Everyday Spaces, Everyday Lives: An Exploration of the Regulation and Children's Negotiation of their Childhoods in the Home, School and Public Space

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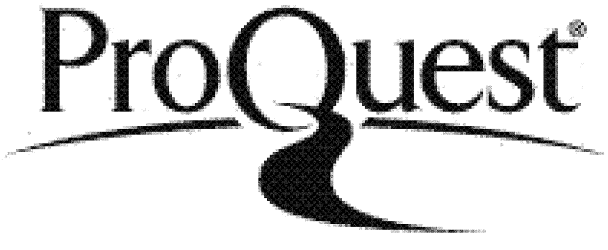

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Summary

Greater moves are being made towards promoting and respecting children's participation and rights within UK society. Yet these are set against a backdrop of moral panics surrounding 'anti-social' 'youth culture' and as children's lives are becoming increasingly subject to adult surveillance and control. This thesis is an in-depth exploration of 10 and 11 year-old 'middle-class' children's everyday lives (in the home, school and public space) at a time when multiple, shifting and contradictory representations of children and childhood abound.

Committed to privileging the children's own voices, choices and ideas, this thesis reveals how by beginning with a broad research aim and methodological design, the children were enabled to play an active and directive role in the substantive and methodological approach of the study. The research adopts a theoretically eclectic approach, drawing on the 'new' social studies of childhood; notions of discourses and discursive practices; subjectivity and 'the self'; positioning, subject positions and agency; relations of power and resistance; and the concept of 'generational relations'.

Foregrounding the children's own agendas, the thesis reveals how heavily these children's lives are dominated by adult regulation, surveillance and control. Throughout this thesis, however, discourses of fun and freedom are juxtaposed with discourses of boredom and control. Indeed, fun and freedom were central tenets of the children's own theorisations of childhood. Whilst examining how constrained and protected these children's lives are in the home, school classroom, playground and public space, therefore, a significant part of this thesis explores the pockets of fun and freedom that these children found or created in their lives. I thus illustrate, how dominant discourses of children and childhood and relations of power and resistance both enable and constrain children's everyday negotiation of and participation within different spaces, relations/hips and time.

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Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis explores 10 and 11 year-old children's everyday lives[1] and experiences across and within the home, school and public space. Based on a 9-month participatory study which privileged children's own 'voices', the thesis traces the ways that they negotiate their childhoods in a world dominated by both adults and competing contradictory discourses of children and childhood. In the chapters that follow I thus examine how different girls and boys make sense of their childhoods, and the multiple and contradictory ways in which they position themselves/are positioned in different relations/hips, spaces and time.

1.1 The Development and Significance of the Research

The original starting points of this research are a far cry from the research that was actually conducted and is (re)presented in this thesis. When I first began my doctorate I was working within the field of psychology. My initial research aim was to explore 10 and 11 year-old children's representations of authority figures in the home and school using participant observation, focus groups and story writing exercises as data generation techniques. My interest in this topic and motives for this methodological approach stemmed primarily from my dissatisfaction with much of the existing psychological research literature on children's perceptions of authority figures that I was reading at the time. Specifically, this research tended only to compare a broad range of authority figures and directives across a number of different social contexts very generally (see for example, Kim, 1998; Laupa, 1991, 1995; Laupa and Turiel, 1986, 1993; Tiask, 1986). Moreover, it failed to attend in adequate depth or in a way that was sensitive enough to capture children's own representations of specific authority figures; generating standardised forms of data that could be quantitatively analysed using relevant statistical packages.

At the beginning of my doctorate studies I was also searching for a theoretical framework that could best help me to conceptualise children and their childhood experiences and perceptions. This search led me to the growing theoretical, empirical

[1] By 'everyday lives' I mean their typical and routine day-to day lives.

and methodological research literature located within the (now not so) 'new' sociology/social studies of childhood which recognised childhood as socially constructed and children as active agents who should be studied and respected in their own right (Alanen and Mayall, 2001; Brannen and O' Brien, 1995; Caputo, 1995; Christensen and James, 2000; Corsaro, 1997; Harden *et al.*, 2000a; Hill, 1997; James and Prout, 1990; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; Lewis and Lindsay, 2000; Mayall, 1994, 2002; Oakley, 1994; Qvortrup *et al.*, 1994). Engaging with this literature, my theoretical and methodological standpoint began to shift and develop along with the substantive focus of my research. Situating myself within this field, I followed academics like Grover who contends that there is a need:

"to offer children the opportunity to define themselves throughout collaboration in the research effort, rather than to be defined solely by adult interests, biases and agendas" (Grover, 2004: 83).

Refining and redesigning my research, I thus strove to enable the children to participate in the study in ways of their choosing. I also began with a broader overarching research aim ('What is it like being a 10/11 year-old child?'[2]) to enable them to address issues of importance to them and to shape the substantive focus of the research. Moreover, I attempted to create opportunities for some of the children to be involved in initial processes of analysis, and following my fieldwork sought all of the children's views on their involvement in the research as a whole. In Chapter 3, I provide a more detailed discussion of the methodological aspects and approaches of the research and offer an honest and reflective account of the children's participation within it. In doing so, I hope to contribute to the growing body of existing participatory research 'with' children and inform future research in this field.

As well as contributing methodologically however, I also hope that this research contributes substantively to the 'social studies of childhood'. Indeed, although some researchers have focused on children's accounts of their lives as they are lived within and across two different spaces (e.g. the home and school) (see for example, Harden, 2000; Mayall, 1994b, 1994c, 2002), more commonly, research in this field focuses

[2] With a view to exploring their representations of different everyday spaces and relationships in their everyday lives.

on one setting (e.g. the home, classroom, playground or public space). These sometimes appear in edited collections alongside research conducted in different social spaces (see for example, Edwards, 2002; Christensen and O'Brien, 2002; Holloway and Valentine, 2000). By exploring 10 and 11 year olds' lives in the home, school classroom, playground and public space, this thesis brings together these children's accounts of the four main spaces in their typical day-to-day lives. In so doing, it focuses on everyday issues and concerns salient to the children themselves and reveals the multiple, shifting and contextual nature of individual children's childhoods.

1.2 The Aim and Purpose of the Research

The aim and purpose of the research was to explore one group of 10 and 11 year-old children's accounts of their childhoods in different spaces and relationships in their lives. A pivotal part of this research was the methodological approach it adopted; specifically, its concern with foregrounding the children's voices, choices and ideas. As highlighted above, my intention was to contribute methodologically and substantively to the participatory research field and social studies of childhood respectively. It was not to suggest implications for policies and practices.

The majority of children who participated in the study were 'white', 'middle-class' Catholics and lived in two-parent families in South Wales. The racial composition of the school that the children attended was predominately 'white'. Indeed, Renold (1999: 5) has highlighted that there are many rural and semi-rural primary schools in the UK with largely 'white' pupil populations. In fact, the National Welsh Assembly for Wales reported that 96.7% of all pupils aged 5 or over in maintained primary, secondary and special educational needs schools in Wales during 2002/2003 were of 'white' origin (National Welsh Assembly for Wales, 2004). With regards to social class, whilst many child policies are centred on the 'needy' and improving their lives, it is important to also consider the accounts of children who are not the specific targets of such initiatives. Although acknowledging the productiveness of studies with multi-racial, class and age samples, I would thus argue that there is a place for studies such as this one, that focus on a relatively homogenous group of 'white' privileged 'middle-class' children. These could exist alongside studies such as Connolly's (1998), which explores racism and young children's gendered identities

in a multi-ethnic, inner city primary school. I want to stress, however, that although class, gender, race and age are inevitably and inextricably bound up with children's childhoods, and these are acknowledged throughout this thesis, the primary purpose of the study was not specifically to explore one or more of these constitutive parts of children's identities. Nor, as an in-depth study of one particular group of children, is it intended to be representative of all 10 and 11 year-old children's experiences and perceptions. However, as I explore in Chapter 3, both the substantive and methodological 'findings' can be compared and contrasted with existing literature and used to inform future childhood research.

With these things in mind, and the general research aim outlined above, the more specific research questions that this thesis seeks to address and explore are presented below:

- How do children portray and articulate what it means to 'be(come) a child' in today's society?
- How are children multiply and contradictorily positioned and actively position themselves as 10/11 year old 'children' in different spaces, relationships and times in their everyday lives?
- How and to what extent do notions of agency and control feature in children's own lives as they are lived in different spaces, relationships and times?
- How does this relatively homogenous group of children differ in their own experiences and theorisations of children and childhood?
- How do children theorise themselves and their own lives in relation to what they conceive as normative notions of children and childhood and those they conceive of as 'Others'?
- To what extent do children's experiences and conceptions on 'be(com)ing a child' resonate/differ with popular notions of children and childhood?

1.3 Structuring the Thesis

Divided into eight chapters, this thesis is made up of a blend of the children's and my own voice, as well as existing theoretical, methodological and substantive literature. These are all given more or less prominence at different times throughout the thesis. Theoretical, methodological and substantive research literature is most prominent, for example, in Chapter 2 and 3. In these two chapters, I locate my own research

amongst existing research literature and outline and explore both the theoretical and methodological concepts and approaches that have drawn upon and utilised to research children's experiences and perspectives. Children's voices are foreground in the four empirical chapters of the thesis. Although containing some excerpts from my own fieldnotes and observations, the majority of data presented in these chapters are extracts from transcribed researcher-facilitated group interviews (to a lesser extent) diaries, photograph discussions and peer-led interviews. All of these were largely organised and (substantively) directed by the children themselves (see Chapter 3 for more detail).

Whilst there were a number of different ways that I could have structured the empirical chapters of this thesis, I chose to (re)present the data according to different social spaces (public, home, school classroom and playground). My reasons for this was to provide some structure and coherence to the children's multiple, partial and messy 'realities' (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of this). This in turn, made the data and indeed (I conceive) the thesis more accessible and appealing to the reader than, for example if the chapters were structured according to specific themes for example, or the children's different friendship groups and accounts. Each chapter thus focuses on very different issues, although key themes run across all of them and cross-linkages and references are between them. As I address in more detail in Chapter 2, however, whilst offering a structure to my thesis, these spaces are rather artificially separated; they are not to be regarded as discrete, independent, or fixed, stable entities.

Within the different empirical chapters, attention is sometimes focused on one or certain groups of children more (or less) than others. This stemmed from my desire to create a thesis that is structured by and that foregrounds the children's (rather than my) own concerns. Different children, for example, tended to address their lives as they are lived in one of the four spaces in particular, or one aspect of their lives in more detail than others. Below I provide a summary of each of the ensuing chapters.

1.4 Chapter Summaries

Having introduced the reader to the research aim and intentions, the purpose of Chapter 2 is to both conceptualise and contextualise children and their childhoods

across the different spaces with which this thesis is concerned. In the first half of the chapter, I discuss and critically explore a number of theoretical concepts and perspectives that together provided me with a framework that enabled me to best make sense of the different ways in which children experience their everyday lives. Adopting an eclectic theoretical approach, I outline how I draw on the 'new' social studies of childhood (socio-cultural perspectives). I also draw on the notion that childhood is constituted within discourse and discursive practices which are bound up with relations of power and resistance (particularly the work of Michael Foucault) together with Bronwyn Davies' concept of positioning, subject positions and agency, to understand and explain how children negotiate and experience their (gendered, classed, sexualised and racialised) childhood identities. Using the notion of 'Generational Relations', the second half of the chapter explores the relational nature of childhood to adulthood and how by living in an adult-centric world, children are subject to heavy (adult-imposed) regulations, government and control. It then contextualises and locates the four empirical chapters within existing literature and representations of children and childhood within public, domestic and school space(s) and introduces the reader to a number of key themes/issues that shape Chapters 4 to 7 of this thesis.

Chapter 3 sets out the methodological aspects and approaches of the research and explores the 'realities' of conducting research 'with' children. Committed to privileging and foregrounding children's own subjective experiences, choices and ideas, I provide an honest and critically reflective account of my endeavours to actively and directly engage the children in the research. The chapter begins by first outlining the research design and introducing the research setting and participants, the practical issues of access and consent together with the epistemological, reflexive, ethical and broader methodological stance I adopted. My research relations/hips with the children are described and the various roles I adopted in the field. An in-depth exploration of each of the data generation techniques (participant observation, researcher facilitated paired/group interviews, peer-led interviews, audio/written diaries and photographs), the way in which they were employed, the productivity of each of them and the children's involvement in them is then provided. The latter part of the chapter is dedicated to describing the analysis process and the way in which the data was made meaningful and (re)presented in this thesis

together with the way in which some of the children were involved in this process. Children's own reflections on their involvement in the research are also examined before issues of validity, reliability, replicability and generalisability are discussed in the final section of the chapter.

Chapter 4-7 are the empirical chapters. Each is concerned with children's experiences and perceptions of their everyday lives in one of the four everyday spaces explored in this thesis. Chapter 4 explores how current oppositional discourses of children and young people as either vulnerable 'angels' or deviant 'devils' (Valentine, 1996a) prescribed the children's access to and negotiation within public space. Beginning by illustrating some of the children's perceived positioning of themselves by other adults as 'devils', the chapter then turns to explore their rejection of this positioning. Specifically, I reveal how girls and boys were accessing and investing in discourses of vulnerability, innocence (and for one group of boys, in discourses of social class), in order to construct themselves in opposition to, and at risk from the 'real' dangerous threats ('working-class' peers and adult male strangers) they perceived as pervading public space. Highlighting some of their parents' apparent concurrence with their own reflexive positioning of themselves, the chapter also examines the spatial and temporal boundaries that some of the children reported being imposed on their access to and movement within this space. A significant part of the chapter is thus concerned with examining the children's 'safe' alternative play opportunities. Indeed, in contrast to the somewhat negative depiction of the changing nature of children's play[3], the chapter illustrates the positive way that these children portrayed these alternative activities/pursuits.

Chapter 5 develops some of the issues raised in Chapter 4. Highlighting how (outside of adult organised/supervised activities) much of the children's free time and play was confined to the home, the chapter explores the gendered constructions of what I refer to as the 'domestication' of their play. Specifically, I reveal how whilst the girls valued the time they spent in the home – and the fun, freedom, privacy and agency it afforded them – the boys resented this time and constructed this space as a site of boredom and constraints. Exploring how much of the children's 'free' time was

[3] From imaginative and free outdoor play to adult organised/supervised activities

confined to the domestic space, this chapter identifies siblings as an important source of companionship for many of these children. It also demonstrates, however, how as well as providing them with sources of pleasure, siblings could also provide both emotional and physical pain. Focusing on some of these children's domestic responsibilities, within this chapter I also explore how two girls were also providers of care for their younger brothers. The final part of the chapter concentrates specifically on adult-child power relations and resistance and some of the children's success at subverting punishments that, parents levied on them for breaking/overstepping the rules and boundaries they set.

Relations of power and resistance are also salient and further explored in both Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 is concerned specifically with children's lives and experiences in the school classroom. A significant part of the chapter is centred around notions of fun and some of the children's endeavours to inject their own 'unofficially sanctioned' fun into lessons that were bound up with surveillance and control. Attention is paid to the nature of such endeavours as well as the consequences of unsuccessful attempts. As part of this, I explore how for two boys, reprimand and retribution provided them with additional sources of fun and freedom; and how as a result, they actively sought punishment during lesson time in the classroom. Yet, whilst discourses of fun infiltrate much of this chapter, the final part of this chapter explores the seriousness of schoolwork and the pressures and pains of academic success for both low and high achievers.

Chapter 7 is also concerned with the school, but more specifically, with children's constructions of their daily lives as they are lived in the space of the playground. One of its main concerns is exploring how in contrast to the way that Blatchford and Sumpner (1998) describe play/break times as significant and generally enjoyable for most children[4], the children's representations of the playground were characteristically imbued with notions of boredom and control. I explore how both the responsibilities of 'prefecting' or 'buddying' together with prohibitions placed on their activities/play conflicted with their opportunities for fun and freewill in the playground. I thus outline some of the children's attempts at negotiating and resisting

[4] Because, they conceive them as providing freedom and independence from teachers control.

these impositions, although highlight how ultimately these proved futile endeavours. Documenting the gendering of their playground interactions and play, the second part of the chapter locates and explores the emergence of the boyfriend/girlfriend culture in the space. Specific attention is paid to the development and increasing sexualisation of this culture. Continuing the leitmotif of regulation and resistance, the final part of this chapter examines the restrictions imposed on these children's heterosexual/ised relations/hips with each other and the children's subsequent rejection of prohibition placed on what some regarded as 'normal' and inevitable part of childhood.

Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter of this thesis. Rather than summarising each of the empirical chapters in turn, this chapter draws together some of the salient 'findings' that cut across Chapter 4 to 7[5]. These 'findings' are located within 'the moment' and current UK discourses of children and their childhoods. As a methodologically driven thesis, this concluding chapter also critically reflects on the methodological approach adopted and employed in the research. The thesis closes with some final comments and suggestions for future research.

Having provided a number of introductions to the research and outlined the overall structure of this thesis, the purpose of the following chapter (as highlighted above) is to conceptualise and contextualise children and their childhoods in the context of home, school and public space.

[5] And hence, across the children's accounts of the public, home, classroom and playground space.

Chapter 2

Conceptualising and Contextualising Children and Childhood

> The main parts of being a child is being yourself, having fun, doing what you wanna do and, just stop worrying about things that are gonna happen and, just keep on focusing on now coz . . . and stop thinking about all the responsibilities your gonna gain, coz you'll have them sooner or later an believe it or not it will be quick, quick enough.
>
> (Samantha in a Peer Interview with Zoë)

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. In the first part, I introduce and critically explore a number of key theoretical concepts and perspectives that eclectically provide a framework that is sensitive to the way in which children construct, negotiate and experience their everyday childhoods across and within different relationships, spaces and time. My foremost intention is to outline how these concepts and perspectives informed and influenced my approach to the research as well as how they were used to understand and interpret the data generated[1]. I begin by critically exploring how children and childhood have been and currently are theorised, and outline the ways I have drawn upon contemporary theories of childhood in this thesis. I then define and discuss how I have drawn upon notions of discourses and discursive practices; subjectivity and 'the self'; positioning, subject positions and agency; and Foucault's theory of power and resistance to explain and understand the construction and re-construction of children's childhood identities. Attention is also given to the different ways in which gender, sexuality, class and race are all inscribed onto and lived in and through children's minds and bodies in their everyday lives.

The second part of the chapter is concerned with contextualising children and childhood in social space(s). Acknowledging the relational nature of adulthood to childhood, I discuss how adult power and dominance, together with contradictory discourses of children and childhood, serve to marginalize and silence children in society. Outlining the way that I conceptualise and deploy the term 'social space'

[1] Rather than provide an exposition of the concepts and perspectives drawn on in this thesis.

(and 'place') I thus focus on the four spaces ('public', 'home', 'classroom' and 'playground') that are explored and make up the empirical chapters of this thesis. Specifically, I introduce the reader to the ways children have been, and currently are represented and themselves experience their everyday lives in these spaces. In so doing, I hope to contextualise and locate my own research within wider debates and literature.

2.2 The Deconstruction of Dominant Discourses of Children and Childhood in the 1980s-1990s: the Emergence of the 'New' Sociology of Childhood

The past two decades have seen significant developments in the theoretical conceptualisation of children and childhood within sociology and the social sciences more generally. Dissatisfied with dominant developmental and socialisation frameworks, during the 1980s and 1990s a number of academics produced a collection of articles/texts proposing alternative ways of theorising children and childhood (see particularly Jenks, 1982; Corsaro, 1985, 1997; Alanen, 1988; James and Prout, 1990; Mayall, 1994a; Oakley, 1994; Qvortrup *et al.*, 1994; Jenks, 1996; James *et al.*, 1998). These academics criticised developmental and socialisation theories for embracing universal biological models of children and childhood. They thus sought to develop a framework that was more socially and culturally orientated and that acknowledged the diversity, plurality, and cultural and temporal specificity of children and their childhoods. In addition to this, these authors attacked dominant developmental and socialisation theories for their construction of children as irrational incompetents, on a journey to 'becoming' a competent and rational adult 'being'; and for portraying children as passive bystanders within this process. This, they argued, denied children's active participation in social and collective life (Prout, 2005). It also portrayed them as "adults in the making rather than in the state of being" (Brannen and O' Brien, 1995: 730) which robbed them of their immediate status. The consequence of this conceptualisation meant that children were not studied in their own right (Caputo, 1995).

Whilst thus acknowledging the very materiality of the biological base of childhood as a cultural universal and that "children's competencies and skills are, to some degree,

shaped by the 'facts' of their ongoing physiological and psychological development" (James and James, 2004: 18), these academics re-conceptualised childhood as a social construction. Specifically, they conceived childhood as being something that is made meaningful through discourse and that can vary across and between cultures, social contexts and time. In addition, they argued against conceiving children as passive incompetents who are "rendered helpless against the onslaught of socialisation forces of the family, the school and the peer groups" and "more natural forces involved in the maturation process" (James and James, 2004: 26-27). Instead, children were re-theorised as 'competent' and 'rational' 'active' constructors and mediators of their social worlds, shaping as well as being shaped by their circumstances (see also section *2.4iii* below). Like adults, therefore, these authors[2] posited that children are also social 'beings' who can be understood in their own right. As a result, James *et al.* (1998: 207) argued that children do "not have to be approached from an assumed shortfall of competence, reason or significance".

2.3 The 'New' Social Studies of Childhood: In Need of a 'Newer' Approach?

The re-conceptualisation of children and childhood in the way outlined above, emerged and established itself in the 1990s as the 'new' sociology of childhood. More recently it has become known as 'the new social studies of childhood' as it has attracted contributions from a number of social science disciplines (e.g. sociology, social policy, anthropology and human geography). To be sure, this paradigm has positively revolutionised the way these (and other) disciplines theorise and (as I explore in Chapter 3) research children and childhood. In exploring the theoretical influences and orientations that I have drawn on in my thesis, I thus feel it is important to outline this school of thought. I nevertheless recognise that it is certainly no longer remarkable or innovative to conceptualise children and childhood in this way; and indeed, was not for some academics working within the sociology of education even at the time (see for example Davies, 1982; 1989). Indeed, in his recent book titled 'The Future of Childhood', Prout asserts that although initially needing to establish their distinct contribution:

[2] See also Speier, 1971; Denzin, 1975; Skolnick, 1976; Fine, 1979; Mackay, 1991; Waksler, 1996 for US contributions to the sociology of childhood.

"the phase in which the new social studies of childhood needed to emphasise their differences with other approaches is coming to an end. There is, for example, a tendency to repeat the basic ideas, such as 'children are social actors', as if these were still novel insights that have not already won wide agreement" (Prout, 2005: 2)[3].

Thorne (2000) (cited in Prout, 2005) also suggests that there is a need for renewal and reflection of this 'new' paradigm as it is now actually becoming rather middle-aged. Prout thus suggests that, although this framework has proved productive, the 'intellectual limits' are increasingly evident. Specifically, he argues that whilst it was necessary to counteract the biological reductionism of dominant paradigms, the 'new' social studies of childhood overemphasize the social aspect of childhood, replacing it instead with social reductionism. Prout nevertheless posits that childhood is never purely social; conceiving it as being extended and supplemented by different material artefacts and technologies, which are hybrids of nature and culture. He thus suggests engaging with Actor Network Theory (ANT) – a form of relational materialism – in order to overcome the nature/culture dichotomy and acknowledge the way in which the 'biological', 'technological' and 'social' are networked together (Prout, 2005: 141).

2.3i Blurring Boundaries and the Problematics of the Terms 'Being' and 'Becoming'

Whilst recognising the potential of Actor Network Theory[4], it was not something I endorsed in my own research. Moreover, although acknowledging Prout's critique of the 'new' social studies of childhood for placing too much emphasis on the social and cultural, this was not something I found problematic. In fact, quite the converse, I found it rather productive in conceptualising children's childhood lives and identities. More problematic for me, is the 'new' social studies of childhood's deployment of the terms 'being' and 'becoming'. Specifically, Lee (2001) suggests that there is a tendency (in both developmental/socialisation theories and wider

[3] This is something that James and James (2005) also argued in the paper they presented at the 'Children and Youth in Emerging and Transforming Societies' international 'Childhoods' conference held in Oslo during July 2005.

[4] Particularly as we are living in an ever-expanding digital age.

society) to regard childhood as being a journey towards adulthood. Conceived in this way, adulthood is defined as a clear knowable stage with connotations of stability and completeness, that is used against which to measure children's instability and incompleteness. Indeed, some of the children themselves invested in and drew upon discourses of 'being' and 'becoming' in negotiating their own everyday lives. As I explore in Chapter 7, for example, two girls (Zoë and Samantha) complained about having to be prefects for (or in Zoë's words "look after") younger pupils in the schools and forgo their own break time because they were "still children" themselves. In critically reviewing the terms 'being' and 'becoming', however, Lee (2001) argues that we have entered an 'age of uncertainty' wherein the stability and completeness of adults' lives can no longer be presumed or expected to endure or exist across the life course. He comments, for example, that:

"twenty first century adults have to adapt to, and remain adaptable to, a world that is full of the promise and threat of rapid change, both at work and in their intimate lives. In other words, one of the main bases for the clear contrast between adulthood and childhood is being eroded. Journey's end is receding from view and thus can no longer be relied upon to make sense of childhood" (Lee, 2001: 8).

Moreover, Valentine (2003) suggests that childhood becomes more elusive to define if conceived of in terms of performative or processed identities rather than biological age. Specifically, she comments how although 'growing up' is often measured in terms of competence and responsibility, that many children demonstrate their maturity. Many adults, in contrast, behave in irresponsible and irrational ways. This notion was echoed by some of the boys who participated in my research. In attempting to define 'childhood' and 'adulthood' Gary, for example, initially states that adults are more mature than children. He then reviews his statement after asserting that adults such as Peter Kay (a British comedian) are immature. In a separate interview, during a discussion about the age of adulthood, a different group of boys also highlighted the generational elision between adults and children:

NC: When do you think you become an adult?
Andy: Well, I reckon they become an adult when they come out of their teens really coz they're not properly like an adult but . . . well they might be to some people, coz you got more responsibilities

	when you're 18 and stuff, but then I reckon it's about 21.
[. . .]	
John:	I think it's just . . . I reckon it's 16 because when your 16 you're like . . . you're allowed to like drive a motorbike like under 16 . . . you're just like allowed to do a lot more stuff, you're like allowed to/
Alex:	That's when you really grow up.
John:	Like it's like an age between like being a proper adult and being like a child, so I reckon it's about 16, around 16.
Andy:	But when you're 16 like you're not properly matured as a proper adult really are you?
John:	Depends who it is.
Alex:	I reckon it should be 18 because like, you can, you can drink and you can smoke.
George:	I reckon it's like when you think you can take care of yourself without like anybody helping you.
Andy:	Yeah.
George:	So it can be like 18, it can be 16, it can be 21.
Andy:	Yeah it/
John:	It can be 10.
Andy:	Yeah it could
John:	Yeah it can but/
Andy:	It could be to somebody like when they think they're a proper adult like when they're 30 or something.
George:	It could be when you're 80!

Using measures of responsibility, maturity and law, these boys reveal the complexities, contradictions and individual specificity of adulthood. Indeed, Lee (2001) questions the 'new' social studies of childhood's attempts to portray children as 'beings' alongside adults and, whether or not 'being' is a good word to use with adults or children. He also notes, that in 'emptying out' the category human 'becoming' (and hence, recognising children as 'beings') the social studies of childhood appears to have dispensed with the notion of supplementation and natural lack. Lee (2001) thus observes that this makes it difficult to see how there can be any account of 'growing up'. Furthermore, by not only being conceived as 'beings' but more specifically, as 'beings in their own right'[5], Prout (2005: 66) suggests, "risks endorsing the myth of the autonomous and independent person, as if it were possible to be human without belonging to a complex web of interdependencies".

