/love to see would be an indoor skatepark with a 'chill out' room which you could sit in and have a rest after skating. In this room you could purchase (cheap) food and drink and chat with mates"
(Duey, aged 13, Diary Extract)

The cost of both activities and, more importantly, transport was a particular concern of teenagers on the Island. For those under the age of 17 accessing transport can be a problem as Chloe and Katie discuss:

Chloe: *Transport. Um ... buses are really, really expensive cos um ... most people go to beaches in Sandown or Freshwater ... and it costs lots and lots of money ... just to get there. It used to be like a quid when I was little but now its like £1.55. You can't spend that much like going there and coming back ... just for a day out.*

Katie: *And that's half as well, isn't it? £1.55*

Chloe: *Mmm ... and the age I am now, 13, they all think you're an adult so you have*

to pay full prices sometimes ... which is really annoying.
(Discussion with Chloe & Katie, 3rd July 2002)

3.2 Facilities which don't stereotype teenagers

As outlined earlier in this report many teenagers are frustrated by stereotypes of their perceived interests. Kaz and Kimbo suggest that the emphasis on building skateparks has neglected the needs of many girls. They also highlight a lack of facilities for older children and young people and call for the paddling pool in East Cowes (Figure. Three) to be altered to accommodate their needs:

Kaz: *Well in East Cowes I would ... you know the paddling pool ... I would change that into a big swimming pool*

Kimbo: *So would I*

Kaz: *Yeah 'cos its like all for little kids and its too cold for little babies as well cos they always scream when they get in ... Like 'cos most things, say the skate park, that's really for boys so there's nothing like for girls to do ...*

(Discussion with Kaz & Kimbo, 4th July 2002)



Figure Three. The paddling pool, photographed by Katie, aged 13

3.4 Hearing as well as listening

The fundamental message that many teenagers wished to express to local decision-makers was that it was not only important to listen to their views and needs but to create ways in which children and young people can actively

participate in decisions which affect their lives and the wider community. It is also important teenager's current participation, whether it be conventional or not, be recognised in order to challenge and break down stereotypes of teenager's as trouble-makers:

"One point which has been made a couple of times is the decision making power that the Island's Youth possess, or rather the lack of. The power to make decisions is perhaps something which the Island's Youth need, to give them a sense of responsibility and respect. The Youth see the council as the big bad, the authority that doesn't listen. Currently the only power the Youth have is to suggest and complain to the council, they have no direct power or influence over changes to the island. What I suggest is that the Island's younger generation is given the responsibility to make decisions. They should be encouraged to come along to local council meetings to air their views, and they must be listened to. The Island's current demographic is weighed down very much by the elderly, and Youth are seen by many as inferior, but we must remember this is their island too! Lets encourage the voices of tomorrow to help shape this island into a place they are proud of, not one they are resentful of".

(Entry on the 'iwight' web forum, 26th March 2003)

Finally, as the above entry on the 'iwight' web forum argues, providing teenagers with opportunities to participate, if they so wish, are fundamental in preventing resentment and disillusionment between young people and local decision-makers.

Further Information

This report outlines just some of the findings from a wider doctoral research project. For further details please contact:

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