Taking heed of these constructive critiques, throughout my research, I conceived that although possibly in different ways, both adults and children belong to a complex

[5] This is what the 'new' social studies of childhood does.

web of interdependencies. Moreover, both adults and children are incomplete, constantly in process (Prout, 2005) and can be regarded as such, without compromising the need to respect their status as persons. In addition, I also acknowledge the physiological and psychological development and maturation that children are subject to. I thus recognise that in this sense, children are different to adults (although adults themselves may be subject to similar processes). I do not, however, conceive children as irrational, as less than adults or as people who should have their voices, views and desires muted because of this; something that categorising children as 'becomings' and adults as 'beings' has given rise to. Nor should they be seen as being completely passive and as having no influence in shaping their own lives. As I explore in section *2.4iii* below, children are agents and can have agency; shaping as well as being shaped by others in their own lives. Thus, they should not be approached from "an assumed shortfall of competence, reason or significance" (James *et al.,* 1998: 207) but rather, in the same way and with the same respect as adults. This is what I take James *et al.* (1998) to mean when they argue that children should be studied 'in their own right'.

2.4 Children 'doing' Childhood: Discourses, Positioning and the Construction and Reconstruction of Identities

In section 2.2 I introduced the notion that, rather than being a 'natural' entity, childhood should be understood as a social construction, constituted and made meaningful by and within discourses and discursive practices. In this part of the chapter, I set out and explore how I have made sense of, and deployed the concept of discourses. I then focus on how discourses, discursive practices, together with notions of positioning, power and resistance, both enable and constrain children's everyday lives and identities.

2.4i Discourses and the Constitution of the Subject

A discourse, as Scott (1988: 35) describes, is "a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories and beliefs". Discourses create certain 'truths' and 'realities' which regulate the way in which we speak, think, act or write, stipulating what is 'normal' and 'natural' in different moments and times. We are thus limited by the discourses available to us, only being

able to function in ways that the discourses in which we operate, prescribe and permit. The ways in which we behave at both the visceral and physical level (Paechter, 2001) reflect the discourses in which we are constituted. The discourse of a 'good' and 'well-behaved' pupil in my own research, for example, was a child who was quiet and remained seated in their allocated 'place' in the classroom. I follow Shilling (2003: 10), however, and conceive that although bodies are taken up and transformed by discourses, they remain material, physical and biological entities. Moreover, like Prout (2000a) and James (2000), I also see the potential of regarding the body as biologically and socially unfinished at birth for the study of childhood and how it changes through simultaneous biological and social processes over the life course.

Whilst delimiting what can be said and done, however, we are not simply determined by one particular discourse. Discourses are multiple, contradictory and constantly in the process of being made and re-made. As Davies posits:

"the discourses and practices through which we are constituted are also often in tension, one with another, providing the human subject with multiple layers of contradictory meanings which are inscribed in their bodies and in their conscious and unconscious minds" (Davies, 2003: 11).

Davies uses the metaphor of a 'palimpsest' to depict the multiple layering of discourse in our minds and bodies, a term to describe the way in which "new writing on a parchment were written over or around old writings that were not fully erased" (Davies, 2003: 11-12). She therefore concedes that new discourses do not simply replace old ones. Instead they may disrupt or exist alongside each other.

The multiplicity of discourses thus provide new possibilities for the way in which we speak, think and act. This in turn, elucidates how children's childhoods are continually created and recreated in and through different social/cultural contexts and how practices exist as multiple, complex, contradictory and changing processes. As I explore in Chapter 4, for example, some of the boys conceived themselves to be simultaneously constructed as both vulnerable victims in public space (by their

parents and working-class peers), at risk from dangerous 'Others' as well as the threats themselves (by adult strangers).

2.4ii Identities and the Self in Process

The multiple, contradictory and constantly changing layers of meaning that different discourses inscribe onto our minds and bodies gives rise to the notion that we are not coherent, stable and rational selves as humanism conceives. Rather, as Davies and Harre posit:

"An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, who one is, is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives" (Davies and Harre, 1991: 46).

The self is not, therefore, something that results in some relatively fixed-end product (i.e. a 'being'). More precisely, the self is unfinished, always in process and "taking its shape in and through the discursive possibilities through which selves are made" (Davies, 1997: 274). We are continually working on ('doing' and 'redoing') our own multiple, fragmented and incomplete identities. In contrast to the more static and fixed humanist notion of identity then, throughout this thesis I draw on Hall's notion of identity. Specifically, he concedes that:

"identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation" (Hall, 1996: 4).

Although conceiving individuals to exist as fluid, fragmentary, multiple selves in process, I nevertheless echo Francis' (2001) concerns regarding the 'death of the coherent self'. Indeed, whilst acknowledging that we are not fixed entities and do certainly change over time and in different social situations, she questions whether

this should lead us to conclude that there is no coherent or stable core self. She argues, for example, that, "some aspects of our individual characters appear to remain constant, despite other aspects altering, depending on the discursive environment or over time" (Francis, 2001: 70-71). Post-structuralist writers, however, concede that humanism is "in the air we breathe, the language we speak" (St Pierre, 2000: 478). We thus "experience ourselves as humanist subjects precisely *because* we are produced as such via the assumptions of our everyday language" (Jones, 1997: 263). In a recent paper, Davies *et al.* (2006: 92) describe how they used autobiographical memories to 'peel away' the technologies of the self used by the rational individualism of liberal humanism and attempted to 'lay bare' the bones and flesh of themselves as embodied subjects-in-process. Yet, although acknowledging that we are 'enveloped' by the language and effects of humanism (St Pierre, 2000) and thus may feel that we are unitary subjects, like Francis (2001), I still find it hard to comprehend and accept that there is no such thing as a coherent self. I thus follow Francis (2001: 71) and throughout this thesis consider the children's individual identities and selves to be complex, multiple, fragmentary, contradictory and always in the process of becoming. I am not however, willing to deny that there may also be some aspects of their selves that remain consistent and coherent across contexts, social situations and time.

2.4iii Positioning, Subject Positions and the Possibilities for Agency

Constituted by and within discourses and discursive practices, some post structuralists perceive us as having little or no agency or control over our lives. Indeed, this notion is certainly problematic for the 'new' social studies of childhood since (as already discussed) one of its central tenets is that children are active social agents, shaping as well as being shaped by others in their own lives. Davies, however, provides a useful notion of agency, which I advocate in this thesis. Specifically, she does not adhere to a humanist theory of agency, wherein individuals are able to act and think independently of social structures and ideas. Rather, together with Rom Harre, she concedes that because of the multiple and contradictory discourses available to individuals, we are provided with at least a possibility of notional choice (Davies and Harre, 1991: 46). Whilst centring discourses and recognising their constitutive force therefore, Davies regards subjects as both

constituted and constitutive. Davies and Harre thus draw on the notion of 'positioning' which they explain as:

"the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself" (Davies and Harre, 1991: 48).

According to positioning theory then, the subject can be passively positioned in some discourses but active in positioning themselves (and other people) in others. 'Subject positions' are consequently created in and through talk as individuals take themselves up as persons (Davies and Harre, 1991: 62).

Crucially however, Davies argues that one is not free to actively take up any available discursive practice and position, even if an agentic position is made available:

"The development and practice of new forms of discourse, then, is not a simple matter of choice, but involves grappling with both subjective constraints and the constraints of accepted discursive practices" (Davies, 1989: 235).

She notes that children, for example, "may have the competence but neither the right nor the desire to position themselves discursively as an adult speaker." (Davies, 1990: 342). Moreover, in a separate article she describes choices as more akin to 'forced choices' since the subjects' positioning within particular discourses make the chosen line of action the only possible actions (Davies, 1991: 42). Whilst conceiving that children can be active agents therefore, I follow Davies and concede that agency is prescribed by the discursive possibilities available to us. Thus, although Sam (in the extract presented at the beginning of the chapter) posits that childhood is about "doing what you wanna do", this may be limited and controlled by dominant discourses and appropriate ways of being that operate in their social worlds.

2.4iv Power, Power Relations and Resistance

Discourses are then, intimately bound up with power (Paechter, 2001). The reason we are unable simply to choose which discourses to operate in, or subject positions to take up, is because some discourses are more powerful (i.e. dominant) than others. Drawing on the work of Foucault, Paechter (2001: 43) asserts that "it is in the action of discourse to constrain what can be regarded as 'true' that power and knowledge are inextricably bound together". As knowledgeable adults whose job it is to impart this knowledge and teach children core skills and subjects, teachers, for example, embody a powerful authoritarian position over their pupils. Sarup observes that whilst "it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge to engender power" (Sarup, 1993: 74). Like Foucault, however, I do not regard power as emanating from one source or as operating in a 'top-down' fashion. Nor do I conceive it as being a possession or commodity that can be acquired or seized. As Foucault argues:

"Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as commodity or a piece of wealth . . . And not only do individuals circulate between its threads, they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" (Foucault, 1980: 98).

Power thus exists in a network-like fashion, existing everywhere as an open cluster of complex and contradictory relations which infiltrate every aspect of our social, cultural and political worlds. Indeed, conceiving of power in this way is invaluable for explaining our multiple power positionings. Walkerdine, for example, states that:

"Individuals, constituted as subjects and objects within a particular framework, are produced by that process into relations of power. An individual can become powerful or powerless depending on the terms in which her/his subjectivity is constituted" (Walkerdine, 1990: 5).

As I explore in Chapters 4-7, the children embodied a range of powerful/less positions in their everyday lives. In Chapter 4, I explore the powerful (middle) class position that one group of boys exercised over their working-class peers but how, at the same time they were rendered physically powerless against these 'Others'.

Similarly, as Year 6 pupils, all of the children who participated in the study embodied powerful positions over the younger children in the school although were powerless in their relations with the teachers in the school. Crucially however, even when seemingly powerless against teachers in the school, they were never entirely lacking in power. Specifically, Foucault explains that:

"Even when the power relation is completely out of balance, when it can be truly claimed that one side has 'total power' over the other, a power can be exercised over the other . . . This means that in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance . . . there would be no power relations at all" (Foucault, 1997/1984: 292 cited in St Pierre, 2000).

For power relations to exist therefore, each side must have a certain amount of power, however small. As a result, power is never totally one-sided or monolithic even "when we can and do speak of dominance, subjugation or oppression" (Henriques *et al.*, 1984: 115). As I explore in Chapter 7 for instance, despite having their favourite playground game prohibited by the head teacher, the children managed to resist this restriction and continue playing it by changing the name from 'British Bulldogs' to 'Colours'. However, whilst this was successful for a time, they faced with further restrictions when running was also prohibited in the playground. With this latter restriction proving too great, and the position the head teacher embodied proving too powerful, the children were forced to turn to alternative playground pursuits. Like power then, there are a multiplicity of resistances that are always present and existing in social and cultural practices and that are constantly shifting and changing; the very existence of power relations, presupposing forms of resistance (Sarup, 1993: 84).

Paechter (2001) notes how this notion of resistance enables us to retain a place for human agency. It also allows us to see how power relations are not inevitable, unalterable or unchanging, but can be modified. Having said this, states of domination do exist meaning that often, power relations may be such that they only allow a very limited amount of freedom (Foucault, 1984). Child-adult relations are certainly one such 'state of domination' as the example above illustrates and as is

explored in depth throughout this thesis. In following sections of this chapter, I attend to child-adult relations in more detail but before doing so, turn first to explore and conceptualise children's gendered, sexualised, classed, racialised and faithed childhood identities.

2.5 Children's Gendered, Sexualised, Classed, Racialised and Faithed Identities

Existing research has specifically explored how children's identities are gendered, sexualised, classed, racialised and faithed (see for example Thorne, 1993; Connolly, 1998; Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Connolly and Maginn, 1999; Tizard and Phoenix, 2002; Ali, 2003; Renold, 2005; Scourfield *et al.*, 2005; Allan, 2006; Connolly, 2006; Devine, 2006; Healy, 2006). My own research, however, foreground how children negotiate and experience their childhood identities within and across different spaces, relationships and time rather than focusing on multiple social and cultural axes of 'difference'. Yet, as highlighted in Chapter 1, gender, sexuality, class, faith and race are all inscribed onto and lived in and through children's bodies and minds. They are thus, part of children's identities and are inextricably implicated in shaping their everyday lives and experiences.

With regard to gender, Renold (2005: 3) highlights the plurality and diversity of masculinities and femininities *and* the "pushes and pulls" of the gender dualism which binds sex/gender categories together. Recognising this, and that gender is socially constructed through discourse, and not something you 'have' but that you 'do' and 'redo', I examine the different ways in which children experience and negotiate the categories 'boy' and 'girl' in their everyday lives. In Chapter 4, for example, I explore the gendered discourses of risk and danger in some of the children's accounts of public space. Specifically, I examine how some of the boys feared physical attack from older and/or 'rough' ('working-class') peers whilst some girls feared sexual abuse and exploitation by adult male predators. In so doing, Chapter 4 reveals these girls' sexual knowledge. Indeed, whilst Renold (2005: 17) highlights how childhood is "perceived as a space where children are untroubled and untouched by the cares of the (adult) sexual world to come", children are not asexual (Thorne and Luria, 1986). Rather, as Epstein and Johnson (1998: 97) assert,

innocence is "a state which some *adults* mistakenly *wish* upon children". In Chapter 7, I highlight the emergence of a (hetero-sexualised) boyfriend/girlfriend culture. Moreover, I explore some children's investment in 'older' (adolescent) discourses of sexuality and the opposition that this was met with by some of the adults within the school.

The children's experiences and perceptions of their everyday lives are also inextricably bound up with their classed identities. I nevertheless remain mindful of recent debates surrounding notions of social class (e.g. whether class is based solely upon socio-economic factors, or cultural factors as well, or indeed, whether social class even exists in society at all). Akin to Renold (2005: 182), I do not adopt the terms 'working-class' and 'middle-class' un-problematically but rather, 'heuristically' to signify contrasting cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Throughout this thesis, therefore, I follow academics such as Reay (1998: 272) who conceives class as, "a complex mixture of the material, discursive, psychological predispositions and social dispositions" that is lived on both a conscious and unconscious level (Reay, 2005). Moreover, like Lawler (2005: 797) I consider class "not simply as a matter of economic inequality but also as circulating through symbolic and cultural forms – through, for example, the means by which people become judged as morally worthwhile or as having the right kind of knowledge or taste". Bourdieu (1986) suggests a model of class which is based on four 'capital' movements through social space: economic capital, which includes income, wealth, financial inheritances and monetary assets; cultural capital, which can exist in an embodied state, an objectified state (cultural goods) and institutionalised state (e.g. educational qualifications); social capital, which is based on connections and group membership; and symbolic capital, which is the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate (Skeggs, 1997: 8). In Chapter 4, I explore how some of the boys' middle-class status enables them draw upon their 'cultural capital' to disassociate themselves from, and 'Other' their working-class peers. The attribution of capital is thus, "capable of conferring strength, power and consequently profit on their holder" (Skeggs, 1997: 8).

Although acknowledging race and faith as a constitutive part of their childhood identities that explicitly and implicitly shapes their lives and experiences, unlike other researchers (see for example Connolly, 1998; Nayak, 1997, 1999; Tizard and Phoenix, 2002; Ali, 2003) they are not something that I foreground in this thesis. My primary reason for this is because neither race nor faith suffused these children's accounts as prominently as gender, sexuality and class. Whilst this research can be criticised on these two counts, I hope that the reader will recognise and respect the impossibility of attending in any significant detail, to all aspects of children's childhoods. Gender, sexuality and class are therefore, more centralised in this thesis, children's racialised and faithed identities stretching beyond the scope of this research.

Having outlined and explored how I have drawn upon certain concepts and perspectives in this thesis to understand and explain children and their everyday lives, the remainder of this chapter is concerned with child-adult relations; and the ways in which discourses of generation/ing impact on children's routine lives across and within the home, school and public space.

2.6 Child-Adult Relations and the Generational Order

In arguing for a sociology of childhood, Mayall (2002) posits that the study of children's lives is essentially the study of adult-child relations. Within modern Western society, children are constituted in relation and opposition to adults. In fact, Jenks suggests that:

"The child cannot be imagined except in relation to a conception of the adult, but essentially it becomes impossible to generate a well-defined sense of the adults, and indeed adult society, without first positing the child" (Jenks, 1996: 3).

Alanen (2001: 129) concurs with this, arguing that the categories 'child' and 'adult' are recurrently produced, standing in relations of connection, interaction and dependence; neither can exist without the other. This, Prout (2005: 76) notes, "makes a shift from seeing childhood as an essentialized category, to one produced within a set of relations". In reviewing Alanen's notion of the generational order however,

Prout (2005: 77) is critical of the way in which it appears to restrict the range of relationships that children are seen as having (i.e. that with adults). Specifically, he argues that there is a spectrum of subject positions (e.g. 'infant', 'tween', 'teenager', 'young adult') that are produced through the generationing process. He also problematises Alanen's approach for what he regards as reinstating an adult-child binary (and hence only one generational structure) and making it difficult to see how intra-generational relations can be properly acknowledged.

Although taking heed and concurring with Prout's criticisms, I do still regard there as being a significant place for some concept of generation and generational relationships in studying children and childhood. This is particularly so in my own research. As I explore throughout this thesis, many of the children's constructions of their everyday lives are imbued with discourses of regulation, governance and control imposed on them by more powerful/authoritative adults. Indeed, some writers/academics and also some of the children in my research conceive of the boundary between adults and children as becoming more elusive to define (see Elkind, 1981; Postman, 1994; Valentine, 2000; Lee, 2001; Prout, 2005 and also section 2.3 above). Nevertheless, the imposition of rules and laws continue to regulate, govern and control children and ensure that they remain a subordinate category, distinct from adults. In fact, Lee (2001: 24) suggests that much of what he terms children's 'states of dependency' (e.g. economic dependency and dependency on adults to make important decisions for them) are in fact socially distributed. Concurring, James and James (2004: 33) posit that it is "through law rather than simply as a result of the ageing process *per se* that adults achieve 'adulthood' and their accompanying personhood".

Despite the re-conceptualisation of children and childhood in a number of academic disciplines (e.g. sociology, social policy, anthropology and human geography) as competent active agents therefore, discourses of developmentalism – wherein children are conceived as dependent, irrational and incompetent – continue to dominate in modern Western society. Often, this is coupled with discourses of childhood innocence and the notion that children embody a state of natural goodness that should be protected from corruption and contamination. As Kehily (2004: 15)

highlights, "the Romantic-inspired child of innocence also calls into being its opposite – the demonic child". Representations of children as joyful, innocent and carefree are therefore, often contradicted by discourses of 'evil' or 'corrupt' children who need to be regulated and controlled (Gittins, 1998). At present, both are dominant discourses of childhood in UK society. Although conflicting and contradictory, however, both discourses invoke similar ideologies with regard to children and social space. These are explored in the following and final part of this chapter below.

2.7 Children and Childhood in Social Space(s)

James *et al.* (1998: 37) observe that childhood "is the status of personhood which is by definition often in the wrong place". Indeed, Jenks (2005: 73) deploys the metaphor of 'a weed' – a plant growing in the wrong place – to denote the way in which children are starkly noticeable in relation to their setting. There are, for example, certain 'designated' spaces where children are seen as belonging (specifically, the home and school). Outside of these spaces (i.e. in public space), children are regarded as being 'out of place' and are "conspicuous by their inappropriate or precious invasion of adult territory" (Jenks, 2005: 73). In exploring children's representations of the home, school and public space, I draw on Chris Philo's definitions of the terms 'space' and 'place'. Specifically, he concedes that the term 'space' adheres to "types of setting for interaction" and the term 'place' refers to "specific sites of meaning" (Philo, 2000: 245). Holloway and Valentine (2000: 9) highlight how attending to different spaces, and the way in which childhood identities are temporally and spatially specific, can add texture and detail to what they refer to as 'the rather broad brush analysis' of the social construction of childhood. This becomes even more pertinent when advocating a 'relational' view of space. Instead of conceiving space as "a container within which the world proceeds" (Thrift, 2003: 96) or an objective physical 'backdrop' for social relations (Valentine, 2001), in this thesis I regard space and society as being mutually constituted. As Valentine (2001: 7) posits, space is active in the constitution and reproduction of social identities and social identities are recognised as producing material and symbolic or metaphorical space; discourses on space and society stipulate what is appropriate and

acceptable. Crucially, however, Valentine highlights how spaces are not to be regarded as:

"discrete, independent, compartmentalized and opposing spaces. . . not bounded, fixed or stable locations but are constituted in and through their relations and linkages with 'elsewhere', with spaces which stretch beyond them (Massey, 1991). In other words, these locations are open, porous and provisional spaces" (Valentine, 2001: 9).

Although the empirical chapters of this thesis are thus divided into spaces as a way of providing it with some structure and coherence, I acknowledge the artificiality of this and recognise that they are all connected and are inseparable and constantly in the process of being made and remade. In this final part of the chapter then, I focus in more detail on the public, domestic and school space and the way in which children are conceptualised and currently are/have been positioned within and across these spaces.

2.7i Children in Public Space

Prior to the late nineteenth century, children in Britain mixed and socialised freely among and alongside adults (Valentine, 2001). In the 1870s, however, children were re-conceptualised either as innocent and in need of protection or (particularly the working-class) as deviant and immoral (Valentine, 2001). This fuelled the removal of children from the workplace and public places. Instead they were relocated to the school and the home. Public space was thus redefined as an 'adult' space where children were conceived as being 'out of place'.

In modern UK society, this spatial ideology continues to endure. Recent research has explored concerns about children's presence in public space and the twin fears that children are perceived to be/perceive themselves to be either victims from the perceived dangers that pervade this space, or are the threat themselves (see for example, Cahill, 1990; Lieberg, 1995; Valentine, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a, 1997b, 2004; Valentine and McKendrick, 1997; Scott *et al.*, 1998; Harden, 2000; Harden *et al.*, 2000b; Nairn *et al.*, 2003; Backett-Milburn and Harden, 2004; Elsley, 2004; Deakin, 2006). At present, for example, the media is saturated with negative projections of

(working-class) children and young people, with almost daily reports of everything from underage drinkers, anti-social (unlawful and intimidating) 'yobbish' behaviour, to cases of child/teenage attackers, muggers and murderers. Indeed, television can be regarded as "a tool of the dominant social order, reproducing hegemonic values, stereotypes and distorting the 'reality' of the crime issue" (Banks, 2005: 171).

The Government are highlighting measures to tackle this so-called 'problem'. The 'Respect Agenda' for instance, emerged as a broad idea during New Labour's 2005 general election campaign. This initiative aims to tackle anti-social behaviour and reinstate the law-abiding majority back in charge of their local community. Byelaws, street curfews, ASBOs (Anti Social Behaviour Orders) and CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) are also becoming increasingly and more commonly employed means of surveilling and containing children and young people deemed problematic to society. As I explore in Chapter 4, however, 'moral panics'[6] (Cohen, 1972) seem to have proliferated the fear of 'dangerous' 'anti-social' children and young people to the extent that any child/young person unaccompanied by an adult in public space/places, is seen as discrepant and undesirable. Some children and young people regard the streets, parks and alleys for example, as the only place(s) that they can meet up and socialise with their friends outside of school/work (see for example Matthews *et al.*, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Matthews, 2003; Skelton, 2000; Elsley, 2004; Valentine, 1996, 2004). In the current UK climate however, they may become unwarranted targets of suspicion and surveillance from adults and other children/young people alike.

Yet it is not only anti-social 'youths' (children and young people) who are conceived as risky and feared by others in public space. High profile media coverage of paedophilia, rapes, molestation and murders also fuels fears that public space is infiltrated and overrun by 'dangerous' 'Others'. This in turn, heightens the need for 'innocent' and/or 'vulnerable' children to be shielded from the perceived threats that

[6] Cohen (1972: 9) defines 'moral panics' as occurring when, "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible".

public space poses. Tight restrictions are placed on many 'middle-class' children's access to, and independent mobility within the public outdoor world. Indeed, O'Brien *et al.* (2000: 273) suggest that in the UK, allowing children to roam or play unaccompanied outside is now becoming a marker of neglectful or irresponsible parenthood. Sibley thus observes that for 'middle-class' children:

"The locality is more likely to be experienced from the car, necessarily in the company of adults, rather than alone or in the company of other children. The car then, functions as a protective capsule from which the child observes the world but does not experience it directly through encounters with others" (Sibley, 1995: 136).

As fears surrounding the safety of public space continue to mount, much of middle-class children's play is becoming home centred or contained within adult controlled/organised clubs/activities (see for example, Lareau, 2000; 2003). Some academics suggest that this is eroding children's ability to roam freely and to engage in imaginative play. Specifically, they argue that children's play is being regulated by adults who establish the rules and take responsibility for making decisions about the activities; however, they assert that this conflicts with the kind of play that children actually want[7] (see for example Adler & Adler, 1994; Oldman, 1994; Smith & Barker, 2000a, 2000b; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). Moreover, Valentine (1997) posits that the protection of children is also a source of control over them. Indeed, Ennew (1994: 135) notes that the activities that children are involved in, are often so spatially disparate that adult assistance is necessary if children are to meet their schedules. Moreover, children's participation in such activities increases children's dependence on their parents as they rely on their economic and cultural resources (Frønes, 1994). Whether constructed as innocent 'angels' ('at risk') or deviant 'devils' ('the risk') (Valentine, 1996a) therefore, children and young people are being ghettoised and spatially outlawed from society (Ennew, 1994). As Valentine (2004) thus argues, public space is being represented as 'naturally' or 'normally' an adult space.

2.7ii Children in the Social Space of the Home

As the previous section explored then, children (and young people) in modern British society are progressively being encouraged off the streets and into the home. Indeed, traditionally, the home has been constructed as a refuge from the public space and world of paid work (Valentine, 2001)[8]. As a private space intended primarily for immediate family (but where relatives and friends may sometimes be admitted) (Allan and Crow, 1989), the home is commonly regarded as a haven; a safe and loving 'cocoon' in which children are protected from the dangers that pervade the public outdoor world (Lee, 2001). This is despite the fact that it is the home, rather than public space, which is the most common site for sexual and physical child abuse and neglect (Kitzinger, 1990; Jenks, 2005). It can also be a site for disorder and unrest with the rising levels of family 'break ups' and divorce (see for example, Smart and Neale, 1999; Smart *et al.*, 2001).

Nevertheless, with much of their play being confined to either adult organised/controlled activities or the home, many middle-class children in particular are being compensated with a range of media to substitute their outdoor play (Livingstone and Bovill, 1999). It is ironic then, that media (such as television and games consoles) are being blamed for the increasing levels of obesity in children and their poor levels of fitness, and for robbing them of the capacity to enjoy imaginative outdoor play and time with friends (Holloway and Valentine, 2003). In August 2005, for example, a national 'Play Day' was organised to encourage children to play outdoors more frequently. Moreover, many parents are becoming increasingly concerned about online dangers and their children's safety in cyberspace. Dangerous 'Others' (e.g. 'paedophiles' and 'perverts') from the outside world are, for example, able to infiltrate the (so-called) 'private' space of the home (see Holloway and Valentine, 2003; Valentine and Holloway, 2001; Valentine, 2004). Yet, as I explore in Chapter 5, like children in other research (see for example, Livingstone, 2002), the

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[7] In chapter 4 however, I question whether such play does conflict with children's own interests and desires.

[8] Although for 'homemakers', au pairs and people who work at/from home, the home is the site of work.

boys in my own research said that they would prefer to be outdoors[9]. Confined to the home therefore, screen based-media provide a readily available resource to combat boredom, although they are rarely chosen over and above being outside with friends (Livingstone, 2002).

In contrast to Wyness' (1994) claims that parents are increasingly found to be opening up their homes to their children's friends in order that they can watch over their children and their safety, the children in my study said that they rarely visited each others' houses. This may have contributed to the boys' strong desire to be outside with friends. Yet, it also meant that siblings provided some of the children with an important source of companionship. Interestingly, however, Edwards *et al.* (2005b) posit that children's views of sibling relationships in middle childhood are under-researched. The research that has explored children's sibling relations has largely been viewed through the paradigm of developmentalism from an adult-centred perspective. Moreover, it has tended to focus either on the relationship between the number of siblings, age gaps and birth order, and educational attainment and/or normative behaviour, or on children in families with 'problems' (Edwards *et al.*, 2005: 499-500; see also Brannen *et al.*, 2000). Yet, foregrounding children's own voices and concerns, in Chapter 5 I explore some of the children's own experiences and perceptions of the social relation with their siblings within the home and how they could be both a source of irritation and conflict but also an important source of emotional support, friendship and protection (Dunn and Kendrick, 1982; Kosonen, 1996; Borland *et al.*, 1998; Edward *et al.*, 2005a, 2005b).

Within the home, however, children are not merely free to play. Indeed, whilst many of the children (and as can be seen in Samantha's construction of childhood which began the chapter) described childhood as being a time of fun and freedom from responsibilities, Morrow (1996) posits that some children are involved in carrying out domestic chores to the degree that they mirror adults' roles. Indeed, Mayall (2002) argues that 'housework' and childcare can lift children temporarily out of the category 'child.' Young carers, however, may be permanently required to enact adult

[9] The chapter explores the different gendered constructions of the home space and time spent occupied with various media.

roles (see Becker *et al.,* 2000; Bibby and Becker, 2000; Dearden and Becker, 2000, 2004; Underdown, 2002; Warren, 2007 for research/literature on young carers). In the 2004 report on young carers in the UK, for example, over half of 6,178 carers surveyed were involved in caring for up to ten hours a week (Dearden and Becker, 2004). They performed a range of tasks including: domestic tasks (cooking, cleaning, washing, and ironing), general care (changing dressings, assisting with mobility), emotional support, and intimate care (washing, dressing, and assisting with toilet requirements). Mayall thus asserts that children:

"occupy a moral space where adults do not always respect their moral agency but nevertheless expect them to take on responsibility, and in their daily interactions they encounter and grapple with moral dilemmas" (Mayall, 2002: 87).

In Chapter 5 I explore the different ways in which some of the children in my own research contributed to the daily running of their home and family life. I examine some of their theorisations of childhood through their categorisation of certain domestic duties as either 'acceptable' and/or common 'child chores' or as unacceptable 'adult' responsibilities. Whilst often constructed as irrational incompetents[10] and remaining accountable to their parents' rules, regulations and subsequent discipline and punishment, children are thus often required to carry out seemingly 'responsible' tasks in the home. The home consequently exists as a site for work, rest, protection and play.

2.7iii Children in the Social Space of the School

Aside from the home, the other main space that children are seen to belong and thus regarded as being 'in place' is the school. Indeed, Devine (2003) states that a defining feature of modern western childhoods is their compulsory attendance at school. As highlighted above, compulsory schooling in the late nineteenth century was fuelled by the re-conceptualisation of childhood as being a time of 'innocence', 'dependence' and 'incompetence' together with representations of 'working-class' children as deviant and immoral. Schools consequentially became (and indeed, still

[10] Hence the reason they are perceived as not being able to competently negotiate public space and are restricted to institutional activities and the home.

function today as) places where children are cared for, contained, educated and taught middle class values (Valentine, 2001). As Alldred *et al.* assert:

"School is . . . a formally organised and institutionalised (both internally and externally) educational setting, separating children off from, but equipping them for an (adult) future in other aspects of the public. It is a space in which children are sequentially segregated with their peers according to age, and linked to levels of educational attainment" (Alldred *et al.*, 2002: 125).

In short, schools provide an ordered temporal passage from child to adult status (Edwards, 2002; Jenks, 2005). Constructed, administered and shaped by adults for children, the school demarcates children as other and adults as the norm, children being defined in a state of incompleteness to be formed and reformed in terms of the adult ideal Devine (2003: 112).

Although Lee (2001: 77) posits that the stark contrast between adult 'being' and child 'becoming' is now no longer such a key feature of schools in Western society, children are still constructed in this way and teachers still embody a powerful and authoritarian position over children. As Delamont (1983) highlights, they have power and authority over pupils' lives; pupils' knowledge, behaviour, speech and clothing all come within their sphere of control. Teachers decide (within the parameters of the national curriculum) what will be taught, at what times and in what ways. Moreover, they decide the way in which children receive this educational knowledge through the organisation of the classroom space. The ways in which children are arranged in the classroom, for example, is often so that the teacher can effectively monitor the whole class. In so doing, they gain control over their 'unruly bodies' (Foucault, 1977) and ensure that children are quiet, well-behaved and engaged with the task in hand. This is what Foucault described as 'disciplinary power' wherein each individual comes to exercise surveillance and control over oneself. Specifically, Foucault asserts that:

"There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by in by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising surveillance over and against himself" (Foucault, 1977: 155).

In Chapter 6 of this thesis, I explore the way in which such disciplinary power operated in the Year 6 classroom in which I observed/participated, and the powerful and authoritative position that Mrs Rotheroe (the class teacher) embodied over the children. Gordon *et al.* (2000) highlight, however, that schools have multiple levels and practices, creating limited yet significant spaces for agency, negotiation, avoidance, opposition and resistance. In Chapter 6 I thus examine forms of agency, avoidance and resistance and some of the children's endeavours to create their own 'fun' within the classroom. Indeed, other research has highlighted the importance that pupils place on 'fun' during lesson times and learning (see for example, Woods, 1976; Pollard, 1985; Dubberly, 1988). Research has also highlighted how the injection of humour and resistance in the classroom plays an important part in boys' construction and investment in a 'hegemonic' masculinity[11] (see for example Mac an Ghail, 1994; Kehily and Nayak, 1997; Renold 2001, 2005). It has also been seen as a product of class tensions; specifically, a working-class resistance to the pressures of a middle-class ethos (see Renold, 2005: 374). In my own research, however, all of the children came from middle-class backgrounds. Moreover, as I explore in Chapter 6, both girls and boys were carving out spaces for their own (unsanctioned) pleasure. I thus highlight the fluidity and changing relations of power between teachers and pupils. Still, I argue that although (in different ways) the children did exercise a considerable degree of power over their teacher, ultimately they remained accountable to her rules, regulations and control within the classroom. The classroom is, for example, ultimately a place of work, where misbehaviour (from inattention, disruptive and unruly behaviour) has to be curtailed in order for the school's clear education purpose to be met (Lee, 2001: 78).

Within the space of the school then, the only officially sanctioned place for children to play and have fun is the playground. Whilst differing widely in terms of size, shape and design, playgrounds are (nearly always) an integral part of any (UK) primary school (Thomson, 2005). Blatchford and Sumpner comment that:

[11] I adhere to Connell's (1987) notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' and concede that this form of masculinity is the dominant form of masculinity; it is constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities and to women and operates to produce culturally exalted forms of masculinity.

"Breaktime can be a forum for enjoyment and activity, play and games, the development of friendships, social networks, social skills and competence; the opportunity for independence and freedom from teachers and classrooms" (Blatchford and Sumpner, 1998: 81).

Indeed, both Blatchford *et al.* (1990) and more recently, Renold (2005) suggest that with growing anxieties over children using and abusing public places, the playground is one of the few remaining social spaces where children can and do play outside the home with their peers. This was certainly true for the children who participated in my own research, as I explore in more depth in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Much research has thus been conducted into children's experiences and use of playground space (see for example, Opie and Opie, 1969; Sluckin, 1981; Boulton, 1992; Opie, 1993; Thorne, 1993; Blatchford and Sharp, 1994; Bishop and Curtis, 2001; Epstein *et al.*, 2001; Swain, 2000, 2002; Connolly, 2003). Armitage (2001: 37-38) notes how at first glance the typical UK primary school seems to be a mass of confusion, movement and noise with little structure; but how further observation "reveals a playground divided into distinct and widely accepted places, each reserved for a specific game or form of play unique to that place". Indeed, despite adult concerns that children do not know how to play anymore and that traditional games are disappearing (Bishop and Curtis, 2001), catch and chase games (e.g. 'British Bulldogs'), skipping, running and other traditional playground games described by Opie and Opie (1969) and Sluckin (1981) are very much still present in playgrounds today (see for example, Epstein *et al.*, 2001; Bishop and Curtis, 2001; Swain, 2002; Connolly, 2003). Moreover, the notion that the playground is divided into distinct spaces for specific games is supported by a wealth of other research that has examined children's experiences and uses of the playground (see for example Boulton, 1992; Thorne, 1993; Skelton, 2000; Swain, 2000, 2002; Epstein *et al.*, 2001; Connolly, 2003). Specifically, they highlight the way in which the playground is monopolised by boys attempting to construct and perform 'hegemonic' masculine identities through participating in competitive games and sport (e.g. football, running/chasing games) and activities of violence and strength (e.g. fighting and wrestling games). Girls and Other boys (who do not engage in such activities)

however, often occupy spaces around the edges of the playground and engage in more sociable activities (e.g. talking) and small-scale kinds of play (e.g. skipping, elastics). Yet, Boulton (1992) questions whether this was a deliberate choice by the girls in his research, or whether they were simply unable to engage in certain activities because of the domination of space by boys. Epstein *et al.* (2001) suggest that the girls' activities around the edges of the playground could be regarded as framing rather than being marginalized by the boys' (football) games. They describe, for example, how much of the girls' talk in their study was concerned with these boys, their prowess at football and general attractiveness (Epstein *et al.*, 2001). Renold (2005: 47) also describes how some of the girls in her research would stand at the sidelines of the football pitch, watching the boys who were watching them. Indeed, in exploring girls' and boys' gender and sexual relations, she identifies the playground as one of the most common sites for children to "hide, share or display sexuality and sexual relations" (Renold, 2005: 33). In my own research, I explore the increasing investment of some of the children in a boyfriend/girlfriend culture during my time in the field during break and at lunch times, and the changing nature of gendered relations and the gendered spacing of the playground over a school year (see Chapter 7).

Whilst Blatchford *et al.* (1990: 164) assert that "the school playground is one of the main settings for outside play, which is completely free from adult control" the playground and/or children's constructions and conceptions of this space can be imbued with discourses of regulation, surveillance and control. As some studies have found, restrictions and prohibitions are sometimes placed on certain activities, most notably football and games of violence (see for example, Armitage, 2001; Epstein, *et al.*, 2001; Swain, 2002; Renold, 2005). In Chapter 7, I outline some of the restrictions imposed on the children's play in my own research. I also examine their 'romantic' relations with each other and explore some of the ways in which the children attempted to resist these impositions. Moreover, I explore how responsibilities such as 'prefecting', which they were required to do during lunch times, further impinged and compromised their supposed fun and freedom in the playground.

In addition to this, and again, in contrast to the 'romantic' projection of the playground (Blatchford, 1994) (as a place of fun, freedom and happiness) this space has also been identified as the most common site for bullying in schools (see for example Whitney and Smith, 1993; Smith and Sharpe, 1994). Although being a place of fun and enjoyment for some children then, Blatchford and Sumpner (1998: 81) posit that "it can also be a site of harassment, cruelty and domination". Renold (2002), for example, examines primary school children's experiences of physical and verbal forms of heterosexual, homophobic and heterosexist harassment whilst Connolly (1998) explores racism in a multi-ethnic inner-city primary school. The prevalence of verbal and physical bullying and harassment is now commonplace in schools (and in the playground) (see for example Tattum and Lane, 1989; Olweus, 1993; Smith and Sharp, 1994; Smith *et al.*, 1999). Whilst intended as a site for fun and freedom, therefore, playgrounds can be both spaces of pleasure and pain for some children and places of freedom and control.

2.8 Concluding Notes

This chapter has outlined and critically explored a number of theoretical concepts and perspectives and the ways in which they were drawn on in my research to help me understand and conceptualise children's childhoods across and within different relationships, spaces and time. Charting the developments in the theoretical conceptualisation of children and childhood, I explained how despite more recent critiques of the 'new' social studies of childhood, it is valuable for recognising children's agency and the diversity, plurality and cultural and temporal specificity of their childhoods. I also explored how understanding childhood as discursively produced and the self as being constantly in process gives rise to the way in which children's childhood identities are continually created and re-created in and through different social/cultural contexts and practices and how they exist as multiple, contradictory and changing processes. Although recognising the constitutive force of discourses, by acknowledging that discourses are multiple and contradictory and that we are both positioned and position ourselves as subjects we can conceive ourselves as agents and having agency. It is nevertheless crucial to conceive that discourses are intimately bound up with power, which is why certain subject positions are made more available than others (Davies, 1991). Moreover, acknowledging that power is

relational, changing and exists in a network-like fashion is important for explaining multiple power positions and the way we can be/come powerful or powerless depending on the discourses in which we operate and the opportunities for resistance.

This chapter has also explored the ways in which gender, sexuality, class and race are all inscribed onto and lived in and through children's bodies and minds. Moreover, it has attended to the relational nature of childhood to adulthood and how the imposition of rules and laws (imposed on children by adults) serve to regulate, govern and control children and ensure their distinction and separation from more powerful adults. Examining the way in which these impositions and constructions of children as either 'innocent angels' or 'deviant devils' have represented and positioned children in different social spaces, I documented how for children to be regarded (by adults) as being 'in place' is for them to be located at school or home. To be unaccompanied by adults in public space therefore, is to be 'out of place'. Academic/research literature which informed my own research was also outlined and discussed in the latter part of the chapter in order to introduce the reader to some of the themes/issues which interweave and shape the analysis of the empirical chapters (chapter 4-7) and to locate my own research within existing literature. Central to this research was the notion of power and the ways in which children's experiences and perceptions of their everyday lives (in different spaces, relationships and time) were bound up with relations of power, regulation and control. Before turning to the four empirical chapters of this thesis however, the next chapter outlines and explores how the theoretically eclectic framework set out in this chapter informed my research methodology and approaches used to plan, conduct, understand, analyse and (re)present the research data generated from the research study carried out.

Chapter 3

Participatory Research 'With' Children: Methods and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out and explores the methodological aspects and approaches adopted in the research. Striving for research that privileges and foregrounds children's own voices, I provide an honest account of my endeavours to conduct research 'with' children. Divided into three main parts, the first section of the chapter describes the growing body of participatory research with children and my own location within this field. Here I also outline the design and ethical framework of my own research, explore issues of access and introduce the reader to the research setting and participants. In the second part of the chapter, the focus turns to the data generation process and the time I spent in 'the field'. I explore the different research roles that I adopted in the field and describe how these roles, together with my status as a young, white, 'middle-class' researcher, enabled the development of positive and trusting research relationships between the children and myself. The chapter then discusses how such relationships meant that the children were willing and indeed wanted to share their experiences and perspectives with me, and allowed me access to their social and cultural worlds. Much of this section, however, is taken up with describing each of the individual 'methods' (participant observation, researcher-facilitated interviews, peer interviews, diaries and photographs) utilised in the research. I detail how (aside from my participant observations) each was shaped, directed and employed by the children, and discuss the different rich and insightful types of data each 'method' generated. My reflections of the children's participation in the study (and specifically the tensions to achieving this) are also provided. The final part of the chapter outlines and explores processes of analysis and the way in which the data were made meaningful and (re)presented in the thesis. At the end of this section, the children's own views on their involvement in the research are reflected upon before concluding with a discussion of validity, reliability, replicability and generalisability and the ways each of these can be applied to my own research. The chapter begins by first outlining my epistemological stance and my endeavours to adopt a reflexive position throughout the research process.

3.2 My Epistemological Stance

The epistemological position that I adopted in this research concurs with what Seale (1999) refers to as a 'middle way' between extreme relativism and realism. Specifically, whilst conceiving that a 'real' material world exists, I believe that the way in which it is understood and represented is socially constructed and dependent on the discourses made available to us (see previous chapter for a more detailed discussion of discourses and discursive practices). Reality is not then, something 'out there'. Rather, it exists in our formulation of it (Boostrom, 1994). We create cultural 'facts', 'realities' and 'truths' about the world and the people in it, and these are all multiple, partial and incomplete, never fixed or entirely knowable. Language does not, therefore, provide a transparent medium with which to see 'true' objective 'reality' through (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Data generated and used in research are thus incomplete and partial versions of reality. Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 15) stress, however, that this does not mean "to imply that they are imperfect representations of an independent social reality that is itself perfectly coherent and integrated". Specifically, Atkinson (1992: 17) asserts that "there is no complete record to be made" just as there is no single social reality that can be uncovered. Moreover, there are no universal truths to be uncovered since we are grounded in society and only produce partial, locally and temporally specific insights (Delamont, Coffey and Atkinson, 2000: 227). Atkinson (1992) thus argues that we should not regard realities as 'fictions' or rob them of their value just because they are made. Instead he emphasises their importance in highlighting how "we use them to interact with the world and with one another" (Atkinson, 1992: 51). In my own research then, I did not concern myself with seeking to uncover the 'real' objective 'truth' (since in any case this may prove a meaningless and impossible quest). Instead, I was interested with exploring what different social constructions revealed about different 10 and 11 year olds' understandings and perspectives, and specifically what being a 10 and 11 year old child (in different everyday spaces) meant to them.

3.3 Reflexivity and the Researcher Self

As a participant observer, however, I was aware that it was not just the children who were creating cultural realities of their lives and experiences. I was part of what I was studying and thus fully implicated in creating 'the field'. As Atkinson posits:

"When we write of reading and writing an ethnography, there is a danger of implying that there is a social reality – 'a field' – that exists independently of and prior to the work of the ethnographer. That is not so. The 'field' is not an entity 'out there' that awaits the discovery and exploration of the intrepid explorer. The field is not merely reported in the texts of fieldwork: it is constituted by our writing and reading. I do not mean that there are no social beings or social acts independent of our observations. Clearly there are. Rather, my view is that 'the field' of fieldwork is the outcome of a series of transactions" (Atkinson, 1992: 8-9).

Unlike traditional positivist research, therefore, which attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher completely, Delamont (2002) suggests that we should set about understanding them. Indeed, Coffey (1999: 23) proposes that it is "epistemologically productive" to recognise that we are part of what we study and "at best naïve to deny the self an active, and situated place in the field". The ways in which we construct realities are intrinsically and inextricably bound up with our biographies, emotions, the cultural context, and our theoretical and epistemological orientations. It is thus essential that one remains reflexive in all aspects of research (Delamont, 2002). As Delamont succinctly states:

"each researcher is her own best data-collection instrument, as long as she is constantly self-conscious about her role, her interactions and her theoretical and empirical material as it accumulates" (Delamont, 2002: 9).

Throughout the course of my research I consequently attempted to be as reflexive as possible and critically reflected on my self as a young, white, middle class female adult committed to foregrounding the children's choices, views, experiences and ideas, and the influence and effect I had upon the thesis. Mauthner and Doucet (2003: 419) highlight that locating ourselves socially, emotionally and intellectually enables us "to retain some grasp over the blurred boundary between the respondents' narrative and our own interpretation". As a white 'middle-class' researcher, for

example, researching largely white 'middle-class' children, I had to continually reflect upon and make strange (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995) what for me were often familiar discourses and ways of 'be(com)ing'. Some of the children's experiences of public space, for instance, had resonance with my own childhood experiences. Moreover, my conceptualisation of children as competent and active agents starkly conflicted with the developmental discourses of children and childhood that were dominant in the school where I conducted my fieldwork. I thus, often empathized with the children and their negotiation of the school space.

Having outlined my epistemological stance and acknowledged how I was implicated in the making of the field, I now focus on the way in which children have been, and currently are being researched and the way in which I approached my own research with children.

3.4 Listening and Hearing Children's Voices: Actively Engaging Children in Research

Up until the last 10-15 years much social science research was conducted 'on' rather than 'with' children[1]. Trapped within dominant developmental frameworks, children were often treated as passive objects of research and experimentation; scrutinised, tested and measured rather than having their experiences and perspectives valued, respected or heard (Alldred, 1998). The emergence of the 'new social studies of childhood', however, and the re-conceptualisation of children as competent and knowledgeable agents, together with the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)[2], have fuelled attempts for research instead to be conducted 'with' children and in ways which actively involve them in the research process (McAuley, 1998; Sinclair, 2004; Hill, 2006). Indeed, it is increasingly being conceded that children are experts on their own subjective experience, perceptions and lives. Concerted efforts are being made, therefore, to foster a 'children's standpoint' (Alanen, 1994). This standpoint accepts that children can speak in their own right and have valid views and experiences (Alderson, 2000).

[1] In some psychological fields, research with children still is conducted in this way.
[2] Particularly Article 12 which states that children who are capable of forming their own views should be accorded the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them.

It thus aims to both listen to, and provide a public platform for children's voices to be heard (Alldred, 1998).

Yet, whilst it is common for researchers to report having conducted participatory research with children, Kellett *et al.* (2004) argue that it is often adults that shape research projects and then involve children as participants[3]. In my own research, however, I tried, as far as possible to actively involve the children in the research design. I endeavoured to create opportunities for them to play an active role in the consent process, in choosing the ways in which they wished to personally participate in the data generation process, and as far as possible (i.e. within the broad research aim) to shape the substantive focus of the research. After the data generation process, opportunities were created for the children to look over some of the research data generated and their own views sought on their involvement in the research processes as a whole. Each of these will be discussed and reflected on in more detail later in the chapter. In the following section, however, I outline how the approach I took to researching 'with' children informed the ethical position that I adopted.

3.5 The Ethical Framework of the Research

Whilst ethics are central in social research with participants of any age, developments in the way in which children are involved in research (i.e. as 'active' participants rather than 'objects') have heightened concerns about using respectful and ethical methods and frameworks (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). Christensen and Prout (2002: 482), however, have questioned whether research with children necessarily raises unique issues about methods and ethics. In fact, they suggest that instead of assuming a basic difference between children and adults, we *start* from a position of 'ethical symmetry'. By this they mean that we do not have to use particular methods or work with a different set of ethical standards when working with children. Instead, "any differences . . . should be allowed to arise from this starting point, according to the concrete situation of children, rather than it being assumed in advance" (Christensen & Prout, 2002: 282). Whilst thus referring to the British Sociological Association (2002) and the National Children's Bureau's (2003)

[3] Although more recently, there are have been a few instances where children have been involved as co-researchers (see for example, Smith *et al.*, 2003; McLaughlin, 2005) and as researchers themselves (see for example, Alderson, 2001; Kellet *et al.*, 2004),

statement of ethical practice, together with the series of questions posed by Alderson and Morrow (2004), I began from a position of ethical symmetry and adopted a reflexive ethical approach throughout my research; carefully adopting the most ethical practices locally specific to the research context and participants studied. Since ethics weave through every aspect of the research, however, rather than attempting to artificially separate certain ethical issues or 'moments' and combine them all in one section of this chapter, I interweave them throughout this chapter and the thesis. Although attending to what Christensen and Prout (2002) refer to as the more 'formal requirements' of ethical practice therefore (e.g. access, gaining and maintaining consent, confidentiality and anonymity), I also discuss what they refer to as the 'broader aspects of the research process'. This includes a discussion on the children's involvement in choosing the way in which to personally participate in the research, in shaping the substantive focus of the research and being involved in the generation of concepts and themes in the analysis process. Dilemmas such as trying to maintain privacy and ensuring that the children were not pressured into participating in the research are also addressed. The first broader aspect of the research process (highlighted above) is discussed in the following section below.

3.6 The Design of the Research

The study upon which this thesis is based was conducted at one primary school fictionally called St Martin's[4] and adopted typical ethnographic[5] practices. Indeed, whilst some school-based ethnographies of children and childhood focus on more than one research site (see for example Thorne, 1993; Gordon *et al.*, 2000; Devine, 2003; Renold, 2005), I chose to focus on one. My reasons for this decision stemmed from my desire for thick, rich and in-depth accounts of different children's experiences and perspectives; something which, as a novice researcher with only a limited amount of time within which to conduct my fieldwork[6], I thought might not be possible, had I studied more than one site. In total, 25 children (11 boys and 14

[4] This name was suggested by some of the children in the research.

[5] I adhere to Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995: 1) interpretation of the term 'ethnography', and regard it as a particular method or set of methods and where, "in its most characteristic form it involves . . . participating, overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research".

[6] I had to be realistic about the amount of time that I could spend in the field since my funding for my PhD was limited to three years.

girls) participated in the study. All were drawn from the Year 6 class at St Martin's. My rationale for the ethnographic nature of the research is provided below.

The majority of my fieldwork took place over a five-month period during the autumn and spring terms of 2004/05, although I did spend a further few days at the school at the end of the summer term of 2005 (see Appendix 1 for a temporal map of the fieldwork). As James (2001) contends, it is through the immersion in the lives of those we seek to understand over an extended period of time, and in various levels of engagement with informants, that rich interpretive understandings evolve. The actual amount of time I spent in the field ranged between three and five days a week. Indeed, Hammersley and Atkinson posit that:

"The production of decent fieldnotes, transcribing audio- or video-recordings, the indexing and filing of material, writing memoranda and reflexive notes are all time-consuming and demanding activities. . . Long bursts of observation, uninterrupted periods of reflexive recording will thus tend to result in data of poor quality" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 48).

Certainly, I did find my days spent out of the field particularly valuable and fundamental to the research process in order to organise, type up, transcribe and file the various data generated as well as to undertake some preliminary analysis. Moreover, by creating a balance between the time spent both in and out of the field, I was able to sustain a renewed and reflexive perspective on both the research setting, the participants and fieldwork, as well as the subsequent data that was generated. I did not want to over-identify with the children, staff or setting and lose sight of my research intention and outlook (Delamont, 2002: 37).

In designing my research, I decided that participant observation would be one of the techniques used. Aside from this, however, the additional techniques employed in the research and the focus of the research (within the broad overarching research aim) were selected and directed largely by the children themselves. Not only did this respect the children as persons in 'their own right'. It also meant that the research was more ethically sensitive since the children were able to provide their full

informed consent, knowing completely how they would participate and what issues would be discussed.

Initially, however, many of the children were unaware of the different techniques that could be employed. This was not, I suggest, because they were children since I suspect many adults without research training or knowledge of research would be unaware of different methods to use (see also Kellett *et al.*, 2004 for a similar discussion of this issue). Group sessions were thus set up to discuss possible 'viable' methods that could be used. Whilst the children stressed that the methods used had to be "fun," they also wanted to employ methods that would optimise their freedom to address their own agendas and the chance to be able to tell me as much as they could about their childhood lives and experiences. They also wanted the methods to "help me" as much as possible[7]. Alongside my participant observations, therefore, all of the children chose to be involved in researcher-facilitated paired/group interviews. Many were also involved in one or more of the following: peer-led interviews, written/audio diaries, taking photographs and subsequent interview discussions about their images. The scope of data generated is summarised in table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 The Scope of Data Generated

Research Strategy	Total
Days/Hours Participant Observation	61 /396.5
Paired/Group Interviews	41
Peer Interviews (at school/home)	5
Audio/Written Diaries	14
Sets of Photographs	19
Paired/Group Photograph Interview Discussions	8

Following the initial two weeks of my fieldwork which I spent acclimatising myself to the research setting, getting to know and building a rapport with the children, these strategies were employed at various points during the study (see Appendix 1). Interviews were conducted throughout the autumn and spring term (November-March 2004/5). The children who wanted to keep diaries and/or conduct peer interviews or take photographs were provided with cameras and notebooks at the end of the autumn term. Some of the children continued these up until the spring half

[7] I was aware that the children's desire to assist me, may have impacted on the methods they chose. However, I did stress that whilst it was important that the methods chosen, would generate insightful data, it was also very important that they enjoyed participating in the ways which they elected.

term. Paired/group discussions were then arranged for those children who wanted to discuss photographs that they had taken and carried out after the spring half term.

After a few months away from the field, I returned to St Martin's (in July 2005) to discuss with some of the children my emerging ideas and themes from the data and seek their own inferences on these ideas and themes. I wanted to try and involve them beyond the data generation process. Unfortunately, time was limited. Both the children's (school) and my own commitments[8], meant that I was unable to spend as long as I would have liked involving them in this way; and so not all of the children were able to participate in this part of the research. In this final phase of my fieldwork, I did, however, seek all of the children's views on the research and their involvement in the research process. This part of my fieldwork is discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter. In the following section, I introduce the research setting and participants.

3.7 The Research Setting and Participants

3.7i St Martin's Primary School

St Martin's primary school is a mixed-sex voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school situated in a pleasant village suburb in the south of Wales. The school serves four nearby Catholic parishes and attracts predominately white 'middle-class' Catholic families from well-established surrounding areas. In order to preserve the distinctive Catholic identity of the school, the school prospectus details in its admission policy that the school has an 'arrangement' with the local education authority whereupon they "are not required to comply with a request for the admission of a child who is not a baptised Catholic where that admission would cause the number of pupils of other denominations/faiths to exceed 10% of the total admission group, even if the Standard Admission Number is not reached". The school's policy also requires that teachers[9] are Catholic. The majority of children regularly attended church. As a self-identified 'non-Catholic' therefore, I sometimes felt like an outsider and that I did not belong in the school. I had very little knowledge of the Catholic faith and did not know whether or not to participate in

[8] During July 2005 I presented my first paper at an international conference and so had taken time to write, prepare and attend this.

[9] Other school staff (i.e. non 'teaching' staff) do not have to be Catholic.

their daily prayers for example. I was also regularly asked by both children and staff alike whether or not I was Catholic and often felt guilty and awkward for not being (although nothing was ever said to make me feel this way).

The school has a pupil roll of 207 and seven classes in total (Reception up to Year 6) with Standard Assessment Task results (at the time of my study) above the national average[10]. The school building is a small 1960s single-storey structure comprising of a reception area, secretary office, a large hall[11] with an adjoining kitchen, seven classrooms, two libraries (one infant and one junior), a staff room, the head teacher's office, the Special Educational Needs teacher's room, staff toilets, and the photocopy/music room. Outside, there are two concrete playgrounds (one for the 'infants' and the other for the 'juniors'). The school also had a large playing field on which pupils are permitted to 'play' during the summer term.

3.7ii The Children

The twenty five children who participated in the study were a relatively homogenous group of children. All were either 10 or 11 years old and drawn from the (only) Year 6 class in the school. At the start of the year, there were thirty children in the class, twelve of whom were boys and seventeen whom were girls, although during the spring term Yasmine left the school. Out of the twenty five children who participated, two (one boy and one girl) were of South Asian background and the rest were 'white'. Naomi (the South Asian girl) classed herself as 'Indian-Welsh'. Yasmine was the only child in the class to have been born and lived in England, and described herself as 'English'. The rest of the children (including George, the only other South Asian participant) very proudly identified themselves as 'Welsh'. All but one of the children (Kai) had one or more siblings. Nearly all of the children came from two-parent families (apart from one girl who lived with her father and two girls with their mothers and mothers' partners). Their parents were nearly all 'middle-class' (all but two of the children) and employed in professional occupations such as teachers, doctors, dentists and accountants. Like their parents, most of the children

[10] Although SATs are no longer compulsory in Wales.

[11] One of the principal functions of the hall is to house the children during dinner times. Collapsible tables and chairs are set out during lunch hour for the children to eat their sandwiches and 'hot dinners' although it is also used for assemblies, concerts, P.E. and some after school activities.

had high aspirations and planned to go to university. There was, however, a range of academic ability in the class.

3.8 Accessing the Research Setting and Participants

In designing the research, I had planned to carry out a few weeks of exploratory pilot work between June and July 2004 before the end of the summer term and then to conduct the main study in the same school at the start of the new academic year in September 2004. Yet this was not possible since despite contacting six different schools (initially via letter which I then followed up with a telephone call a few days later) at the beginning of May 2004, all refused me access saying that they were currently overwhelmed with students and schoolwork.

Following a month of refusals, I contacted the head teacher at a school where I had previously carried out some fieldwork and was able to conduct a two-week period of exploratory fieldwork in one of the Year 6 classes in the school in June 2004[12]. Meanwhile, one of my supervisors contacted one of her 'friends' (who knew a number of head teachers) on my behalf, and asked whether he could help me negotiate access into a school. He put me in touch with Mrs Hayes (the head of St Martin's) who he said sounded "very interested" in accommodating my research and we arranged to meet at the beginning of September 2004.

Although when I first met with Mrs Hayes the focus of my research had altered since she had agreed to meet with me (see Chapter 1), she was still very interested in my research and readily gave her agreement to me carrying out fieldwork in the school. We agreed that I would begin in November 2004 (after the autumn half term) until the spring half term in February 2005. I showed her the parent consent letter that I had drafted at her request, which she amended (see section *3.9i* below). We then made arrangements for them to be given to the parents prior to me beginning my fieldwork. Before November (when I was due to start my fieldwork) I met with Mrs

[12] At this stage, my research focus was rather different to that developed in my main study and so the empirical chapters in this thesis contain only data generated from the main study. The pilot study was however, still useful for piloting the use of focus groups and diaries with children and for gaining some experience of participating and observing in school setting settings, which as a novice researcher I had little experience of.

Rotheroe (the Year 6 teacher) and discussed my research and fieldwork intentions. She also seemed happy with everything that I proposed to do.

Once I had begun my fieldwork I was able to negotiate and extend the period of fieldwork. Initially I extended my fieldwork from four to five months (until March 2004). Towards the end of this period of fieldwork however, I managed to negotiate a further two weeks of fieldwork (after the SATs) in July 2005.

3.9 Gaining and Maintaining Informed Consent

3.9i The 'Need' for Parental Consent

Like Thomas and O'Kane (1998) I had wanted the children's participation to be dependent on the *active* agreement of the child and *passive* agreement of the parents. Indeed, the British Educational Research Association's (2004) 'Revised Ethical Guidelines for Research' requires researchers to comply with Articles 3 and 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These Guidelines for Research explain that this means that children who are capable of forming their own views, should be granted the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, which means that they should be facilitated to give their fully informed consent.

Initially, I wanted the children's active consent to take priority over their parents' consent. However, Mrs Hayes wanted the parents' active consent in advance of me starting my fieldwork. At my first meeting with her, she asked that the 'opt-out' letter that I had drafted for the parents be changed to enable parents to specify whether they were 'willing' or 'unwilling' to let their child partake. Since my access to the school was reliant on the agreement and goodwill of Mrs Hayes I amended the letters (see Appendix 2). The consequence of this, however, meant that the children's decision was compromised and despite some of them telling me that they wanted to be involved, five of the thirty children in the class, were prevented from participating in the study[13]. Whilst I thus began from a position of ethical symmetry and (as in research with the majority of adults) wished to privilege the participants' consent, I found that in practice this was not possible.

[13] I accepted these parents' decisions and did not approach them and try and persuade them to change their minds, which in hindsight I regret since having done so may have enabled these children to participate in the research.

3.9ii Gaining and Maintaining the Children's Informed Consent

Although first gaining their parents' consent, my principle concern was to gain and maintain the children's voluntary informed consent[14]. The Economic and Social Research Council's 'Research Ethics Framework' states that:

"Informed consent entails giving as much information as possible about the research so that prospective participants can make an informed decision on their possible involvement" (ESRC, 2005: 24).

On the first day of my fieldwork therefore, I gave each child in the class an information leaflet describing who I was, issues surrounding my research, and their own participation in the study if they decided to become involved (see Appendix 3). I then discussed these issues in more detail in small discussion groups with the children (whose parents had agreed to them partaking in the study). Within these discussions, particular attention was paid to issues relating to participation in the study. Specifically, (in accordance with ethical guidelines and my desire to enable the children to have as much control over their involvement in the study as possible) the voluntary nature of their involvement was emphasised, and the fact that if they decided not to participate in any way and at any stage in the fieldwork, they could do so without any negative consequences[15] (but see section 3.16 below). Yet, in addition to this (and again in line with ethical frameworks), considerable attention was also given to discussing issues of confidentiality and anonymity. I explained that I would take care to disclose information only in ways that protected the identity of those who provided it[16] except in cases where someone was being harmed or at risk of being harmed and another adult was unaware. Indeed, Williamson *et al.* (2005: 405) argue that "when researchers fail to outline the limitations of confidentiality, children are denied the right to engage fully within the informed consent process". We then discussed different things that could constitute 'harm' and the children seemed to

[14] I did, however, write two additional 'research update' letters during the course of my fieldwork, informing parents of the research and fieldwork progress and any changes that the course of the fieldwork had taken. Subsequent to the initial consent no parent, withdrew their consent or similarly, retracted their initial refusal and at no time during the fieldwork was I contacted by any of the parents.

[15] This was continually re-emphasised throughout my time in the field.

[16] In order to protect their identities, the children were all given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms. Most of the children seemed to like the idea of having a 'secret identity.' All but one child chose their own pseudonyms and the boy that did not said that he 'didn't mind what he was called' and said that I could choose for him. In addition to this, neither the school nor the research location was identified and other facts that may have identified them were changed or omitted.

understand the implications of the actions that would be taken if such a situation arose[17]. The children were reminded of these limitations prior to interviews and a note was placed in diaries, which some chose to keep. It was harder to remind the children of these limitations when participating/observing their lives, although all of the children who participated in the study, chose to partake in interviews and so were reminded at these times.

It is well documented, however, that gaining consent is not a one-off procedure (see for example, Statement 25 of the 2002 British Sociological Association's ethical guidelines). Indeed, the ESRC Research Ethics Framework outlines that in participatory research:

"consent to participate is seen as an ongoing and open-ended process. Consent here is not simply resolved through the formal signing of a consent document at the start of research. Instead it is continually open to revision and questioning. Highly formalised or bureaucratic ways of securing consent should be avoided in favour of fostering relationships in which ongoing ethical regard for participants is to be sustained, even after the study itself has been completed" (ESRC, 2005: 24).

As far as possible therefore, I endeavoured to renew the children's consent throughout my time in the field. When participating in or witnessing conversations, this was difficult. Renewed consent could, however, more easily be provided in other data generation techniques[18]. In thus being open about my research intentions, continually seeking the children's consent, and emphasising the voluntary nature of their participation, together with the fact that they could refuse to participate at any time, I endeavoured to create a research environment where the children did not feel pressured into participating in the study and could continually provide their informed consent (or indeed dissent) to being involved in the research.

3.10 Field Relations and Roles

> Fieldwork involves the enactment of social roles and relationships, which places the self at the heart of the enterprise. A field, a people, a

[17] Fortunately no such situation arose during my time in the field.
[18] There were times when the children did momentarily withdraw their participation from such techniques (see also section 3.16 below).

> self are crafted through personal engagements and interactions among and between researcher and researched. This negotiation or crafting of ethnographic selfhood in the process of fieldwork can be thought of as the establishment of a field identity or field role (Coffey, 1999: 23).

As researchers, we can never become 'full' participants in the lives of those we research. We must then, adopt particular roles during our time in the field. These are constantly negotiated and renegotiated with different informants throughout a research project (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Throughout my time in the field, I was positioned and positioned myself in various ways (from 'observer' to 'agony aunt') and participated in children's social worlds to varying degrees. I took on more of a passive observer role, for example, during teacher directed lessons, assemblies and periodically, on the playground. At other times, I took on a more interactive role and joined in with the children's conversations and activities in both the classroom and playground.

3.10i Power and Authority

One of the most pertinent issues that adults attempting to access children's social worlds and cultures must address, however, is the power differential socially embedded in child-adult relations. Whilst some researchers have attempted to discount this power imbalance, by denying their adult status (see for example, Mandell, 1988; Holme, 1998), Kellett and Ding (2004: 170) suggest that "a shift to a more equal distribution of power between the adult and child" is required. Like Mayall (2000) therefore, I did not deny my adult status but instead strove for less adult-centric roles. Unlike the majority of adults in the school, I asked to be called by my first name. I tried to avoid situations that augmented my adult status, and spent as much time as possible with the children (both in the classroom and playground) rather than with other adults in the school.

Fortunately, Mrs Rotheroe (the class teacher) rarely placed me in situations that compromised this less adult-centric stance (e.g. by asking me to watch the class for a few minutes, or assist the children with work). However, unsurprisingly there were times in the classroom when some of the children drew on my status as a more knowledgeable adult and requested that I "help" them with their work. Whilst I did not pretend that I was unable to help them (except at times when I honestly could not

e.g. Welsh lessons), I always suggested that they check what I had said with Mrs Rotheroe, reminding them that I was not a teacher. I nevertheless, remained aware that in particularly dangerous or potentially dangerous situations, my moral obligation and responsibility as an adult made it necessary for me to intervene. Fortunately such cases were seldom, as an adult staff member had usually either witnessed or reached the scene before myself. There was, however, one occasion when I walked into the unsupervised classroom to find some of the year 6 boys 'high jumping' over some high-stacked chairs. I thus advised that they stopped their game in case they injured themselves.

3.10ii Personal Characteristics and Attributes

Whilst I attempted to minimise the power differential between the children and myself, unlike other researchers (see for example Fine & Glassner, 1979; Corsaro, 1981; Pollard, 1987; Mandell, 1988; Thorne, 1993) whose size, age, maturity and appearance affected their initial rapport with the children they were researching, my appearance and age did not present such problems. Indeed, my physical appearance (as a young, 'white' moderately dressed adult) did not markedly distinguish me from the majority of the Year 6 girls that I was studying. In fact, on one occasion I was mistaken for being a school pupil and chastised by one of the teachers for 'walking past her' in the corridor while she was reprimanding a pupil. This was until she realised who I was and apologising, said that she thought that I was one of the children. My age, social class and race also facilitated my inclusion in both boys' and girls' conversations and playground activities; I liked similar music, television programmes, knew and could join in with many of the games that they played in the playground, and shared some of the same interests and experiences.

3.10iii Building Positive Relationships

Whilst being a young, 'white', middle-class researcher did go some way towards building a good rapport between the children and myself, Pattman and Kehily (2004: 134) highlight that "becoming accepted by children and young people to the point where they are willing to share their experiences with you involves time, active listening and mutual respect". The sharing of information was certainly crucial in developing a positive and trusting relationship with the children. This was highlighted most pertinently in one interview after I hesitated in responding to two

girls' question, asking me whether or not I was "a virgin". Reminding me that 'they answer my questions' they told me that it was only fair that I answer theirs, which I agreed and answered.

The sharing of information, however, went beyond personal information. Indeed, I was frequently positioned as a 'knowledge source' about certain things (e.g. puberty, university, adulthood) and also as an 'agony aunt' for some of the girls, as they solicited my help and advice over problems that they had. Sometimes they would also confide in me about issues that they did not want to share with their friends/other children in the class. As far as possible, I tried to ensure and maintain confidentiality. Moreover, after realising that I 'wouldn't tell' the boys, for example, would 'misbehave' in front of me, sometimes using me to 'keep watch' and make sure that Mrs Rotheroe was not watching them.

This, together with the sharing of knowledge and information thus assisted in building a good research relationship with the children and in them positioning me as an 'adult friend' and sharing their thoughts and feelings with me[19]. They would include me in their class and playground conversations, and the girls would request in class that I sit on their table and 'hang out' in the playground with them. Moreover, although I did spend more time with the girls on the playground and it was them rather than the boys who requested I sit next to them in class and shared more personal information with me, I still built a positive rapport with the boys in the class; the information they shared with me and subsequent data generated, was just as rich and insightful as that provided by the girls, as is revealed in the four ensuing empirical chapters.

While there thus remained an obvious and inescapable generational gap between the children and myself, the different roles that I adopted enabled me to develop a positive relationship with the children. Moreover, they also enabled different kinds of data to be generated (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 109). The more passive roles,

[19] I did not however, engage in what Duncombe and Jessop (2002) refer to ethically dubious 'over rapport' wherein the boundaries between 'real' and 'fake' friendship blur (see also Coffey (1999) for a reflective discussion on research relationships). This was less of an issue because of the generational gap between the participants and myself, although throughout my fieldwork I never 'pretended' or indeed attempted to become a 'friend' in the same way as their peers.

for example, enabled me to make more detailed observations and notes while the more participatory roles enabled me to share in their experiences and gain an in-depth insight into the children's social worlds and cultures.

3.11 Fieldnotes

As I highlighted in section 3.2 above, 'the field' is not something that exists 'out there' waiting to be captured and documented. Rather, it is constructed "both through the practical transactions and activities of data collection, and through the literary activities of writing fieldnotes, analytic memoranda and the like" (Atkinson, 1992: 5). The fieldnotes that I thus created were but one version of the field, as opposed to a reflection of reality (Atkinson, 1992; Reid *et al.*, 1996), albeit as faithful to the way in which I perceived it to be as possible.

In order to construct a version of the field as close to how I conceived it to be, the ideal would have been to make notes during my actual participations/observations. However, this was not always appropriate. Indeed, Emerson *et al.*note how although one may wish:

"to preserve the immediacy of the moment by jotting down words as they are spoken and details of scenes as they are enacted; on the other hand he may feel that openly writing jottings will ruin the moment and plant seeds of distrust" (Emerson *et al.*, 2001: 357).

Like Graue (see Graue & Walsh, 1998) then, my notes were quite detailed during "teacher-directed periods" and I was able to get many verbatim quotes and provide detailed accounts of the classroom interactions. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 182-3) stress that "the actual words people use can be of considerable analytic importance" since they provide us with "valuable information about the ways in which members of a particular culture organise their perceptions of the world, and so engage in the 'social construction of reality'". However, when interacting with the children in the classroom, playground and during assemblies, I thought it inappropriate to take notes. Yet, Graue importantly notes that the understandings that she obtained from her interactions with the children would not have been possible if she had only been a passive participant (Graue & Walsh, 1998). When participating in the field therefore, I refrained from creating written records; instead making

mental notes and as soon as possible after, made jotted notes, little phrases, and quotes. As Emerson *et al.* (2001: 356) note, these can help "preserve the immediacy of feelings and impressions and to maximise the ethnographer's ability to recall happenings in detail".

Following a day's fieldwork, however, I would always set some time aside to type up a full and extended version of my day. Indeed, Hammersley and Atkinson highlight that:

"There is no advantage in observing social interaction over extended periods if inadequate time is allowed for the preparation of notes. The information will quickly trickle away, and the effort will be wasted. There is always the temptation to try to observe everything, and the consequent fear that in withdrawing from the field one will miss some vital incident. Understandable though such feelings are, they must, in most circumstances, be suppressed in the interests of producing good quality notes" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 179).

In order to make my fieldnotes as clear and vivid as possible, I meticulously noted dates, times, places, individuals involved and the contexts in which they took place. I also distinguished verbatim speech from my own summaries or reconstructions of the speech, which I made if I was unable to accurately record the dialogue. By using double speech marks to represent direct quotes and single speech marks to record indirect speech there was no ambiguity with whose 'voices' the text represented. In addition, I tried to represent volume of speech by the size of letter, using capital letters when voices were raised and small font size for quiet utterances. I also depicted pauses like so '. . .' and tried to convey non-verbal expression and pace in order to convey the speakers meanings as accurately as possible. The procedures and processes I thus took, I believe, facilitated me writing more detailed and elaborate fieldnotes that were as close to the field as I conceived possible.

Having outlined my field relations and roles, and the way in which I (re)constructed the field, the chapter now details the ways in which the children chose to personally participate in the research; namely through interviews, written/audio diaries and visually through taking photographs.

3.12 Researcher-Facilitated Paired/Group Interviews[20]

The ways in which we understand and create meanings is collectively constituted through interaction with others. As Kitzinger (1994: 117) posits, "we are part of complex and overlapping social, familial, and collegiate networks". She thus proposes that in exploring people's experiences, understandings, and perspectives, we employ methods that "actively encourage the examination of these social processes in action" (Kitzinger, 1994a: 117). Paired/group interviews may provide the means for achieving this (Kitzinger, 1994a, 1994b; Kreuger, 1994; Morgan, 1998; Bryman, 2001) since they enable the "multi-levelled and dynamic nature of people's understandings" and their "fluidity, deviations and contradictions" to be captured (Kitzinger, 1994b: 172). All of the children in the study chose to participate in either paired or group interviews. Issues of grouping and dynamics, structure, focus and social interactions in the interviews are discussed below.

3.12i Grouping and Dynamics

The children organised themselves into groups. All comprised of pre-existing friendship groups and were single sex. Indeed, while there have been debates regarding the use of pre-existing friendship groups (see for example, Kitzinger, 1994a; Morgan, 1998) Hill (1997: 176) suggests that, "children will probably talk more freely in established groups, than when brought together purely for the research". The size of the groups ranged from two to five. After some initial interviews, regroupings occurred as a number of the girls wanted more opportunity to contribute to the discussion and some felt more comfortable discussing issues with only their 'best friends' and myself. Certainly, more open and in-depth insights could often be gained from paired interviews. As Kreuger (1994: 79) comments, smaller groups may be "preferable when participants have a great deal to share about the topic or have had intense or lengthy experiences with the topic of discussion".

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[20] Although concerned with paired/group interviews, in this section, I draw on 'paired,' 'group' and 'focus group' interview literature. Indeed, there is considerable discrepancy as to the social dynamics of group and focus group interviews. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) distinguish focus groups from the broader category of group interviews for example, by the explicit use of group interaction to generate data. Still, others conceive of focus groups as a type of group interview (Gibbs, 1997; Morgan, 1998; Bryman, 2001). In practice, focus groups may share many of the same characteristics of other group interviews and indeed, many researchers use the terms interchangeably. It is for this reason that this section draws on literature concerning both group and focus groups literature to discuss the use of paired/group interviews in my research.

3.12ii Structure and Focus

The relatively unstructured and flexible approach that I adopted in the interviews afforded the children the opportunity to set their own agenda and "terms of the discussion" (Mauthner, 1997: 123). Often they preferred me to initiate the discussion and "ask us [them] some questions". Rather than following a pre-set structure of questions, I structured the interviews loosely around general themes to allow the children to develop the focus and discuss issues that were important and significant to them. Sometimes, I would ask them specific questions about things that they had written in their diaries, for example, or things that I had drawn from my participatory observations. Yet, I tried to facilitate rather than control the discussion and strove to create an open, non-judgemental and permissive atmosphere in which all the children felt free to share their points of view. I tried not to intervene in discussions, although I sometimes probed for further details, asking them to clarify or expand on things that they had said by acknowledging and extending certain points that some of the children made.

3.12iii Social Interactions and Processes

The paired/group interviews certainly did create a context that enabled the ways in which the children collectively created meanings and 'realities' to be studied. Indeed, throughout the interviews, the children would often comment on what each other had said, sometimes clarifying and extending each other's leads, picking up on things and building on what their friends had said. They did not, however, always agree with each other. As Kitzinger (1994b: 171) comments, participants "question one another, try to persuade each other of the justice of their own point of view and sometimes they vehemently disagree".

Being in their pre-existing friendship groups also meant that they would often discuss shared experiences. It also had the potential to 'keep each one another on track' (Graue and Walsh, 1998) by scrutinising and evaluating each other's statements. An example of this is presented in the following interview extract below wherein two of the boys are discussing 'being mugged':

> Sherman: It was kinda dumb though, coz we'd just got mugged and then we like we could have gone home or something and then we just kept

50p and went swimming.

Andy: But it wasn't very fun. I dunno why it just wasn't.

John: Well you got mugged.

Sherman: Well we didn't really care coz like we didn't like/

Andy: Well Sherman we did care because like we went to four different police stations.

Whilst Sherman downplays the concern that Andy and himself had about being mugged to his friends and myself, Andy corrects him by pointing out that they "did care" because they went to four different police stations. Pre-existing friendship groups also had the potential to facilitate sensitive disclosures, which may not have otherwise been forthcoming; or to foster a third person to introduce an incident or event about their friend, which may not have otherwise been revealed.

Interviewing children in pairs and small groups can thus provide a more supportive and enabling environment than one-to-one situations (Hill, 1997; Graue & Walsh, 1998; Mayall, 2000; Eder & Fingerson, 2002). It can encourage richer insights into their social lives, with them reminding each other about things, extending responses, disagreeing with each other and scrutinising each others' comments and responses. Moreover, the relatively unstructured nature of the interviews enabled the individual children and groups to focus the discussion in the way that they elected, leading to a dynamic and diverse set of issues being addressed and discussed.

3.13 Peer-Led Interviews

The relatively unstructured and flexible approach adopted in the researcher-facilitated paired/group interviews afforded children the freedom to discuss topics salient and important to them. Nine of the girls, however, wanted to take an even more active role in the data generation process and so decided to devise and carry out some of their own interviews with each other[21]. There are a few research studies that highlight having used peer-led interviews (see for example, West, 1999; Alderson, 2001; Young and Barrett, 2001; Kellet *et al.*, 2004; Murray, 2006). To date, there exists very little discussion on the employment of this method in research with children. Yet, importantly, peer-led interviews may redress the large power differential that exists between adult-child and older-younger child interview

[21] Although some of the boys considered interviewing each other, they decided not to, saying that they would not know what to talk about and would end up 'just messing around' and so would prefer to just continue with the interviews that I facilitated.

situations (although this does not completely avoid issues of power – see previous chapter on notions of power and also section *3.13ii* below). In total, three different groups of girls conducted their own interviews (two pairs and one group of five girls)[22]. Two of the girls decided to plan and carry out the interviews at home. The other girls decided to plan and conduct the interviews at school. All of the nine girls alternated between being the interviewer and interviewee(s).

3.13i Planning and Performing

During break and lunch times the girls who conducted their interviews at school would sit down and brainstorm questions, sometimes collectively, and sometimes individually. Whilst brainstorming the girls asked me to sit with them, and would often show me the questions that they had devised, asking me my opinion on them. During this time, I would try and remain as passive and neutral as possible. All of the questions the three groups of girls devised were very focused and specific, unlike the majority of those I posed in the interviews I facilitated. This was interesting given that the girls participated in a number of researcher-facilitated interviews before they planned and carried out their own. Moreover, the way in which they structured and carried out the interviews, took a rather formal question-answer format[23]. Most of the questions, for example, were too specific to enable detailed responses. However, even when some of the girls did try and provide more lengthy responses, they were often stopped by the interviewer who would quickly move onto the following question. Indeed, they appeared to relish the power and control that the position of interviewer afforded them over their friends. In contrast to the way in which I facilitated any pair/group interviews, they attempted to augment rather than lessen the power differential that exists between the researcher (interviewer) and the researched (interviewee) and discourage rather than encouraging social interaction; the interviewer going around in a circle asking each person in turn, for their individual responses.

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[22] These were the same groupings as the ones they had organised for the researcher-facilitated interviews.

[23] The girls asked me to stay with them while they conducted the interviews 'in case there were any problems.' On one occasion, for example, Chloe and Phoebe were having trouble trying to operate the dictaphone that I had given them and so asked me whether they could use my Mini Disc recorder instead. Throughout all of these interviews, however, I tried not to intervene. Indeed, although they wanted me there, in one interview (with Kelly, Faith, Mary-Kate, Daisy and Hope) it was made clear to me that the girls did not want me interrupt when on probing one of the girls with a response that she had given, I was thrown a disapproving glare from the 'interviewer'.

Certainly, I found the stark contrast between the way in which these peer-led interviews and the researcher-facilitated interviews were structured and carried out really interesting. The peer-led interviews were more akin to the way in which interviews in news reports are conducted. Yet, this may have been more in line with these girls' notion of 'an interview' than the friendly and informal atmosphere created in the interviews that I facilitated since they never referred to the latter as 'interviews'. Instead they would ask me 'when I could take them out again'.

As with all of the data generation techniques, however, I did not try and control the way in which they participated and continually stressed that there were no right or wrong ways of employing different methods. Moreover, whilst the structure of these interviews prevented the generation of very in-depth data, they still provided important sources of data in terms of the issues discussed. Indeed, like Hecht (1998) I found that the majority of the questions that they asked each other, proved to be interesting and easily as important as the answers provided. I found that they would sometimes ask questions that would not have occurred to me to ask and could then pick up in researcher-facilitated interviews with them. Two of the three groups of girls, for example, included many questions that related to risk and child abduction, which was something that I had not thought to ask them about or, felt that I could have brought up as a topic of discussion had they not have introduced it themselves. This did not mean that my responsibility to ensuring their physical, psychological or social well-being diminished. Indeed, whilst the power differentiation between adult researcher and child participant is redressed in this situation and the children may be more comfortable answering more sensitive topics introduced by their friends rather than myself, I would have intervened in situations where children appeared to be uncomfortable or distressed. All of the children did, however, seem happy to answer the line of questioning posed by their friends. Although I would suggest, that if they were not comfortable with certain questions, these children would not have hesitated in refusing to answer questions posed by their friends. Peer interviews then, both enabled these girls to design and direct some of their own interviews with their friends, whilst simultaneously introducing new or potentially sensitive topics for discussion in subsequent researcher-facilitated interviews or other informal conversations/discussions.

3.13ii Recording and Re-presenting

All researcher-facilitated and peer-led interviews were recorded onto mini disc. On days spent out of the field therefore, interviews were fully transcribed using the word processing package Microsoft Word. The key to the transcript notations is presented in Appendix 4. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and so any grammatical errors are purposeful attempts to try and re-present the interviews as accurately as possible. Interruptions, overlapping between the voices of participants and voice tone, pitch, etc., are also included for the same reason. Pseudonyms are, however, used and names of places changed in accordance with the ethical approach I adopted.

3.14 Photographs

The visual image surrounds our everyday lives (Chaplin, 1994). Indeed, Pink (2001: 17) posits that they are "inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with definitions of history, space and truth". Holliday (2000) argues, that visual methods allow participants to choose how they are represented and appear to offer a glimpse into the everyday worlds of respondents and their fluid and fragmentary identities in unique ways.

The opportunity to take photographs to construct and portray their childhood identities certainly appealed to many of the children who participated in the study. In total, nineteen children took photographs. All but one of these children[24] were provided with disposable cameras which, once having finished the film, were returned to me so that I could process them. The prints were then returned to the children for them to keep[25]. Unlike Punch (2002) however, I did not 'show' the children how to use the cameras in the sense of demonstrating different photographic styles.[26] Indeed, I did not find the images that the children created interesting in the conventional sense that they were aesthetic or 'good' photographs (Radley and

[24] One of the boys (Andy) opted to use his own digital camera and print off his photographs on his own printer at home.

[25] The children did allow me to also have a copy of the prints.

[26] I did however, read through with the children, the instructions that were attached to the back of the cameras on how to operate them. Moreover, there were quite a few photographs that were blurred or did not 'come out' because the flash had not been used. In one case, only one photograph was developed because one of the girls (Naomi) had not used the flash with any of the images. In this instance I gave her another camera to use and she made sure that she used the flash with each of the photographs that she took.

Taylor, 2003). Rather, I was interested in what had been made visible and the reasons why.

3.14i Censoring Identities

Whilst the children had the freedom to decide what they photographed, in discussions prior to being given the cameras we did discuss the ethical dilemmas involved in them taking photographs of people, the school or outside of their home as well as other things that revealed their identities. As Banks notes:

> "Whilst most social researchers give their subjects pseudonyms when writing or speaking about them and perhaps alter details of locations, events or times in order to prevent the identification of individuals by other means, this option is less open to those who take photographs . . . Individuals can be seen and recognised by those who know them, or traced by those who wish to find them" (Banks, 2001: 130).

All of the children were aware of the issues surrounding confidentiality and anonymity and were keen, as far as possible, to protect their true identities. Since at the time, I was unsure of how I would use the photographs, we initially decided that it would probably be best not to take images of people and other things that would easily identify the children. Following further discussions, however, we decided that if they wanted to take photographs of these and other such things, then they could be used and shared in the interviews. Moreover, we agreed that the actual image would not be included in my thesis or any other reports arising from my research but may be spoken or written about. Many of the children did, therefore, take photographs of their homes, the school, friends, themselves, and members of their family although the majority of their images were of objects or ambiguous places or spaces. Many girls took photographs of their room, clothes, CD's and other possessions (see figure 3.1). Similarly, many boys took photographs of football strips, computers and games (see figure 3.2).

Figure 3.1 A Photograph of Phoebe's Bedroom

Figure 3.2 A Photograph of Kai's X Box Games

Indeed, Holliday (2000) contends that:

"Most of us display our identities in visual ways through different arrangements of cultural products such as clothes and interior décor and the kinds of books, records and CDs we choose to put on display for others" (Holliday, 2000: 513).

Like Radley and Taylor (2003) however, I found that the photographs of places and objects did not preclude the children from talking about the images in relation to other people who were associated with them. Moreover, the photographs that the children took provided me with a greater insight into their childhoods outside of school, which I was unable to observe.

3.14ii 'Showing' and 'Telling'

Like Clark (2004), I found that many of the children expressed pride in the photographs that they had taken and took great delight in sharing them with their friends[27]. Most of the children wanted to discuss their images in small groups with their friends and myself[28]. In these discussions, however, the photographs were not seen as simply a copy of 'reality' or an unproblematic representation of what is observed (Fasoli, 2003). Rather, they were conceived as artefacts of the contexts in which they were constructed and then in which they are later consumed (Fasoli, 2003). Indeed, the subjectivity of photographs has the potential for a variety of different and perhaps conflicting meanings to be accorded to the image as it is viewed by different eyes and audiences in diverse temporal historical, spatial and cultural contexts (Pink, 2001). Cook and Hess (2007: 43), for example, note how in their study where photography was used with children, images had multiple meanings both for the children and 'adult viewer' and how the images "offered a perspective from a given context, at a given time".

In the small photograph group discussions therefore, I adopted what Fasoli (2003) refers to as a 'reflexive account of context issues'. I asked the children to explain what was happening in the photograph, when and where the photograph was taken, and importantly, why the photograph was taken, together with the significance and meaning that the children attached to it. Images, some of which were relatively banal, were thus made meaningful through the subjective gaze of the viewer, each of the children producing these photographic meanings by relating the image to his or her existing personal experience, knowledge and wider cultural discourses. As Prosser (2000) (cited in Fasoli, 2003) notes, in adopting a reflexive approach the photograph and text can work together to enlarge each other.

3.15 Audio/Written Diaries

Out of the twenty five children who participated in the study, ten girls and four boys chose to keep either audio or written diaries. As Plummer (1983: 17) posits, diaries

[27] Nearly all of the children stuck them in their diaries or in scrapbooks that they were provided with and either labelled or wrote in detail about each of the images that they had taken. These children allowed me to photocopy them but did not want me to keep the original copy because like the diaries, wanted to keep the data record of their lives that they had enjoyed spending time producing.

[28] All of these were recorded onto mini disc and again transcribed according to the way in which the interviews were (described above).

are 'documents of life' which track "the immediately contemporaneous flow of public and private events that are significant to the diarist". Rather than comprising of one general retrospective account of individuals' social experiences, diaries are thus written discontinuously providing a day-to-day record of the ever-changing present (Plummer, 1983). This, in turn, captures the diarists' multiple, fluid and fragmentary identities, changing experiences, feelings and perspectives.

The length of time that the children kept diaries varied between one week and three months, although as time went on they wrote less and less. The length of the entry also differed, often depending on how busy and/or how literate the children were. As with all of the other data generation techniques, I wanted to enable the children to structure their diaries and entries how they wanted to and to write/talk about what was important to them. The children thus, approached the way in which they kept their diary in different ways (as figure 3.3. and 3.4 illustrate below).

Figure 3.3 An Extract From Hope's Diary

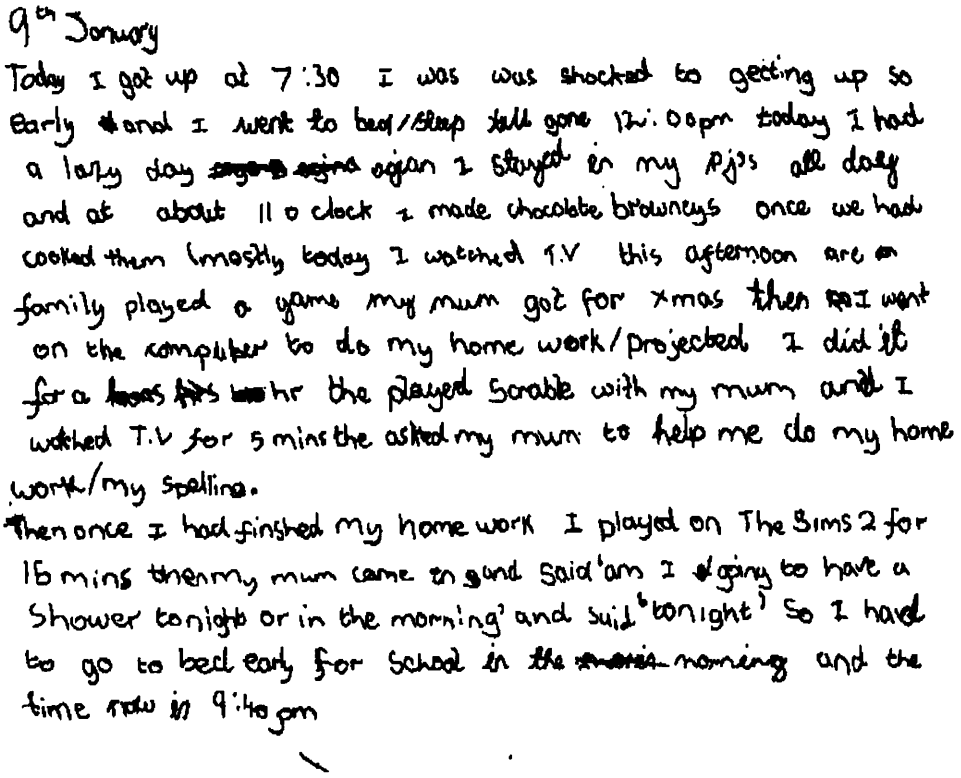
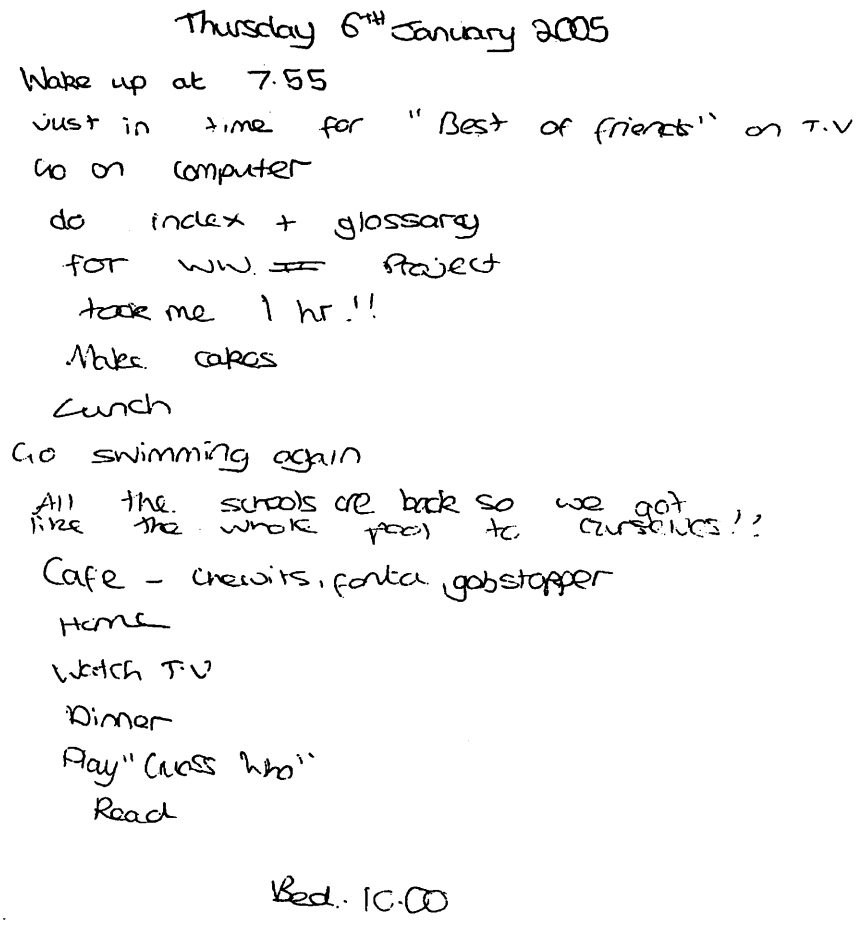

9th January
Today I got up at 7:30 I was was shocked to getting up so early and I went to bed/sleep till gone 12:00pm today I had a lazy day again I stayed in my PJ's all day and at about 11 o clock I made chocolate browneys once we had cooked them (mostly today I watched T.V this afternoon are family played a game my mum got for xmas then I went on the computer to do my home work/projected I did it for a hr the played Scrable with my mum and I watched T.V for 5 mins the asked my mum to help me do my home work/my spelling.
Then once I had finished my home work I played on The Sims 2 for 15 mins then my mum came in and said 'am I going to have a shower tonight or in the morning' and said 'tonight' So I have to go to bed early for school in the morning and the time now is 9:40pm

Figure 3.4 An Extract From Mary-Kate's Diary


Thursday 6th January 2005

Wake up at 7.55

just in time for "Best of friends" on T.V

Go on computer

do index + glossary for WW II project took me 1 hr.!!

Make cakes

Lunch

Go swimming again

All the schools are back so we got like the whole pool to ourselves!!

Cafe - chewits, fonta, gobstopper

Home

Watch T.V

Dinner

Play "Guess who"

Read

Bed. 10.00

The diaries varied, for example, in day-to-day content and detail, the intimacy of the diarist's revelations, and the balance between reflecting on the content and more straightforward reporting of events. All however, provided valuable sources of data, particularly since the diaries were distributed at the end of the autumn term meaning that many entries were made during the 'Christmas holidays'. This thus provided me – as an outside observer – with an insight into an inaccessible part of their lives. Yet, even after the 'holidays', many children spent more time reporting on their lives out of school and unless something they felt that something significant had happened, would often describe their day at school as "the same as usual". They thus enabled me to identify, and explore the parts of their lives that they deemed as important enough to report on and some of the children's thoughts and feelings on these events.

Once the children had finished their diary, they allowed me to either transcribe (in the case of audio diaries) or to photocopy (in the case of written diaries) them. Those

who had kept audio diaries wanted a copy of this transcription although said that they did not want to keep the original tape. As with the interviews, transcriptions of these diaries were kept as close to the original recording as possible. The majority of children who kept written diaries wanted to keep the original copy although they allowed me to photocopy them. Indeed, I found like Punch (2002: 335) that the majority of children seemed to enjoy "creating a document of their lives which they would be able to keep".

3.15i The Authenticity of Diaries in Research

Whilst I found diaries important sources of data, Elliot (1997: paragraph 4.9) argues that diaries commissioned for research are not private documents and from the outset they are written with a particular reader and their agenda in mind. However, Dinsmore argues that no diaries are 'exclusively' and 'authentically' private. Specifically, she contends that "all diarists have an imagined reader for their work, even if that reader is a facet of her own self" (Dinsmore, 1996 cited in Holliday, 2000: 515).

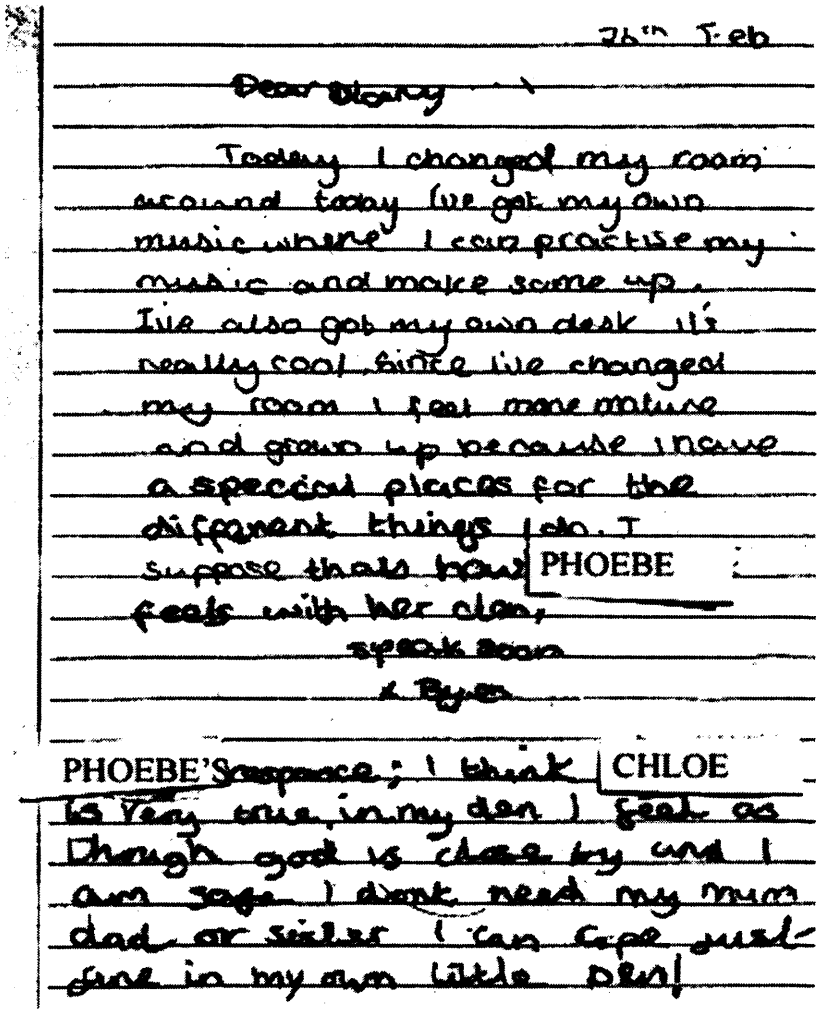
The fact that they were writing their diaries for the study, was apparent in many of the diaries that the children kept for me, although I felt that this had a number of advantages. As well as their day-to-day entries, for instance, many children also included information about themselves (e.g. their likes and dislikes, favourite things and hobbies). Yet the awareness that these children had about purposes and intentions of the diaries they kept, helped overcome ethical problems over over-disclosure; where they may have forgotten the true purposes of the task and reported something that they would not want to be disclosed. In one case, for example, one of the girls reflected on her day although at the bottom of the entry asked me not to include that day in my 'project'. Writing for a reader did not, therefore, preclude some of the children from sharing their private and inner thoughts and feelings with myself as the researcher.

3.15ii Sharing Experiences

It was not, however, only me but also their close friends who (all of) the children shared their diaries with. Indeed, at the beginning of her diary, Chloe 'promised' that she would share the things that she wrote in her diary, with both her best friend

Phoebe and myself. A clear illustration of this 'sharing' was when Phoebe 'responded' to a diary entry that Chloe had made:

Figure 3.5 An Extract from Chloe's Diary



Sharing their diaries with each other also meant that I was able to draw on things in a peer/group interview, which they had reported on in their diaries[29]. This allowed me to clarify, tease out, and expand on certain issues. It also allowed me to tap into their feelings and reflections about certain issues that they had reported on, if they had provided more of a chronology of events. Indeed, Elliot (1997: paragraph 4.14) posits that "the process of returning to an informant and accessing different kinds of accounts provides the opportunity to develop a researcher's understanding of the

[29] Although in accordance with the ethical framework I adopted, each time I did this I would always make sure prior to the interview that they were happy with me doing this.

meaning which informants' attribute to certain events". This in turn, allows participants to reflect and possibly reconstruct their constructions of social reality.

3.16 Tensions to Realising Children's Choices and Ideas

Whilst the research was specifically designed to maximise children's own choices, experiences and ideas (both with regard to levels of participation and issues addressed), there were tensions in conducting such research in the highly regulated and controlling institution of the school, where there are negative implications for children's agency (Devine, 2002). I have already outlined the tensions surrounding issues of consent (see section *3.9i*). However, the times children were able to participate in interviews and discussions were dependent on the teachers' sanctioning. Consequently, these were often during what Mrs Rotheroe deemed 'less crucial' lessons (e.g. P.E., Art, Music) but lessons that many children found most 'fun'[30]. On one occasion, for example, halfway through an interview one girl (Lucy) decided that she did not want to miss the music lesson and so said she would do the interview "another time"[31]. However, when Mrs Rotheroe discovered – on a separate occasion – that I had not interviewed any of the children during the music lesson because many said they enjoyed this lesson, she said that was "too bad" and that the children had agreed to be in the study and so it was not their decision when to be interviewed. When I reminded her of the voluntary nature of their involvement, she remarked how that was all very well but I had my fieldwork to complete!

Indeed, at times, Mrs Rotheroe's desire to assist my fieldwork sometimes posed a potential threat to the children's agency over their participation in the research. One time, for example, after seeing the cameras that I had brought in, some of the children decided that they too wanted to take photographs as part of their projects. Unfortunately, this meant that I was unable to provide everybody with cameras on that day and so said that I would buy some more and then give them to them after the weekend. Realising the situation, Mrs Rotheroe called for the attention of the class

[30] Because the children were often 'prefecting' or attending committees or clubs, opportunities for them to participate in interviews during break and lunch times were seldom. Moreover, because it was required that a member of staff stay inside and supervise them, the children's privacy would have been compromised and so most decided against conducting them during these periods.

[31] Aware of the tension involved in the children deciding whether or not to sacrifice a "fun" lesson to participate in an interview or discussion I was careful to always accentuate the voluntary nature of their involvement and stressed that they could withdraw their involvement momentarily or all together from the study at any time without feeling bad for doing so.

and told the children that they should "stick with what you [they] had first said you [they] wanted to do" and not "keep changing your [their] minds". Throughout my fieldwork therefore, I continually emphasised to both the children and Mrs Rotheroe, the voluntary nature of their participation and how they chose to participate within the research. Fortunately this, coupled with the good rapport I developed with the children, seemed to be enough to discount the influences/'help' from Mrs Rotheroe. Throughout the study, some children did decide not to continue participating in a certain way or indeed, elect to participate in a different way although, they would ask me not to tell Mrs Rotheroe because she would only "get funny" with them.

Having discussed each of the data generation techniques in turn, the chapter now turns to the way in which the data were made meaningful through analysis and represented in the thesis.

3.17 Making the Data Meaningful: The Process of Analysis

In making meaningful the data generated in my fieldwork, I adopted Peirce's (1979) notion (as taken from Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) of abductive reasoning. Such an approach involves "a repeated interaction among existing ideas, former findings and observations, new observations, and new ideas" (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 156). Indeed, Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 156) comment that in comparison to inductive[32] and deductive[33] approaches, abductive reasoning "seems to capture more productively how researchers in all disciplines actually think and work". Yet, whilst there are a number of ways to achieve qualitative analysis (Lofland and Lofland, 1995), Miles and Huberman (1994: 9) identify several features that are common to all analytic approaches. These include: affixing codes to data, noting reflections and remarks, sorting and sifting through data to identify relationships, patterns, differences and themes and using these in subsequent processes of data generation.

The initial step in this cyclical process, however, involves reading and becoming familiar with the data that has been generated (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). As Dey (1993: 83) posits "reading and annotating are processes which aid the

[32] This is where you begin with an open-ended and open-minded desire to know a social situation or setting and then theories are generated from the data alone.
[33] This is the polar opposite to inductive reasoning, where data are used to test existing theories.

'digestion' of our data". Both during and following my fieldwork period therefore, I spent considerable periods of time reading, re-reading and annotating all of the data generated. Delamont (2002:169-170) suggests that by reading and re-reading, researchers "draw out both recurrent patterns and instances that run contrary to those patterns". Taking comfort in Dey's (1993: 89) advice that memoing should be a creative activity, and that memos should be suggestive and need not be conclusive, I noted down all of my reflections, impressions, questions and ideas regardless of how insignificant or obvious I deemed them to be.

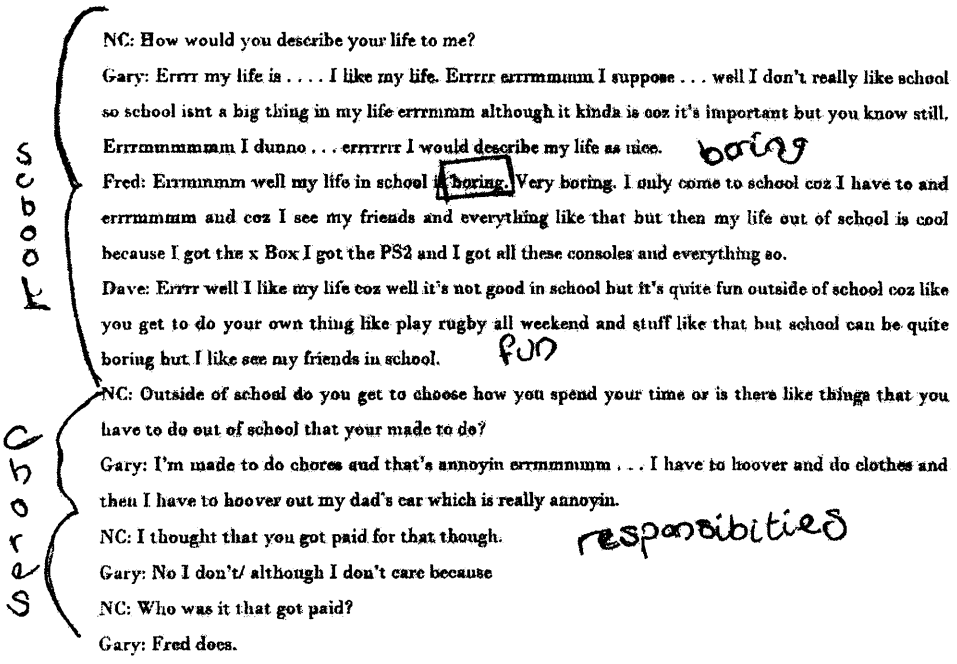
Following careful reading and memoing, I coded 'chunks' of data (Miles and Huberman, 1994), which I then brought together to create categories that were linked by a particular topic or theme. These codes were driven by the research questions but were also sensitive to issues that the children identified to me as most significant and/or addressed more frequently or in more depth during the course of the study (see paragraph below). Initially, many of the codes were rather basic 'in vivo'[34] codes (Strauss, 1987) (e.g. 'rules', 'rule breaking' 'grounding') but gradually became more conceptual (e.g. 'power', 'agency', 'resistance') as I began to locate the data in explanatory or interpretive frameworks (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Indeed, Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 30) posit that coding involves, "going beyond the data, thinking creatively with the data, asking the data questions, and generating theories and frameworks". As part of this, I explored my own experiences and knowledge of similar phenomena as well as ideas from wider literature. Such coding processes assisted in both reducing and complicating the data, enabling new levels of interpretation to be gleaned (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

Time restraints (with regard to the length of time I was able to spend in the field) and tight school schedules and commitments did prevent the children from being involved to any great extent in the analysis process. Yet, I did discuss some of my initial codes and ideas with a few of the children and provided them with the opportunity to read through, annotate and code some of their own interview transcripts; asking them to prioritise things that they thought were important and if

[34] These are codes that are derived from the terms and language used by the social actors (Strauss, 1987 cited in Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

they were writing my thesis, what themes/issues they would explore and (re)present (see figure 3.6 below).

Figure 3.6 Children's Coding of an Interview Transcript



Indeed, (as highlighted in section 3.4 above) although concerted efforts have been made to involve children in choosing the research methods, agenda setting and data generation, Barker and Weller (2003) note that the process of analysis in research, is largely undertaken by adult researchers; they select which voices to include in the analysis and dissemination of research (but see Thomas and O'Kane, 1998; Smith and Barker, 2000b for examples of studies that have attempted to involve children in analysis). Thus, although I do not claim that the children completed a full-blown analysis of the data and the final (re)presentation of the data has been carried out by myself, they were involved in the coding stage of analysis. This not only enabled me to ascertain whether or not the children agreed with the inferences being drawn by the research about their experiences so as their voices were not misrepresented or misperceived. It also enabled the children to participate in the research beyond the data generation process, to look over and visually see what they had said in interviews, which was something that they all relished doing.

Once having coded the data, I then began exploring and interpreting the codes and categories created. Whilst aware of the many different computer packages designed to assist analysis, I chose not to use any for analysis of my own data. Indeed, Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 27) assert that "the importance of the work lies in how we use the codings and concepts not in whether we use computer software to record them or rely on manual ways of marking and manipulating the data". I thus used a PC to type up and store all of the transcripts and to code them using the copy and paste functions in Microsoft Word. I then printed all of these out and with the photocopies of the children's diaries and photographs, physically cut up all of the coded data extracts and laid them out on the floor. This enabled me to physically pore over them, rearrange, label and re-label the different piles and bits of data (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). It also allowed me to repeatedly familiarise myself with the data and provide me with a renewed perspective in order to re-think and develop original codes and concepts.

I followed the process outlined by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) and examined all data segments subsumed under each category, comparing and contrasting them with other data, noting similarities and differences, irregularities and inconsistencies. This led to some categories being 'split up' (Dey, 1993) into new, yet more clearly defined subcategories. Indeed, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 213) posit that "as this process of systematic sifting and comparison develops, so the mutual relationships and internal structures of categories will be more clearly displayed". Yet, in addition to exploring data and relationships within categories, relationships were also explored between the categories themselves. Dey (1993: 141) states that "we need to think in terms of a category set rather than an unrelated and haphazard collection of individual categories". He refers to the process of interweaving categories as 'splicing' and posits that by splicing, we are able to identify the most central and significant categories and main strands of analysis and help identify the direction of the analysis. Through brainstorming I was thus able to experiment with the different ways in which the categories and concepts could and, indeed, did relate together.

3.18 (Re)presenting the Field

Whilst the term 'data analysis' is often used to denote processes such as those outlined in the section above, Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 108) argue that analysis is most fundamentally about "the representation or reconstruction of social phenomena". Yet, as highlighted in section 3.2, we do not just report what we find, but rather create versions of the social worlds and the participants we observe (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Research cannot, therefore, be 'written up' "as if it were a mechanical exercise, or as if the written text were a transparently neutral medium of communication" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 255). We are profoundly implicated in how we reconstruct the social worlds we report. As such, the analysis of social life cannot be divorced from how we write about it (Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 253).

In Chapter 1 I outlined how I re-presented the data in this thesis according to different spaces. The data presented in the four empirical chapters are, however, only mere slices and segments of the entire mass of rich, contradictory and messy data generated. These have been selected because they best address the relationship between my research questions and the children's (constructions of their) experiences and perceptions. Indeed, Hammersley and Atkinson note that:

"descriptions and exemplifications that are too dense, too detailed, or too protracted will not normally lead to a useable text. Comprehensiveness and comprehensibility compete to some extent. For the most part there is a trade-off between the two, and the ethnographer needs to construct accounts through partial, selective reporting" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 248).

The excerpts selected comprise largely of interview data since these were thought to best convey the children's voices, views, experiences and perceptions of 'be(com)ing a child'. Pseudonyms were used rather than numbers or letters since they provide the reader with the chance to 'get to know' the individual children better throughout the thesis. Finally, my use of footnotes and brackets throughout the chapters of this thesis are intended to highlight points which are relevant to issues being described/discussed but that may disrupt the flow/direction of the narrative if not segregated in this way. I hope therefore, that the way in which this thesis is

structured, and the data I have chosen to include, foregrounds the children's voices in a way that is insightful yet accessible to the reader.

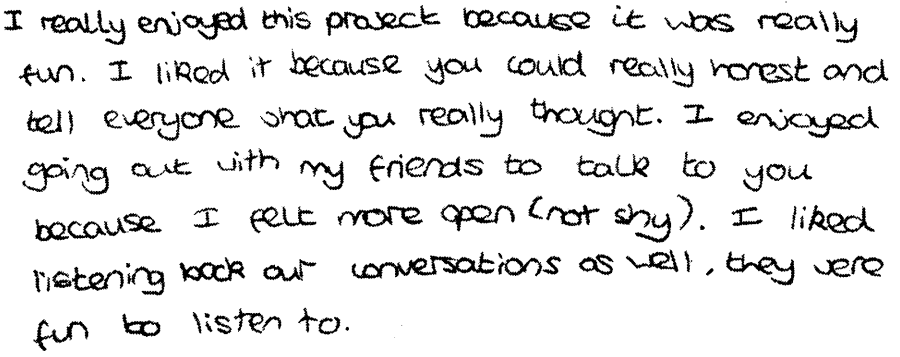
3.19 So What Do You Think?: Children's Views of their Participation in the Research

Whilst thus far, this chapter has provided the reader with my own reflective account of the research process, I would argue that it is equally, if not more important to consider the children's own thoughts of this process. As Edwards and Alldred (1999) assert, although there is a general concern to 'empower' children through research by making their voices heard, there is very little attention given to exploring how children view research. Indeed, whilst as adult researchers we may feel and claim to be conducting 'participatory' research 'with' children, such feelings may not be shared with the children themselves.

At the end of my time in the field, therefore, I sought the children's views on the research and their 'participation' within it. Asking them to answer honestly, I thus distributed anonymous feedback forms with space for them to provide responses to a number of questions. The questions are presented below along with some of the typical responses the children provided:

Figure 3.7 Anonymous Feedback Responses to Question 1.

*"Please could you write about anything that you **liked** or **enjoyed** about the project?"*


I really enjoyed this project because it was really fun. I liked it because you could really honest and tell everyone what you really thought. I enjoyed going out with my friends to talk to you because I felt more open (not shy). I liked listening back our conversations as well, they were fun to listen to.

I enjoyed the project because it was fun and It was based on us not Somthing about adults.

Figure 3.8 Anonymous Feedback Responses to Question 2

*"Please could you write about anything that you **disliked** or **did not enjoy** about the project?"*

I didn't disliked anything because it was just really great fun

All the other groups went out and we had to wait our turn.

Figure 3.9 Anonymous Feedback Responses to Question 3

"How much freedom do you feel that you had to choose what you did in the project and how you were involved?"

I think I had quite a lot of freedom and how I was involved : We had diggerent subjects that we could talk about when being interveied, lots to say in the diarys (both audio and writing). It was fun. I was involved in it by doing all the things that I have just said.

well, we were able to choose either to tape record something or write it down or even both. e.g you might not want to say it on tape so you could write it instead. Or you could mention it in your talk aswell that really helped and also we could take pictures and write about them.

Figure 3.10 Anonymous Feedback Response to Question 4

"How much freedom do you fell that you had to decide the topics that were covered in the project?"

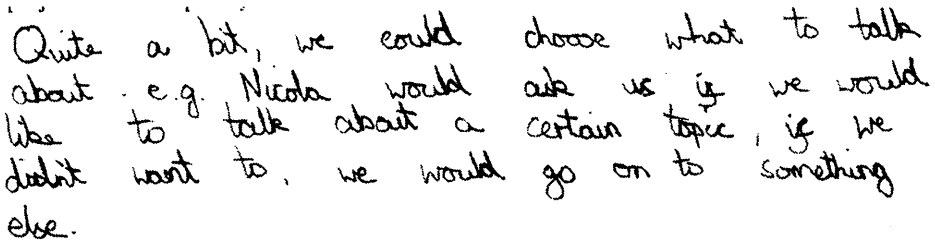
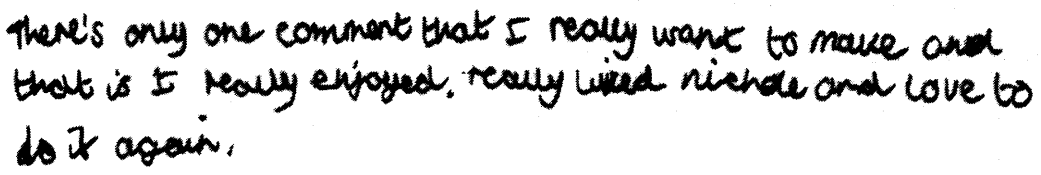


Figure 3.11 Anonymous Feedback Response to Question 5

"Is there anything that you would have changed to make the project better or more fun or interesting?"

Figure 3.12 Anonymous Feedback Response to Question 6

"Please write any other comments or feelings that you have about the project and about you being in the project?"



As is illustrated by the extracts above then, the children were generally positive about the research, enjoyed participating in it, and conceived themselves as having quite a directive role in choosing how they participated and the issues they addressed. Indeed, the only negative comments that were made (by a minority of children) were with regards to them wanting more opportunities to participate in researcher-facilitated interviews. Based on their feedback, therefore, (despite some tensions – see section 3.16 above), my endeavours to actively involve and foreground children's voices, choices and ideas were largely successful and their participation in the study enjoyed by both the children and myself alike. In the final

section of this chapter I discuss issues of validity, reliability, replicability and generalisability and their applicability to my own research.

3.20 Validity, Reliability, Replicabilty and Generalisability

Notions of validity and reliability are problematic and contested ideas in qualitative research, particularly when adopting an epistemological stance such as the one I have in this research. Validity and reliability as they are applied in positivist and pure realist research (which seeks to uncover and represent the independent, knowable objective truth) are, for example, rendered meaningless. Yet, equally, I do not find principles such as those outlined by Silverman (2001)[35] particular useful either. Instead, I follow both Creswell and Miller (2000) and Hammersley (1992) who conceive of validity as relating to how accurately ones account(s) represent those features of phenomena it is intended to describe, explain or theorise. In this thesis, therefore, I have endeavoured to (re)present the children's subjective experiences and perspectives and 'the field' as close and faithfully as possible to what I conceived to be 'true' reflections of the phenomenon. I also spent a prolonged time in the field, actively involving the children in the research process and produced thick and rich descriptions of the research and findings; which are all things that Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest may aid the validity of qualitative research. The whole research process (from planning to dissemination) has, however, also been described and presented in an honest and reflexive account in this chapter. Indeed, Altheide and Johnson (1998: 292) suggest that clearly delineating the process by which the research occurred, "including accounts of the interactions among context, researcher, methods, setting and actors" can be used as an approach to evaluating ethnographic research. This thus enables the reader to "judge the validity of claims on the basis of the adequacy of the evidence in support of them" (Hamersley, 1992: 69).

Like validity, notions of replicability and generalisability – in the positivist sense – are unworkable in qualitative research. Since all ethnographic type research is context and temporally specific, and researchers are the 'research instrument *par excellence*' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), their construction/(re)presentation of

[35] Silverman (2001) suggest five interrelated ways to produce more valid qualitative research. These include: refuting assumed relations between phenomena, employing the constant comparative technique, being able to apply generalisations made to every piece of data, to employ a deviant case analysis and, use appropriate tabulations.

the field is intrinsically bound up with personal characteristics and orientations. Replicability in such research is thus an unattainable endeavour. Yet, with regard to generalisability, Coffey and Atkinson assert that, whilst we do not generalise in same way that a survey researcher hopes to that:

"qualitative data, analysed with close attention to detail, understood in terms of their internal patterns and forms, should be used to develop theoretical ideas about social processes and cultural forms that have relevance beyond those data themselves" (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 163).

Data generated from small specific samples and local contexts cannot/should not be used to make universal claims. Along with the methods and methodological position adopted in the research, however, data can be situated among existing literature/studies and can be broadly contextualised enabling tentative generalisations be made by comparing and contrasting it with other 'findings'. This, together with possible conceptual and theoretical insights can thus be used to inform future research and ideas.

3.21 Concluding Notes

This chapter has outlined and explored the methodological aspects and approaches of the research with which this thesis is concerned. Acknowledging and respecting children as experts in their own subjective experiences and perspectives, with a right to have them heard, much of this chapter has been concerned with documenting my endeavours to maximise and 'give voice' to children's own choices, experiences and ideas throughout the research. Rather than shaping the research study myself and then involving the children as much previous research has done (Kellett *et al.*, 2004), this chapter has shown how I sought to (and as the children's feedback indicates) successfully enable the children to play an active and directive role throughout the research from gaining and maintaining (informed) consent through to processes of analysis. By locating the study at one school (in one Year 6 class), adopting typical ethnographic practices, and reflexively participating (at various levels and in various less adult-centric ways) in the daily (school) lives of twenty five children over a nine-month period, I described how I was able to build a positive and trusting relationship with the children where they were able and felt comfortable to 'voice'

their own choices and share their experiences and perspectives. This in turn, enabled rich interpretive data and subsequent understandings to evolve (James, 2001).

The chapter did highlight a number of tensions (specifically in relation to consent and the teacher's own beliefs during the data generation process). I nevertheless sought to convey how the design of the research provided the children with considerable degree of autonomy to select and direct both the ways in which they participated and the issues they addressed. Both the researcher-facilitated and peer-led interviews, for example, provided the children with a space to structure and address/discuss issues of concern to them with their friends in a safe and comfortable environment. The researcher-facilitated paired/group interviews also captured the way in which meanings are understood and created through social interaction and encouraged richer insights into their social lives, as they extended responses, concurred, contradicted and scrutinised each others' comments. Cameras gave the children the freedom to visibly construct and represent their fluid and fragmentary identities and worlds in unique, multiple and contradictory ways, the images being made meaningful by relating them to their experiences, knowledge and wider cultural discourses. Diaries (written and audio) enabled the children to write/talk about their daily lives, providing them with a record of their ever-changing experiences, feelings and perspectives.

Actively engaging children in processes of data generation, however, not only respected and gave 'voice' to their choices and concerns. It also ensured that the research was more ethically sensitive (the children being aware how/when they were participating and the issues that would be discussed). Moreover, the methodological stance resulted in the generation of a rich and diverse set of data that addressed a wide array of issues and agendas pertaining to the way in which they 'live out' their lives as children in different spaces, relationships and time. The data were made meaningful through abductive reasoning and the cyclical process of reading, re-reading, annotating, coding and categorising chunks of data. This both reduced and complicated the data, enabling new levels of interpretation to be gleaned. The children's involvement in the initial coding process went some way to ensuring that their voices were not misrepresented or misperceived in the thesis as well as further involving them as participants in the research. Codes and categories were then

compared and contrasted, split and spliced in order to manage and maintain the children's still messy, complex and contradictory 'realities' (all of which are socially constructed via discourses and discursive practices). These 'realities' are (re)presented in the four empirical chapters in this thesis (as faithfully as possible to what I conceived to be 'true' reflections of the phenomenon in order to aid validity) alongside my own interpretations/analysis and additional research literature (enabling comparisons and subsequent generalisations to be made) according to different social spaces.

Having outlined and explored the methodological and theoretical aspects and approaches of the research in this and the previous chapter, the chapter now turns to the empirical chapters of this thesis. The first (and following one) is concerned with children's constructions of be(com)ing 'a child' in 'public' space and how dominant discourses of children impinges on their access to, and negotiation of and in this social space.

Chapter 4

Strangers and Dangers: 'Risks' and the (Adult) Surveillance, Supervision and Control of Children in Public Space

4.1 Introduction

With current moral panics (Cohen, 1972) surrounding Britain's 'anti-social' 'youth culture', the (adult) notion that children and young people do not belong in public space may never have been so strong. Whether the perpetrators of 'anti-social' behaviour or vulnerable innocents in need of protection from the 'risks' pervading Britain's streets, children are very much regarded by adults as being 'out of place'. This chapter reinforces this notion as I reveal how dominant (contradictory) discourses of children as either 'at risk' or 'the risk' suffuse the children's everyday lives; heavily constraining their access to and negotiation within local public places and spaces where they lived. The chapter thus begins by exploring some of the children's intense feelings of marginalisation from supposed 'public' places (local shops) by unknown adults (strangers). I highlight their struggles (and both successes and failures) at resisting and rejecting the interactive positioning of themselves as deviant potentials; reflexively positioning themselves as 'respectable' middle-class citizens. In so doing, they draw upon the cultural capital that their middle-class status affords them, to negatively depict and construct their working-class peers as the 'real' deviant 'Others'. Part of this chapter is, however, concerned with exploring some of the children's gendered fears of public space and their take up of positions of innocence and vulnerability. Echoing these fears, the children highlight how their parents perceived them to be in need of protection from the 'dangerous' outdoor world. The chapter outlines some of the strict spatial and temporal boundaries some of the children portrayed their parents imposing on them. In the final part of this chapter, I thus examine some of the safe alternative play spaces/places with which they were provided.

4.2 'If You're on Your Own or Just with Friends, Adults Don't Trust You': Children's Perceptions of Adult Suspicion and Surveillance of 'Unsupervised' Children in Public Places

Writing about children's participation within modern British public life, Alan Prout (2000: 304) argues that despite the recognition of children as individuals with a capacity for self-realisation and autonomous action, public policy and practice are increasingly marked by surveillance, regulation and control of children and young people. As I highlighted in Chapter 2, the media are currently saturated with negative depictions of children and young people (working-class in particular) engaging in anti-social and unlawful behaviour in and around Britain's streets. This, coupled with Government initiatives such as the 'Respect Agenda' (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 8) appear to be fuelling a string of moral panics regarding children and public space. Indeed, from the accounts given by some of the children in the research, it seems as though these panics have proliferated to such an extent, that – regardless of class, race, behaviour or intentions – the mere presence of 'unsupervised' (i.e. those not in the company of adults) older children and young people in public space (and places within this space) attracts adult anxiety and concern. As I explore in this and the following chapter, the majority of children reported spending very little time alone or with friends outside on the streets or in and around different public places (e.g. parks and shops). Nevertheless, the negative way in which they perceived adult strangers as interactively positioning them, and their subsequent negative experiences of public space, was one of the first things highlighted in initial research-facilitated interviews by two different groups of children (one group of boys and one group of girls) as a 'bad thing' about be(com)ing a 10 and 11 year old child. Part of these interviews are presented in the two extracts below:

Sherman: [. . .] the bad things are, like all like . . . you don't like, get like, respected like, as a person like adults.
George: Yeah.
Sherman: You walk into a shop and security guards just follow you coz they think you're gonna steal something.
NC: Is that when you're on your own?
George: Yeah and they always . . . yeah.
Sherman: Yeah and I have like a shop round the corner from me and my dad goes 'oh go and get me a newspaper' and then like people like follow you around like, just seeing if you're gonna steal something or anything.
George: Yeah and they always ask you, 'oh have you got your mum and

dad with you? Oh sorry you can't come in unless you got your mum and dad with you/ coz it's the rule now'.

Sherman: Yeah.

* * * *

Yasmine: Well, the bad things about being 10 and 11 errr a lot of people don't trust you because they think that you're a young teenager and they think teenagers like smoke and drink and steal things from the shop. If you went to a shop and you were in there for a long time they would tell you to get out because they can't watch everybody else in case they started stealing.

NC: Have they said that to you before?

Yasmine: Yes.

NC: What happened?

Yasmine: They shut me out the shop because I was in there for a long time and one of the shop assistants come up to me and said 'can you hurry up please because I can't . . . the shop's full' and, it was like . . . there was only about three people in there. They just wanted me out the shop because I'd been in there for a long time but I was waiting for my little sister and, it was really annoying coz they shut me out the shop but I was with my step brother and he . . . they told me to get out the shop and I thought it was really funny because my step brother he said 'oh don't worry girls you can take as long as you like and if they come round again I'll tell them to 'shut up' and then they came round again and he told them to 'shut up' and so they shut us out the shop. Then, the next day we went back in and it was really funny because they didn't trust me then and they wouldn't stop staring at me and, every single time I walked into that shop and I was by myself they got someone to either stand just behind the cupboard and pretend they were doing something and watch me in case stole something or they'd get someone to go in the next aisle and have a look what I was doing. If you go into a shop that you don't usually go into they think well I've never seen her in here before so I'll just watch her in case she steals something, so if you walk into a shop nobody trusts you coz you're so young and they think 'oh well she's little so she'll steal something if she wants it' and I wouldn't but it's just adults. They're too like curious about what kids are going to do because I don't think it's fair because if an adult walked into a shop and they asked for a something they'd come off what they were doing and they'd go and help but with a kid they'd just say 'oh they're over there'.

In both of these extracts, Sherman, George and Yasmine describe themselves as being positioned by adults as potential thieves. As a consequence, they describe either being prohibited from entering the shop, or subject to the suspicious and surveilling gaze of adult shop staff if unaccompanied by an adult in the shop. Indeed, rather than being recognised as individuals (i.e. in the singular sense of 'a child'), these children conceive adults (in this case shop staff) as drawing on the current

dominant discourse of childhood (as 'deviant' and 'immoral') to categorise all children and young people in this way. This is in contrast to the way in which George, Sherman and Yasmine perceive shop staff as positioning all adults. Sherman, for example, asserts that children are not "respected like as a person like adults". Similarly, Yasmine posits that there is a stark distinction between the ways in which child customers and adult customers are treated; adults being regarded as the competent and moral ideals. These children's indignation at being marginalized and treated differently from adults, is echoed by children and young people in Cairns' (2001) article. Specifically, Cairns notes how shopkeepers explained that signs prohibiting more than two children from entering their shop at a time or unless accompanied by adults, were in response to problems with theft. Yet, crucially, and quite correctly, the young people in the study pointed out that not all young people steal and that adults also shoplift. Moreover, they argued that the signs were discriminatory and unfair; it would not, for example, be acceptable to display a sign prohibiting women from a shop unless accompanied by a man (Cairns, 2001: 352).

In the second extract above, Yasmine reports her "step brother" and herself attempting to resist the 'discriminatory' requests to "hurry up" and to "get out the shop". However, by her stepbrother telling the assistant to "shut up" and them 'taking as long as they liked', Yasmine and her stepbrother were reinforcing and reproducing the representation of both herself, and other children as 'deviant' and disrespectful. In turn, she was also serving to fortify the binary division between adults as competent and respectable citizens and children as incompetent, unruly and in need of both containment and control.

4.3 'I Don't Act Like Those Kinda Rough Teenagers': Boys Constructing 'Middle-Class' Identities in Opposition to 'Working-Class' 'Others'

Whilst indignant that they were demonised as anti-social and unlawful 'Others' by shop staff simply because they were children, George, Sherman and their friends similarly constructed their 'working-class' peers in this way. Skeggs (2005: 977) argues that "attributing negative value to the 'working-class' is a mechanism for attributing value to the 'middle-class' self". The following extract clearly illustrates this 'mechanism'. Specifically, it reveals how in constructing their own 'middle-

class' identities, these boys were simultaneously constructing and classifying 'chavs' as the anti-social disrespectable 'Others' that they are mistaken by some adults as being:

Andy: I hate chavs
[. . .]
Andy: They're called . . . it stands for Council House At Violence but they hang around like/
George: Council estates.
Andy: Really thinking they're it and really like solid and everything and then/
George: They're always around the council houses.
Andy: Yeah, coz council estates, they know everyone.
John: Well they just . . . loads of people just hang around in street corners.
[. . .]
NC: And what do they act like?
Andy: Ermmm, solid like, rappin'.
John: No, they just . . . they just mess around and like threaten people.
[. . .]
Andy: Coz some people are scared of me but/
John: Are they?
Andy: Yeah.
NC: Why are they scared of you?
Andy: Because I'm big. They just think I'm gonna beat 'em up.
NC: What older people or?
Andy: Yeah sometimes but, well old old people get threatened by me.
John: (agreeing) Oh yeah, old old people.
NC: Adults you mean?
Andy: Not adults. Like grannies and stuff.
John: Old pension people.
NC: Why do adults think that you're gonna cause trouble?
Andy: Coz they see people like me and they just think I'm trouble.
NC: Why?
Andy: Coz it's just the way I am.
George: They're like prejudice
Andy: I don't act like those kinda rough teenagers though. If they got to know me then they wouldn't think that.

In the last few years, the word 'chav' seems to have firmly established itself as part of our English language. Hayward and Yar (2006: 10) comment that 'chav' is the new terminology for the 'underclass' and how "socially marginal groups are characterized, classified and understood". In the extract above, Andy asserts that the word 'chav' stands for 'Council House At Violence'. Although I was not familiar with this acronym, Hayward and Yar (2006) highlight how 'Council Housed and Violent' is one of several acronymic etymologies of the word 'chav'. Both however, quite aptly capture the way in which 'working-class' children and young people have

been projected in the media. Explaining to me further, George, Andy and John thus describe 'chavs' as 'hanging around' in gangs on the streets, projecting a hegemonic (Connell, 1987) working-class masculine identity by behaving in anti-social and physically aggressive ways.

Amidst moral panics of children and young people in public space Andy, however, posits that elderly (and thus more vulnerable) adults perceive him in the same way as 'chavs'. He nevertheless uses his cultural knowledge and power to reject this reflexive positioning of himself. Specifically, he compares and dissociates himself from this stigmatised social group by drawing class distinctions between them/himself (i.e. by referring to them as "rough" and situating them in "council estates") and between their behaviour and his own ("I don't act like those kinda rough teenagers though. If they got to know me then they wouldn't think that"). In doing so, Andy also uses the 'position of judgement' that his class status affords him, to consolidate and attribute value to his own respectable and 'superior' middle-class identity; simultaneously assigning these working class children/young people as the real immoral and abject 'Others' (Skeggs, 2005: 977).

In the 2005 Collins English Dictionary[1], the term 'chav' is defined as "a young working class person who dresses in casual sports clothing". Indeed, as well as drawing distinctions between their behaviour, these boys also drew on this visual stereotype in a bid to further dis-identify themselves from their 'working-class' counterparts. The extract below however, reveals the complexity and fragility of using their appearance to achieve this:

George:	They always wear Adidas or Nike white clothes.
Andy:	Nike, it's like (pointing to the symbol on Alex's Nike training shoes) that symbol is like a 'chav' sign.
George:	Yeah but Alex is fine.
NC:	So they look a certain way?
Andy:	Yeah sports clothing.
George:	You can pick 'em out from a crowd.
Andy:	Trackie bottoms and everything, and trackie tops. All white.

Whilst Skeggs asserts that in the past, there were clear differences and distances between the middle and 'working-class', now:

[1] Which is when the word 'chav' first entered the Collins English Dictionary.

"we are in a period where the proliferation of difference through markets, advertising, and other sites of the popular, means that recognition of difference is a lot more difficult to maintain, to know and to see; boundaries are far more permeable than in the past" (Skeggs, 2004: 97).

Although George thus asserts that a 'chav's' visual appearance allows you to "pick 'em out from a crowd", in describing the type of clothes they wear, Andy depicts the Nike symbol on the training shoes that Alex is wearing as a trademark 'chav' sign. Crucially, this exemplifies the way in which (what the boys construct as) 'working-class' children and young people have access to the same labels as these 'middle-class' boys; and how the visual boundary and distance between these social classes can thus be blurred. The boys' accounts in the extract above suggest however, that it was the tasteless and excessive way that chavs donned the same brands (i.e. white tracksuit bottoms and top) that distinguished them from these 'Others'. As Skeggs suggests:

"it is therefore, not just a question . . . of what clothes are worn, but *how* they are worn. The 'how' informs their exchange-value. The object does not wholly generate its value; it is the practice in which it is used . . . The generation of an aesthetic self relies on the accrual of cultural capital in the right composition, of the right volume, with the right knowledge in the right way" (Skeggs, 2004: 136).

The boys explained to me, for example, that it was the difference between wearing the same Nike or Adidas tracksuit in a colour other than white or indeed, combining a white Nike top with either different colour bottoms or jeans that visually differentiated themselves from 'chavs'. As Hayward and Yar succinctly comment:

"current popular discussion of the 'chav' focuses not on the inability to consume, but on the *excessive* participation in forms of market-orientated consumption which are deemed *aesthetically* impoverished. The perceived 'problem' with this 'new underclass' is that they consume in ways deemed 'vulgar' and hence lacking in 'distinction' by superordinate classes" (Hayward and Yar, 2006: 14).

There were thus, certain 'dos' and 'don'ts' which enabled these 'middle-class' boys to wear the same clothing brands as 'working-class' children and young people. Moreover, these markers of acceptability (i.e. the 'dos' and 'don'ts') were defined "by those who have the symbolic power to make their judgement and definitions legitimate (the conversion of cultural into symbolic capital)" (Skeggs, 2004: 107). Akin to the cultural power and superiority that these boys had to construct and position 'working-class' adolescent's as the 'real' threats therefore, their respectable (and more powerful) 'middle-class' identity enabled them to wear the same brand names and still achieve an identity distinct from working-class 'chavs'. They had the power to define and to both include and exclude as is resonated in George's comment "Yeah but Alex is fine" in the extract above. As this and the previous section has explored however, such subtle distinctions and guidelines between being a 'chav' or respectable 'middle-class' citizen nevertheless left these boys open to being positioned as potential threats to the social and moral order of public space.

4.4 'You're Like a Bigger Target': 'Middle-Class' Boys at Risk from 'Working-Class' 'Others'

Although their class status enabled the boys to 'Other' and attribute negative value to their 'lower-class' peers, they did construct themselves as embodying a physically vulnerable position against them. Indeed, just before I began my fieldwork, Andy and Sherman were 'mugged' by what they referred to as a thirteen year-old "rough lad":

Sherman:	Me and Andy we got like . . . this guy whose like . . . it was weird, and people think we're gonna cause trouble coz me and Andy we were running just like havin' fun down this road to the leisure centre, like just like we always do. We just race each other and then this guy like goes . . . we walked past and what did he say? He said like/
Andy:	Give us your money.
Sherman:	No this other guy/
Andy:	No he said/
Sherman:	No no before that there was this guy and he said 'don't go doin' anything bad' or something like that to me.
[. . .]	
NC:	Who did?
Sherman:	This guy coz he thought we were like troublemakers.
NC:	How old was he?
Sherman:	He was like this man coz he thought like that we were making trouble and then umm so we ran up and we were

trying to run past . . . we were gonna run like straight through but this rough lad stops us and he goes 'nice trainers. I'll swap you my trainers for these ones.' He had like really old baggy trainers and stuff.

Andy: Yeah.

Sherman: And then Andy goes 'well no. They're new' and then he goes 'give me your trainers or I'll beat you up' and stuff and he starts swearing at us and like threatening us and then he goes 'oh well give me all your money then' and then he stole . . . Andy had a two pound coin and that's all he had so he stole this and stole about four quid from me but I kept like 70p.

Sherman and Andy's mugging experience may certainly have been the reason behind why this group of boys were so preoccupied and at pains to construct 'working-class' children and young people as the 'real' risky 'Others' and to disassociate themselves from both these peers and the subsequent accompanying subject position. Often, for example, it was comments made by either Sherman or Andy that sparked discussions surrounding or pertaining to public space. In collectively retelling this experience however, Sherman and Andy reveal the different and contradictory ways in which they were simultaneously positioned by an adult (stranger) and one of their 'working-class' peers[2]. Specifically, they describe how despite their innocent behaviour and intentions (i.e. "running" and "having fun" racing each other to the leisure centre), like the shop assistants and elderly people (described in section 4.2 and 4.3 respectively), another adult ("a man") regarded them as "troublemakers" 'up to no good'[3]. Yet, at the same time, Sherman and Andy explain how (as well dressed boys from wealthy backgrounds) they were seen as vulnerable victims of (who they constructed as) one of the 'real' "troublemakers'" anti-social actions. Thus, whilst Andy and Sherman had the cultural capital and power to 'Other' 'working-class' children and young people, the extract above illustrates the physical power that the "rough lad" – by virtue of the rough/tough working class identity he projected[4] – could exercise over them.

Although Andy, Sherman and their friends (John, George and Alex) were therefore, amongst the most popular boys in the class and embodied a hegemonic (Connell,

[2] And hence an inter- and intra-generation disparity in this positioning and possibly also between different classes.

[3] Perhaps this was because they were seen to be running away from something or just because they were unsupervised outside in public space.

[4] And possibly his bigger physical stature.

1987) masculine identity amongst their (middle-class) school peers, they openly and unashamedly admitted their fears of (whom they constructed as) 'working-class' children and young people when in and around public space:

NC: Do you get scared when you walk past 'chavs'?
George: Sometimes.
Andy: Well, because they usually are . . . they're usually in groups and stuff.
Alex: I know.
George: Yeah and they usually like/
Andy: So they like use each other coz like, I went past these guys in this lane and then they had a guard dog and it bit me and I had a massive mark on my leg.

* * * *

Sherman: But it's quite annoying because the chavs and everything cause you get . . . sometimes you get quite frightened.
John: Yeah I know.
Sherman: You get frightened.
NC: What coz they're older?
Sherman: Yeah coz they're rough and older and you don't know what they're gonna do.

These boys' fears of their 'working-class' peers may have stemmed, or have been expounded by their actual encounters with local 'chavs'. Equally however, these encounters may have made it more acceptable for them to admit these fears[5]. In Valentine's (1997a: 77) article for example, rather than admit their fears, most of the boys bragged about the dangers in their neighbourhoods and taunted each other for being 'chickens'. Yet, crucially, the boys Valentine describes were from a "local authority housing neighbourhood" in a metropolitan area; again revealing a distinction between 'working-class' and 'middle-class' boys' identities. Moreover, in contrast to the boys in my study, the boys in Valentine's may well have been able to defend themselves from potential dangerous situations. In the first extract above, for example, Andy describes being unable to defend himself from a group of (working-class) chavs (and their dog) as he explains why he is fearful of this social group. Interestingly, however, it was a lone 'rough lad' who mugged Sherman and Andy. Yet, in the second extract, Sherman explains that it is not because they are in groups, but their age and also the unpredictability of their behaviour that 'frightens' him;

[5] These boys openly admitted their fears to other children in the class as well as myself although none of them were ridiculed or teased for this.

unpredictability that probably stems from the representation of the working class as dangerous, excessive and ungovernable (see Skeggs, 2004)[6].

Accessing and embodying positions of vulnerability, both Sherman and George thus further disassociate themselves from the negative representation of children and young people as anti-social and ungovernable. In the extract below then, Andy, John and George explain the ways in which they manage and negotiate the local outdoor space in order to avoid encounters with 'rough kids' and 'chavs':

NC: What do you do when you're walking down the street and you see a gang of them?
George: You just try and avoid them.
John: Yeah try and avoid 'em.
George: You just like cross the road.
John: When you walk past 'em just don't say anything.
George: Yeah but if they follow you across the road you gotta get someone/ because that means that they're after you.
John: I know, or turn around.
NC: Has that ever happened to you?
Andy: Yeah.
John: Yeah that's happened to me.
NC: What did you do?
John: I went across the street to see if they were following me so I like kept changing goin' across the street and see where they/
Andy: And then when people see 'em it becomes obvious/ but usually you just go and get someone coz I'm usually up and down with my dog so I always take my dog everywhere coz they're threatened by her, but like she's really dozy.
[. . .]
NC: So did you get anyone to help you last time or didn't you need to get anyone?
Andy: Well no because I went into my house so.

Just as there were subtle (visual) distinctions demarcating 'chavs' from 'non-chavs', there were certain subtle behaviours signifying whether or not their working-class peers were "after" them. Relaying these specific behaviour codes, John, Andy and George highlight that crossing the road or walking past without saying anything helps to avoid attracting these children/young people's attention or fuelling a motivation for attack (them being "after you"). Because of the vulnerable position they embody however, George and Andy describe needing to enlist the help of other people if they do start following them (see also Spilsbury, 2002). Andy also notes

[6]Although this is something that is also inadvertently implied by Andy in the first extract.

how he also uses his dog as a defence mechanism against these 'Others', although in another interview he told me that he no longer walks to the leisure centre since Sherman and himself were mugged. Here again then, we can see the perceived physical power and capital that, 'working-class' children and young people exercise over these middle-class boys. In explaining the measures that they took to avoid confrontation, and admitting their fear of rough children/young people, George, John and Andy, for example, reveal how they were governed by their fears of these 'Others' and how they limited their freedom and opportunities to 'have fun' in public outdoor space.

4.5 'He Looked a Bit Like a You Know . . . Paedophile': Girls and Adult Male Stranger-Danger

Although aware of Sherman and Andy's mugging experience, none of the other children echoed the same fears about their 'lower-class' peers or spent time talking/writing about the threats that they perceived them as posing in the public outdoor world. Notwithstanding this however, some of the girls did express their concern about the potential threat that adult male strangers posed to their safety[7]. In the case of two girls (Phoebe and Chloe) this concern was not voiced in researcher-facilitated interviews or their own individual projects, but rather in the peer interview that they independently designed and carried out with each other. Indeed, although (as with the research-facilitated interviews) there was a magnitude of issues that they could have discussed, Phoebe and Chloe chose to devote part of their interview discussing potential risky situations and unknown dangerous 'Others' that they perceived as pervading public outdoor space. Part of the interview is presented in the following extract below:

Chloe: [. . .] What is the first thing that pops into your head when I say 'stranger'?
Phoebe: Scary man. Maybe dirty.
[. . . .]
Chloe: Okay. What would you do if you thought someone started following you in a quiet area and you were on your own?
Phoebe: What would I think?
Chloe: What would you do or think?
Phoebe: Right I'll answer both of them. I would ermm go into a different

[7] These concerns were not such a persistent theme as the boys' (in section 4.4) fears about 'working-class' children and young people.

house and knock on the door and say 'this man's following me. Just let me in please or just talk to me and pretend you're my neighbour' and I would think he's going to kill me or . . I dunno rape me. That's what I'd think.

[. . .]

Phoebe: What would the first word be that pops into your mind if I said 'rapist'?

Chloe: What? . . . Rapist?

Phoebe: Yeah/

Chloe: Young girl [. . .]

Neither of Chloe's questions in the extract above are either age or sex specific, or include any reference to a murderer or sexual abuser. The first extract nevertheless, reveals Phoebe's underlying concern with adult male strangers, as she intuitively associates the word 'stranger' and the person who is following her in the scenario with which Chloe presents her with a "scary" and dangerous man and/or sexual predator. In a recent article, Meyer posits that:

"paedophilia, embodied by the figure of 'the paedophile', has recently been identified as a *major* risk to children and attracted considerable attention in the media, the government and the wider public" (Meyer, 2007: 85).

Valentine (1996b: 210) concurs as she argues that proliferated stranger-danger campaigns have led to public space being (re)produced as space populated by 'deviant' others; and in particular, where the male body is saturated with threat and danger. Indeed, in both their questions and answers, Phoebe and Chloe specifically associate the adult male with sexual risks and/or danger and position themselves (as young girls) as vulnerable against them. Despite both the construction of childhood as a time of presumed sexual innocence (Renold, 2005) therefore, and parents' denial that children know or understand the sexual risks that they are subject to (Valentine, 1997a), these girls appeared to be very aware of their body as being a sexual object of desire. Indeed, much of the researcher-facilitated interview with these particular girls was dominated by talk about puberty and their post pubertal bodies. Phoebe was the girl in the class who was most preoccupied with drawing on more mature femininities and projecting herself as 'sexy' and heterosexually desirable. Both girls were, nevertheless, aware of the pleasures and dangers of striving for and achieving an older femininity, potentially being perceived as desirable by both their peers and adult men. Concerning themselves with the unwelcome sexual advances of men, in

the extract above Phoebe thus describes how she would defend herself in a potentially sexually abusive situation in public outdoor space.

In contrast to Phoebe and Chloe, Zoë and Samantha were not interested in having a boyfriend. Neither did they appear concerned with wanting or projecting an older (pubescent) attractive appearance. Nevertheless, they were equally as aware as Phoebe and Chloe that their female bodies were/could be at risk of transgression by adult males. This is illustrated in the extract below wherein they recount a time when they perceived themselves to be potential victims of sexual attack by a "paedophile":

Samantha:	[. . .] this one time though we went to this park and umm, me and Zoë, up this street/
NC:	Were you allowed to go?
Zoë:	Yeah. We were allowed to go.
Samantha:	Yeah, just up a street and there was this man and he was on his own and he was smoking like a cigarette ummm/
Zoë:	He was just sitting there by himself in the park.
Samantha:	In a park . . . in a children's park and, as soon as he saw us he got up. So we legged it down the end of the street, we were all standing at the end of the street and this man just . . . he walks out then and he's following us. We leg it halfway down the street, we look back and he's not far behind us so we run really really fast/
Zoë:	I was crying.
Samantha:	Me and Zoë, we legged it right down the bottom of the street and he was really really really like coming up close/
Zoë:	Yeah
Samantha:	But umm he obviously looked away for a second and we legged it down Zoë's street and then he got to the end and he was just puzzled where we'd gone. He was just looking like that/
Zoë:	Yeah/
Samantha:	To see where we'd gone.
Zoë:	Me and Samantha were crying.
Samantha:	Yeah we were crying our eyes out but it was like one of the scariest experiences
NC:	Did you tell your parents?
Zoë:	Yes.
Samantha:	Yes.
NC:	What did they say?
Zoë:	They said that it was really bad.
Samantha:	Graham (Samantha's mother's partner) said he was going to go round there with a bat. But then my mum said there's a learning disability place by there but I don't think he was learning disability coz he looked fine. He just looked a bit like a you know . . . paedophile.

In section 4.2 and 4.4 I explored how some children conceived adults as positioning them as potential 'deviants' when unsupervised by other adults on the streets or in shops. Valentine (1996b) notes that there appears to be an assumption that the streets belong to adults and are not thus regarded as places for children and young people. In the extract above however, Zoë and Samantha similarly construct a man who is alone and neither with, or supervising a child in a "children's park" – a designated children's space – to be out of place and hence, a risky deviant 'Other'. Indeed, despite her mother's suggestions (possibly to deny a sexual reading) that the man may have had a "learning disability", Samantha positions this adult male stranger as a paedophile. Yet, it was not just because the man was alone in this children's space that Samantha positioned him in this way. Rather, it was also because he followed them out of the park and down the street. This is interesting, given the fact that the children in section 4.2 did not construct adult shop staff that followed them, as sexual predators. Such a disparity may nevertheless, be related to the different context in which these adults followed them. In the bounded space of the shop, where the public freely and frequently enter, these children may feel that they are more protected by people than in outdoor space. It may also be because of the different purposes and meanings of these two spaces. It is more acceptable for adults (e.g. a security guard) to follow children in shops than it is in a children's park. Moreover, in contrast to the unknown (i.e. 'strange') man who, without a child, is 'out of place' in a "children's park", the adult shop assistant is known as such and belong in shops (and so can be classified), which is where they are followed. Amidst a culture of concern surrounding paedophiles and stranger-danger however, Zoë and Samantha construct themselves under threat from this man and describe how they sought protection from potential abduction or attack.

4.6 'I'm Not Even Allowed Out my Cul-de-Sac': Spatial Boundaries and the Production and Protection of 'Middle-Class' Childhoods in Outdoor Space

The previous two sections have explored some of the gendered fears of public outdoor space. Discussing the restrictions that were imposed on their independent (i.e. unsupervised) movement within this space however, some of these and other children's accounts suggested that their parents also appeared to position them in this

way. Indeed, whilst (as highlighted above) a few children reported being "allowed" to go to certain places (such as the local shop, park, field or leisure centre) alone or with friends, they had very clear spatial boundaries of where they were and were not permitted to stray.

In outlining these boundaries, there did not appear to be any clear or significant gender differences; boys and girls reported similar levels of control on their independent movement and freedom in and around the local area. Indeed, O'Brien *et al.* (2000) comment that, although girls have previously had more restrictions placed on their access in and around public space than boys, more recent research has suggested that this gap may be narrowing. Girls, for example, have traditionally been perceived to be more at risk in public space (i.e. from sexual attacks), although boys are increasingly perceived to be at risk (from male peer violence) on the streets (see McNamee, 2000; Valentine, 2004). There were, however, complexities surrounding these spatial limitations. This was revealed to me in an interview with the same group of boys who spoke at length about public outdoor space, as they mapped out some of the places that they are permitted and prohibited from going without adult or more responsible supervision:

John: I don't think I'm allowed to go to . . . like if I want to like go to Gary's house which is . . . or Fred's house, then I'm not allowed to go because they think I'm not old enough.
Andy: Fred's house is really close to you.
John: Like I live . . I know.
George: Yeah it is.
[. . .]
Andy: I'm allowed to go to Wilsbury on my own.
John: Yeah/ I'm hardly allowed to even go to the village on my own.
George: I'm not allowed to go to Junior Club on my own.
NC: How far away is it when you walk?
Andy: Walk? Wilsbury is about five miles from me.
George: Junior Club is about five minutes, three minutes, two minutes.
John: I'm right by the village.
[. . .]
George: I'm allowed to go to the village. I'm not allowed to go down to Junior Club on my own.
Andy: I'm not allowed in like/ the nooks and crannies but you know, like little lanes and stuff like little . . . the fields and stuff, coz loads of people hang out there.
George: Even though I'm allowed to go to the park on my own. That's strange.

Alex: It's really annoyin', I'm not even allowed out my cul-de-sac. John, I'm not even allowed out my cul-de-sac.
NC: So do your parents know about the 'rough' people then?
Andy: They like . . . probably when they move they find out about the area and then they just like corner off places you can go.

In the extract above, the restrictions that both John and Alex assert that their parents impose on their movement in public space, appear to be related to their parents' perception of them as vulnerable and too incompetent ("they think I'm not old enough") to safely negotiate the dangerous public outdoors. For these two boys, their restrictions also appear to relate to distance. However, in describing places that they are and are not permitted from going, George and Andy's accounts suggest that the spatial boundaries their parents imposed on their independent mobility were also related to what Matthews *et al.* (2000a) refer to as the 'social and physical fabric of the landscape'. George, for example, says that he is forbidden from going to Junior Club on his own despite being allowed to venture to the park alone; which although not explicitly stated, implies that the park is either the same distance or further than the church hall where Junior Club is held. Moreover, Andy explains that there are certain places (e.g. "little lanes", "fields" and "nooks and crannies") that risky 'Others' encompass and that his parents subsequently prohibit him from going.

In a separate interview, Hope reveals that the boundaries of her independent mobility are also related to the fabric of the landscape. She notes, for example, how she is permitted to walk to some of her friends' houses and to the local park and swimming pool in the village where she lives. When she goes and stays in her parents' caravan however, Hope describes being given total freedom: "When I go down the caravan I'm allowed to go down the beach on my own. I'm allowed to go anywhere and I like . . . I always go in dens with everyone". Through her comments, Hope conveys a disparity between her parents' construction of the safety in the local neighbourhood and that of the countryside and coast surrounding their caravan. Specifically, she implies that her parents conceive the coast and countryside to be a safe and natural idyll where children can 'play' and roam freely without fear of any of potential dangers that pervade the suburban neighbourhood (but see Valentine, 1997b for a contrasting view of the rural countryside).

In addition to this spatial dimension, however, there was also a temporal dimension to some of the children's constructions of both their own and their parents' representations dangers that pervaded public space. This is illustrated in the interview extract and subsequent discussion below. The extract follows on from the previous extract above and details the boys' reflections of the restrictions that John's parents impose on his access to the public outdoor world:

John:	No, when I was my brother's age I could go down the village like . . . well when my brother was my age he could go down the village or whatever but I'm not allowed to for some reason. I just have to stay inside and be bored.
NC:	Have you asked why you're not allowed?
John:	Yeah. They just said its coz it's dangerous.
NC:	Do you think it's dangerous?
John:	No.
Sherman:	Well if you think about it/
Andy:	Well there's a police station in the village.
John:	I know.
NC:	What do they think is dangerous about it?
John:	I dunno/ I cant . . . I can go/
Sherman:	Muggers.
Andy:	Simon Mills[8].
Sherman:	Yeah Simon Mills.
John:	Like at the night fair enough like, but midday no one's gonna like hurt me are they. I don't get why I'm not allowed to go out.
Sherman:	No one's like gonna try and attack you in broad daylight in the village where people are there and there's a police office across the road.

Describing how he is given less freedom and access to the local area than his brother when he was 11 years old, John highlights how his parents construct the village as more dangerous now than it used to be. This echoes the popular discourse that public outdoor space is not as safe as it used to be and that today's children are not able to play outside in the same way that previous generations could (see for example Valentine, 1997a, 1997b, 2004). John, Sherman and Andy nevertheless reject John's parents' construction of the village as dangerous or that they will be mugged during the day, asserting that there are people and a police office to protect them. However, this is interesting and quite ironic given the boys' positioning of themselves as 'at risk' in and around the local village and also given that it was in the village during

[8] Simon Mills was a 'rough kid' in the local village, known by these boys, for his violence, drug use and crimes.

the day that Sherman and Andy were 'mugged' (see section 4.4 above). Moreover, a few minutes later, in this same discussion, Sherman contradictorily states: "you can't go out without people trying to steal your money and stuff". Notwithstanding this, both these boys and other children in the research did construct the "night" as dangerous. Kai, for example, explained that he is not allowed in the nearby park after 8 o' clock because of the 'chavs' that hang around and "light fires". Constructed as a designated safe play space for children during the day, in the evening therefore, the park is reproduced as a risky area; 'chavs' using this as a site with which to perform and project a rough 'working-class' masculinity (see also Harden, 2000). The spatial boundaries imposed on these children thus served not only to protect but also to reproduce their 'middle-class' childhood identities in opposition and contradistinction to 'working-class' 'Others'.

4.7 'It's Good . . . We Get to go to All These Clubs, Activities and Stuff': 'Safe' Play Spaces and Opportunities for 'Middle-Class' Children

Although heavy restrictions were imposed on their access to, and movement within, the local public outdoors, all of the children reported being provided with safe alternative play spaces[9] and opportunities out of school hours. Relaying to me the ways in which they spent their time out of school, many of these children revealed how much of their evenings and weekends were occupied with various adult supervised clubs and activities. The majority attended at least one 'after school club' (e.g. computer, dance, football, rugby, netball and other seasonal clubs as well as 'Junior Club' on a Friday evening – see below). In addition, many were also members of non-school clubs and activities (e.g. football, rugby, athletics, tennis, swimming, golf, 'stage' schools, and Guides)[10]. Yet, whilst Valentine and McKendrick (1997) assert that children are being 'compensated' with adult controlled activities for the decline in their independent mobility and subsequent independent outdoor play, this rather negative view did not appear to be shared by the children in my research. In one interview, for example, Andy compared his privileged childhood and the opportunities he was provided with, to children living in

[9] Those not infiltrated with dangerous Others.

[10] Researchers have highlighted the way in which middle class children's lives are structured and organised with various activities and contrast it with the relatively informal and unstructured lives of working class children (see for example Ennew, 1994; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997; Lareau, 2000).

poverty in Kenya. In fact, for many children, the adult organised/supervised activities in which they participated, were regarded as one of the 'good' things about their lives as 'middle-class' 10 and 11 year-old children:

Gary:	Out of school the good things/
Dave:	Rugby.
Fred:	Out of school is good.
Gary:	You can like go to clubs and stuff and/
Fred:	Junior Club.
Dave:	Like football tonight.
Gary:	Like football clubs, ruby clubs, Junior Club.
[. . .]	
NC:	But do you get told what to do at clubs?
Gary:	Yeah/
Dave:	Yeah, you get told what to do, but you're enjoying yourself so . . .
Gary:	Yeah.
Fred:	You have fun.

In the interview extract above, the boys explain that whilst they are supervised and controlled by adults at clubs, they fulfil the main characteristic that was identified as being important to children and childhood; namely to enable them to "have fun". Indeed, in another group interview John told me that sport is the main way in which he has fun. As section 4.4 has explored, however, John and his friends positioned themselves as vulnerable and at risk in the local outdoor area that they lived. Clubs were thus ideal, safe ways for them to engage in a number of different sports activities.

One of the things that academics in writing about the changing nature of children's play argue is that children's ability to roam freely and engage in imaginative play is being eroded. Moreover, they conceive that children's modern day play is being increasingly regulated by adults; they establish the rules and take responsibility for making decisions about the activities (see for example Adler & Adler, 1994; Oldman, 1994; Smith & Barker, 2000; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997; Valentine, 2004). Yet, crucially – although perhaps not unsurprisingly given the fear that they have been socialised into regarding the local outdoors – for many of these children the surveilling gaze and control that adults exert over them in clubs and activities was regarded in a positive way. Phoebe and Chloe, for example, who were keen dancers and had regular dance lessons, dreamed of 'getting in' to one of the top dance schools in London. Similarly, Nigel, who said that he did not want a "boring"

job like his father (a financial adviser) told me, like many other boys, he wanted to be a professional footballer. They thus conceived the adults who ran and supervised the clubs and activities, as helping them to improve their skills and techniques in order for them to achieve their dream future occupations. In this sense then, adults in these clubs and activities were not controlling and constraining. Rather, as middle-class children already heavily supervised by adults, these clubs/activities were seen by these children as providing them with more freedom, opening up the career opportunities available to them, re-producing their privilege and fulfilling their fantasies.

Whilst many of the children shared the same interests as their friends, some attended different clubs/schools (e.g. different dance schools or rugby clubs). As I explore in more detail in Chapter 5, however, the children rarely reported 'going over' each others' houses. Given the heavy restrictions imposed upon their access to, and movement within the public outdoors, clubs and adult supervised activities were the main time/place that the children could meet up with their friends out of school hours. Junior Club – which all but one boy (Lee) in the class attended – was therefore, important to many children in the study. Organised by Sherman's parents (and supervised by other children's parents), Junior Club was held in the local parish church every Friday evening during school term time for pupils in Years 3-6 in the school. Indeed, there were often snatched conversations during the Maths lesson on a Monday morning when the children would excitedly discuss Friday night's events. In the following two extracts, which are taken from two separate interviews, some of the girls highlight the kinds of things that they do at Junior Club and the reasons that they enjoy it so much:

NC:	Do you enjoy Junior Club?
Hope:	(Enthusiastically) Yeah.
NC:	What's so good about it?
Daisy:	It's just like/ fun to hang out and stuff.
Hope:	Fun.
Daisy:	And then you get to see all your friends [. . .]

* * * *

NC:	Tell me about Junior Club then.
Kelly:	(Gasps) OH MY GOD IT'S FUNKY.
Mary-Kate:	Okay Junior Club . . . you go there at 6.30 on a Friday night and there's loads of sweets and we get to go into our

	little library/ for Year 6's and we basically just mess around and Dave and Gary were hiding from Sherman's mum.
[. . .]	
NC:	What kind of things do you do there?
Mary-Kate:	Mess around. There's a snooker or a pool table.
Kelly:	A pool.
Mary-Kate:	A pool table for the boys and there's a Playstation and you make stuff as well.
NC:	Is it just for the boys?
Faith:	No.
Kelly:	AND THEY LIKE SET UP A STALL every week. You like/
Mary-Kate:	Make biscuits and toast and you get to put loads of chocolate spread on it.
Faith:	Oh that was lush.
Kelly:	AND LIKE LAST WEEK WE HAD Rich Teas (a type of biscuit) and we put like icing and like sweets and Smarties and stuff.
Mary-Kate:	So they do different stalls each week. Oh yeah and they have disco every month.

In the first extract, Daisy explains that Junior Club is fun because she is able to see "all" of her friends. Indeed, this can be seen as better than the rare occasion that children were allowed to invite "a few" friends over to their houses. Moreover, in contrast to the streets and other public outdoor spaces, Junior Club was both a safe and designated space for these children to "hang out" and "mess around" with their friends without, being regarded as 'up to no good' and 'Othered' by adults. In the second extract, the girls describe some of the activities available to them at Junior Club. Interestingly, these activities were reminiscent of the things some of the children (boys and girls) reported doing at sleepovers (e.g. eating sweets and chocolate, gossiping, playing on games consoles). Seen in this way therefore, 'Junior Club' functioned as one big weekly party, where they could hang out and have fun with 'all' (as opposed to 'a few') of their friends in the class.

In describing the things they do at 'Junior Club', in the second extract above Mary-Kate also highlights how there is a separate designated room specifically and exclusively for Year 6 children. Indeed, it was this, and the way in which they perceived adults as treating them, that was important to one group of boys:

George:	Junior Club is like one of the best things.
Sherman:	My mum runs it.
George:	It's like one of the biggest things you look forward to all

week.
Sherman: Yeah I know.
[. . .]
Sherman: Because with like . . . I'm not just saying this because like my mum and dad run it, but like, in Junior Club you get respected.
All: Yeah.
George: I know.
Andy: But some of them are like lunatics that run around there.
Sherman: Yeah but like we don't really get really told off. They just like say 'can you stop doing it' and like Year 6 like we like talk about stuff like other years don't understand and everything. It's good coz like we have our own room.
All: Yeah.
[. . .]
NC: Is it only Year 6 that have a separate room?
Andy: Only Year 6, yeah.
Sherman: Coz we're special.
Andy: Yeah because we're the oldest group and we're gonna go next year and we're not gonna be able to go there next year so.
NC: Uh huh.
Andy: But ermm so we get to like talk about anything in there and like the other kids aren't allowed in there so . . . but it's/
George: And it's like, private.

In a number of interviews, Sherman argued that as children some adults at school and in public space (see section 4.2 above) do not respect them. This is in contrast to how he reports that they are treated at Junior Club. Sherman highlights, for example, that they have the freedom to have fun and run around like "lunatics". They are not "told off" or regarded with suspicion and marginalized by adults as in public spaces (see section 4.2 and 4.4 above). Perhaps more significant, however, is that as the oldest children, they are given a separate room from which the younger children are prohibited. The privacy that the boys felt this room offered, was important since there are very few places where they had the freedom to talk about anything with friends, without the surveilling gaze of adults or other peers[11]. Moreover, quite the reverse to public space where they were marginalized by some adults and embodied a physically powerless position in relation to their 'working-class' peers, at Junior Club they were afforded privileges (by adults) and embodied a powerful position over the younger 'juniors' that attended the club. Their identities are thus, confirmed rather than challenged or undermined by others (such as shop staff and 'chavs').

[11] They rarely reported going over each other's houses for example and so could not use their bedrooms and in public space and school, they were subject to the constant surveilling gaze of others.

Oldman (1994) posits that the institutionalisation of children's play means that children's use of time and space is increasingly being structured around adults' lives. Moreover, I highlighted above how other academics have painted a rather bleak picture of the changing nature of children's play. Interestingly however, these 'middle-class' children had only positive things to say about the adult organised/supervised clubs and activities they attended. They did not just provide the children with positively viewed and safe alternatives to unsupervised public outdoor play. Rather, for some children, they were regarded as providing opportunities over and above that which independent public outdoor play could offer.

4.8 Concluding Notes

This chapter has been concerned with exploring children's experiences and perceptions of public space and how dominant discourses of children as either vulnerable innocents or dangerous demons prescribed their access to, and negotiation of, these spaces/places. Describing the way in which the media are saturated with reports of 'anti-social' 'youth' crime and culture, I explored how some of the children perceived adult strangers (i.e. those who do not know them) as demonising them and subsequently subjecting them to their suspicious surveilling gaze when 'unsupervised' in public space/places. Rejecting this construction of themselves, however, I nevertheless explored how one group of boys used their cultural capital to dis-identify and dis-associate from 'working-class' peers, instead positioning them as the 'real' anti-social deviants; and in so doing, attributing value to their own identities as 'respectable' innocent and moral 'middle-class' children. Despite their cultural capital, however, I described how these boys expressed feeling physically vulnerable and at risk against these 'working-class' 'Others'. I thus focused upon how these boys managed and negotiated the local outdoor space and their endeavours to avoid encounters with these peers; subsequently revealing the perceived power and control that they embodied and exercised over these boys in the study.

Examining some of the girl's accounts, this chapter highlighted a gendered dimension to the children's fears. Whilst the boys regarded their 'working-class' peers as their biggest threat – aware of the sexual desirability of their bodies - the girls perceived adult male strangers as the greatest risk to their personal safety. I explored two of the girls' (Zoë and Samantha's) experience of being followed by

what they conceived to be a male paedophile. Specifically, I suggested that although some of the children perceived adult strangers to regard them (as 'children') as out of place on the streets and in public places (e.g. shops) when not in the company of adults, these girls perceived adult strangers to be out of place when not accompanying a child in the place of a park. I also proposed that there was a spatial dimension to these girls' construction of adult males as sexual predators as I highlighted the different connotations of being followed by an adult (male) in a shop and outside on the streets.

Whilst acknowledging the children's own reflexive positioning of themselves as vulnerable and at risk from dangerous 'Others' in public space, the chapter examined the strict spatial and temporal boundaries some of the children reported their parents imposed on their access and movement in this space. A significant part of this chapter was thus concerned with exploring how all of the children were provided with 'safe' alternative play spaces and opportunities. Of concern here, was conveying how despite the rather negative portrayal of the 'institutionalisation' of children's play and the way it is increasingly being controlled/supervised by adults, that the children's accounts were imbued with positive experiences and perceptions of this play.

Having explored children's experiences and perceptions of public space, the following chapter focuses on their accounts of the home – the only other main space outside of school, where they are seen by adults to belong (see Lee, 2001).

Chapter 5

Home is Where the ('Middle-Class') Child is: Family Relations/hips, Routines and the Domestication of Children's Free Time and Play

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 explored how perceived risks and dangers pervading public space meant that tight restrictions were levied on children's access to, and movement within the local outdoor area. I thus explored some of the 'safe' adult supervised/organised play opportunities that some of the children were provided with. Aside from these opportunities, however, the majority of children reported that much of their time outside of school was spent within the home. Extending one of the themes introduced and explored in the previous chapter, this present chapter begins by examining some of the children's play and activities within the home. I reveal their gendered responses to what I have referred to as the 'compulsory domestication'[1] of their leisure time.

Because of the time that they spent within the home, in this chapter I also explore how siblings provided an important source of companionship, emotional protection and support in this space. I nevertheless highlight the fluidity and fragmentary nature of children's sibling relations/hips and examine how brothers and sisters could similarly be a source of irritation, conflict and pain. For one girl (Daisy), I highlight how the source of irritation took the form of the care that she provided for her younger brother. This is explored as part of a larger section that examines the domestic duties that some of the children carried out, and ways in which the contributions they made sat within their own theorisations of childhood.

The final section focuses specifically on child-adult power relations in the home. I explore the authoritative powers that children reported their parents exercised over them and the specific forms of retribution (something that is also explored in Chapter 6) the children were subject to. As Chapter 2 outlines, however, in cases of dominance, power relations are never totally one-sided. This thus enables these

[1] By this I mean that children are being forced to play in the home because of parents' fears that public space is too dangerous.

children to retain a place for agency, and for power relations to be modified and altered. Moreover, as I document in the final part of this chapter, some of the children drew upon the limited power and agency that their position as a 10/11 year-old son/daughter afforded them, to resist and negotiate their ways out of punishments that their parents imposed on them.

5.2 'I'm Not Allowed Out Anywhere Really': The Regulation and Compulsory Domestication of Children's Free Time and Play

As fears over the safety of Britain's streets continues to mount, the home – perceived as a safe protective haven – is, James *et al.* (1998) argue, a space where ('middle-class') children are becoming increasingly embedded. Although many of the children (boys and girls) attended numerous adult organised/supervised activities, nearly all of them reported spending the rest of their outside of school at home. They described, for example, spending much of their 'free' time either watching television or playing on PC's (personal computer) or games console(s). Rarely did they describe frequenting each other's houses. Indeed, when in one interview, I asked a group of boys whether we could talk about their "home life", I was met with the following response:

Sherman:	Right literally this is what we do. We watch TV, we eat, we watch TV, we eat, we watch TV, we sleep, we watch TV, we eat, we watch TV, we eat/
Andy:	No we do more than that Sherman.
Alex:	We watch TV, we eat, we play on the PS2[2], we sleep.
NC:	Andy what do you do then? You finish school and then what kind of things do you do?
Andy:	Watch TV and eat.
Alex:	Have a sleep and then go back to school again.

Nearly all of the children reported having their own television, VCR and/or DVD player, games console(s) and had access to a computer. Livingstone and Bovill (1999) suggest that parents are providing children with a wide range of media in the home to compensate them with their restricted access to outside space. Indeed, Wyness (2006: 82) describes television and computer games as "electronic babysitters" as they offer parents a way of keeping children close by and occupied. There were, however, differences in the way in which some of the boys and girls

[2] PS2 is an abbreviation for 'Playstation 2', which is a games console.

spoke about the 'compulsory' domestication of their free time and their subsequent utilisation of media within the home. Many of the girls, for example, spoke enthusiastically about playing on computers and watching television. This is illustrated in the two extracts (the first which is taken from a group interview and the second from a photograph discussion session) below:

NC: Okay. How do you spend your time out of school?
(all shouting over each other excitedly, at first making their responses inaudible)
Kelly: MSN[3]
Daisy: Oh yeah. Come on girls.
Hope: MSN, MSN, MSN, MSN.
NC: What's that?
Kelly: It's like this thing on your computer.
Faith: It's a chat room.
NC: Oh, I know.
[. . .]
NC: So you do that then after school?
All: Yeah.
Kelly: Yeah it's funky.
Mary-Kate: It's cool.
Hope: It's ace.

* * * *

Naomi: (flicking onto the next page in what she termed her 'photo diary', Naomi starts reading aloud what she had written)This is my FAB computer. It is fun and anyone can agree. It is brilliant.
[. . .]
Lynne: Oh you got a lush TV.
Naomi: Ta love. Every . . . of course every child has one thing which they love to do which is the same as every other child. One of them is watching TV You can also link it to a dance mat which is so much fun.

Using words such as "funky", "cool", "ace", "fab", "brilliant" and "fun", these girls convey just how much the enjoy spending time at home with the various screen-based media with which they are provided. Indeed, over the course of my fieldwork, there would often be conversations at school where some of the girls would discuss messages that they had sent to each other via MSN, levels that they had completed on various 'computer' games and Internet sites that they had visited. McNamee (2000: 484-485) suggests that video games can be regarded as a strategy for contesting spatial boundaries by considering such games as a heterotopia - an 'other'

[3] MSN is an instant messenger service available on Microsoft Windows.

- rather than a real space. In a somewhat different vein, Willett (2005: 286) argues that the websites that the girls in her research visited[4] offered them "easy access to a form of cultural capital (knowledge and interests in a very popular item), giving them a certain amount of kudos with their peers". Akin to the adult organised/supervised activities that they were provided with therefore, these girls did not appear to regard the media that they were afforded, as 'compensation' for their restricted access to the outdoor world as Livingstone and Bovill (1999) suggest. Indeed, the term 'compensation' has rather negative connotations.

In an interview discussion with Gary, Fred and Dave about their school life, Fred appeared to echo the girls' enthusiasm of such technology:

> Fred: Ermm well my life in school is boring. Very boring. I only come to school coz I have to and, ermm and, coz I see my friends and everything like that but then my life out of school is cool because I got the X Box I got the PS2 and I got all these consoles and everything so.

Specifically, Fred constructs school as a 'boring' place that he 'has' to attend. In comparison, he describes his life outside of school, as a time of freedom, choice and fun wherein he is able to amuse himself with the games consoles he owns. Indeed, not only does Fred's comment appear to resonate with the way in which the girls' (in the extracts above) spoke about media in the home. Rather, it also seems to adhere to the notion and public concerns that children have become preoccupied with computer games and modern technology and actively seek to spend their time 'playing' indoors, rather than outside engaged in more physical pursuits. One adult fear is that children are "being sucked into a technological vortex" which compromises their opportunities and abilities to develop social networks (Wyness, 2006: 175). The following two data extracts and discussion, however, reveal the complexities and contradictions in Fred's and some of the other boys' narratives of their time and use of media in the home. The first extract is taken from an interview with a group of boys (George, Andy, John and Alex) and the second is from an audio recording that Fred compiled at home during the spring term:

[4] E.g. the Eastenders (a British soap opera) page on the BBC website and a site called flogo.com which are two of the sites that the children in my research visited.

NC: Do you get bored out of school?
George: Sometimes.
Andy: Ermm sometimes, like when you're just at home.
George: When you got nothing to do.
John: Naaaah, I got a computer (laughs).
George: (laughing) Yeah same here.
Andy: That gets quite boring though.
Alex: It's like you do something, you play on the PS2 and then you get bored of that after about 3 hours and then/
Andy: THREE HOURS?
George: THREE HOURS?
Andy: Geez Alex.
George: That's a long time.
John: You need to get out a bit more.
Alex: Well then you watch TV and then you get bored.

* * * *

The kind of stuff I watched over the holiday on the telly was . . . ermm I watched . . . like The Simpson's. I watched the . . . I also watched a load of films like Saving Private Ryan, a load of DVDs. Just a load of stuff and ermm . . . I watched loads of films coz it just fills up time coz most of 'em are like three hours especially Lord of the Rings films.

In the first extract, John, George and Alex initially assert that they do not get "bored" at home because they have computers to keep them entertained. Like Fred, in talking about their 'home life' in the context of the school and in relation to their 'school life', media certainly seemed quite appealing to these boys. They nevertheless admit that screen-based media can only keep them entertained for a certain amount of time and that in fact, playing on the computer "gets quite boring". Indeed, notwithstanding John's comment that he had the computer to keep him entertained in the home, in another interview he complained about the tight restrictions that his parents imposed on his mobility in the 'outside world' saying "you're like restricted from having fun really [. . .] I just have to stay inside and be bored". Moreover, the audio recording that Fred carried out at home (and thus in the immediate context which may have made him think more reflectively about the time that he spent in this space) also offers a different perspective of his time out of school, from that which he provided in the extract (taken from a school-based interview) above.

Together then, these data extracts suggest that for these boys, watching television and/or playing on computers or games consoles was far from being something that they "love to do" (see Naomi's comment in the extract above) or used to displace the time they used to spend 'playing' outdoors. Instead, they were simply the best way to

occupy or 'fill up' the time that they were made to spend at within the 'safe' haven of the home (see also Livingstone, 2002). In the same interview from which the first extract above was taken the boys told me, for example, that they "have" to play on their computers because, in George's words "it's just like you're programmed to [. . .] There's nothing else to do". Indeed, given the spatial restrictions they reported being imposed on them, it was somewhat ironic that in the extract above John tells Alex that he needs "to get out a bit more". For these boys, the home (at least in relation to free time and play) was thus associated with notions of boredom and control whilst the outdoor world, in contrast (as resonated in John's comment to Alex and in his quote in the paragraph above) was seen as being a place of 'fun'. This is also interesting, considering their constructions of the 'village' space in the previous chapter as 'risky', and where (far from being 'fun') care needed to be taken to avoid threats from 'chavs' that hung around various parts of this public realm. Indeed, these boys appeared to have an idealised image of public space and what being permitted to venture into and around this space meant to them.

5.3 'I Can do Stuff that I Just Never do in Public': Home Places as Spaces for Girls' Privacy, Pleasure and Control

In contrast to these boys, however, none of the girls in the research expressed feeling restricted from 'having fun' in the home, or spoke about wanting to spend more of their free time outside. Rather, many of the girls liked and indeed valued the time that they spent at home. In one interview, for example, Ashley commented that she would rather stay inside than go outside with her friends and saw no point in "just standing" in the street. These highly gendered accounts echo conventional and historical feminine narratives of femininity within the home. Indeed, other researchers highlight how girls' subcultures tend to be based/spent in the home (Frost, 2001; Reid-Walsh and Mitchell, 2004). Yet, for some girls in the research, their value of the time that they spent at home went beyond the pleasures that they gained from screen-based media. Indeed, the following extract reveals what certain places within the home meant to one of the girls (Phoebe) in the research. The extract is taken from an interview that was carried out following a conversation with Phoebe about "a den" that she had made for herself at home and wanted to tell me more about "on tape":

NC: Okay then tell me more about your den.
Phoebe: Okay. Right, I walk in through the door, I stand here and there's the stairs going up but there's a wall here and the stairs goin' up. Do you get me?
NC: Uh huh.
Phoebe: There's obviously a little gap there and with the railing, I get like towels and blankets and hang them/
Chloe: Do you have to take them down every night?
Phoebe: Yeah but it's easy, and then I just hang them again. I then I get this one and fold it and then . . . coz the banister, I fold it and all the coats go on top of it so it doesn't really have a problem. And then I get my quilt and fold it in half. That's how big it is. A single quilt folded in half . . . and then I put that/
Chloe: That's quite small innit?
Phoebe: It's lush. I can put my whole body across there . . . and then . . . this way though (shows Chloe how she fits in). And then, I put two pillows sitting upwards so you know I bend it and then I lie on one pillow and then the other pillow, I've got like all my games and stuff. I play my Gameboy so you know when you're in the middle waiting for a programme . . . adverts to stop, I just go 'bye mum' and instead of walking up the stairs I just go in my bed and in there I can do stuff that I just never do in public if you know what I mean. It's very secret as well. It's really nice and secret and I can do anything. I can do stuff rude. Anything I can do.
Chloe: What do you mean stuff rude?
Phoebe: I dunno. Anything. I can do anything in there. That's what I mean.

Although Phoebe describes in detail the process of 'building' her "den", this narrative stretches beyond just being about her 'having fun' and constructing an imaginative play space. Rather, it is about her carving out a 'private' place within the home. Resonated in her comment "I can do stuff that I just never do in public if you know what I mean. [. . .] I can do stuff rude", Phoebe attempts to convey the privacy that her "den" affords her and the control that she has to do "anything". It is a place where she can escape the surveilling gaze of others, which she is constantly subject to in other spaces/places in her daily life.

Significantly, however, some of the other girls in the research regarded their rooms in this way. Although some of the boys took photographs of their bedrooms, in subsequent discussions that were set up, they explained that their reason for doing so was because it was the place where they slept, that contained their possessions and (for some) where they watched television and/or played with their games consoles. The extract below, however, reveals how Hope's reasons for photographing her bedroom stemmed beyond this:

NC: Why did you take a picture of your room?
Hope: Coz I like my room. That's at Christmas but without the lights it would still look like that.
NC: Do you spend much time in your room then?
Hope: Ermm yeah. I spend most of my time in my room at night like . . . not just to sleep but during the night, like after I watched Coronation Street and Emerdale with my mum and sister and that and then I just like dance . . and play on my karaoke. But I don't like people seeing me when I . . . dance/ or sing or anything.
Daisy: Neither do I.
NC: Why?
Hope: I just find it embarrassing. I don't mind it if I'm doing it with loads of people and it's something to do in school like the show we're gonna do on Wednesday. I don't mind that but it's just like . . . and I get embarrassed when like . . . I get nice clothes and then I get embarrassed to wear them.

Akin to Phoebe's "den" Hope, regards her bedroom as a 'private' place in which she has the freedom and agency to do things that she would not do (or at least does not like doing) in the presence of other people[5] (i.e. 'in public'). Indeed, the bedroom in particular, has been suggested as the only 'official' place where children and young people are able to have some privacy and time alone (see for example, Brown *et al.*, 1994; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002). Commenting that she 'gets embarrassed when she wears "nice clothes", Hope acknowledges (and resents?) that she is subject to the surveilling gaze of others. Aapola, Gonick and Harris (2005: 102) suggest that "girls have been seen to have a special relationship with dancing as a form of embodied self-expression". It can also "create and maintain contact with other people, to experiment with different forms of femininity, or to get feedback on one's appearance and one's skilfulness at dancing" (Aapola, Gonick and Harris, 2005: 163). Hope's bedroom, therefore, is a place where she is able to experiment with her embodied identity and 'test out' what she regards as 'acceptable' public bodily displays. In talking in another interview about the dance routines that she choreographs, she told me, for example, that her older sister often suggests "dirty" dance move that she finds "really gross" and thinks look "stupid". Since many girls often performed the dance routines that they choreographed to the latest chart songs, to audiences in the playground, it was imperative that their voices hit the correct notes and their dance moves be practised in order that they were performed to

[5] Although Hope does reveal later in the interview that her older sister would sometimes come into her room unannounced and uninvited.

perfection. For Hope and other girls then, their bedrooms represented far more than places simply to sleep, keep their possessions and entertain themselves with different screen-based media. Furthermore, rather than being a place of constraint and control (as the boys in section 5.2 perceived), for these girls, the home was liberating in the sense that it offered a retreat away from the surveillance of others. Moreover, they were provided with the power to control certain spaces (i.e. bedroom and other informal places which they carve out for themselves) to do what Phoebe describes as "their own thing" and experiment with their fluid, multiple and shifting identities as 'girls'.

5.4 From 'Best Buds' and Playmates to 'Arch Enemies' and Rivals: Children Negotiating Sibling Relations/hips

Although some of the girls sought private time alone, like the boys they also relished the time that they spent in the company of others. Yet, since outside of adult organised/supervised activities much of the children's leisure time was confined to the home, and times that they 'went over' each other's houses were seldom, siblings provided an important source of companionship for many of these children. Kai, for example, who was an only child, said that he wished that he had a "little brother" with whom he could play football because it was "very boring" having to play on his own. Indeed, many children spoke at length about their siblings and the considerable amount of time that they spent together with them. In talking about his relationship with his thirteen year-old brother, Gary likened him to a 'best' friend: "I do hang around with my brother quite a lot. [. . .] But you know, it's like . . I know you say you have best friends, but your brother is like kind of your best friend". Describing a brother as "kind of" a best friend, Gary distinguishes between the relations/hips between siblings and that with (non-related) 'friends' and/or does not regard the title 'best friend' as being associated with one's sibling. He nevertheless exemplifies the close bond that exists between his own brother and himself and the subsequent companionship that they provided each other with outside of school.

Akin to Gary, Faith reported having a close relationship with her nine year-old sister and spending time with her outside of school. Yet, in one interview wherein her friends and herself were discussing their relationships with their siblings, Faith

reveals how the companionship that she offered her sister went beyond providing her with someone with whom to 'hang out' with:

Faith:	I share a room with my sister apart from she had her own room, but when we were little ermm she always used to get nightmares and she always used to jump in my mum and dad's bed with them so we always used to share a room, although she's got her own bed but like I've got two beds in my room now because my brother broke his bed coz he was too heavy for it (Mary-Kate laughs).
NC:	So she's got her own room but she stays in yours, or she doesn't anymore?
Faith:	No she still stays in my room but she's/
Mary-Kate:	She didn't when we had a/
Kelly:	But she keeps all her stuff in her room.
Mary-Kate:	Her own room.
Faith:	Yeah like if she has a sleepover or something she always like/
Mary-Kate:	Has her room.
Faith:	Has her room but then she doesn't . . like when . .
NC:	Why does she sleep in your room again?
Faith:	Because when she was really little she used to ermm get nightmares and then like . . so we've always just slept in the same room since so . . . and then you get someone to talk to. But when her friends aren't there she always plays with me and then when her friends are there she leaves me out.
Mary-Kate:	Poor Faith.
Faith:	But then I just butt in.

Explaining how her sister used to suffer from nightmares, Faith describes how she provided her with emotional security, comfort and support (see also Edwards *et al*, 2005b) by allowing her to sleep with her in her bedroom. The extract does, however, suggest that this has fostered a close bond between the sisters but to the point that Faith has in fact come to rely on her younger sibling for companionship. She expresses resentment and jealousy over her sister's friends 'coming to their house because her sister plays with them instead and 'leaves her out'.

What is also interesting, is how the meaning that Faith attributes to her bedroom space conflicts and contrasts with Hope's in the previous section above. Specifically, whilst Hope, and indeed other girls, regarded their own rooms as a place of privacy away from others, Faith constructs her bedroom as space where her sister and herself can talk and play together[6]. Indeed, complaining about her sister 'leaving her out'

[6] Although Faith may perhaps have regarded it as a private space for her sister and herself.

and talking positively about her sister sleeping in her room, Faith appears to relish the time spent with others.

Notwithstanding this however, Phoebe, who (as explored in the previous section above) liked and actively carved out a place of privacy in her home, did also seek her older (fifteen year-old) sister's companionship, security and support:

> Phoebe: [. . .] But the thing is, I hate my sister to bits but I love her to bits and when she's not there I get really worried.
> NC: What do you mean?
> Phoebe: Coz . . . I feel, I'm in bed and then like there's no one safe in the house even though my mum and dad are there but when my sister's back I chat to her and send her letters saying 'can I sleep in your room tonight?' It's really nice and the other night umm say something happened to me. Louise my friend slept over and umm my mum was smacking me coz I was being naughty and I . . . my mum . . . then I told my sister and my sister wasn't being nice about it so I was just like great. [. . .] so I was really bad coz I said to my sister 'can we have a girly chat about high school' and stuff like that and then she didn't reply to that and I didn't like it.

As Edwards *et al.* (2005b: 505) note, talking together is a significant aspect of girls' connection to their sisters. Indeed, in the extract above, Phoebe explains that she dislikes the space that is created between her sister and herself when they 'fall out' and portrays a sense of loss and loneliness without her. Like Faith's younger sister, she also likes the safety and comfort that sleeping with her sister in her room provides her with. Whilst appreciating privacy and time alone therefore, it was only when she had agency and control over this time that, that Phoebe valued time apart from friends and family[7].

Although Phoebe and her sister were very close however, Phoebe describes how as well as loving her sister "to bits", she also "hates" her "to bits". Indeed, whilst many children described their relations/hips with their siblings in positive terms, most also reported feeling annoyed by them at some point and said that they argued and fell out with each other. Even though Gary (see above) and Fred, for example, highlighted spending a lot of time with their older brothers, they also reported having frequent disputes with them:

[7] This is something that is taken up and explored further in the final section of this chapter.

Fred: Yeah when my brother's not with his friends we always fight. We always argue and we'll, it's . . . we always argue and fight like seriously coz sometimes we don't like each other for some reason and then, ermmm/

Gary: Yeah, that's a brother's job.

Fred: And then he just calls me a load of swear words and everything like that and then, ermmm I quite easily get wound up so I wack him one and then he wacks me one and then we just start fightin.

[. . .]

Gary: And then you hit them and then they like, then they push you back like, coz they're older, they're much stronger than you and like it really hurts. So you hit them back and then they go tell. It's really annoyin'.

Fred: And what me and my brother do sometimes, we have muckies which turn into proper fights because he's heavier than me obviously, and he sits on me for ages/

Gary: Oh yeah. My brother sits on my head.

[. . .]

Gary: Yeah me and my brother, we fight over like the PC and Gamecube[8].

Fred: (agreeing) Yes.

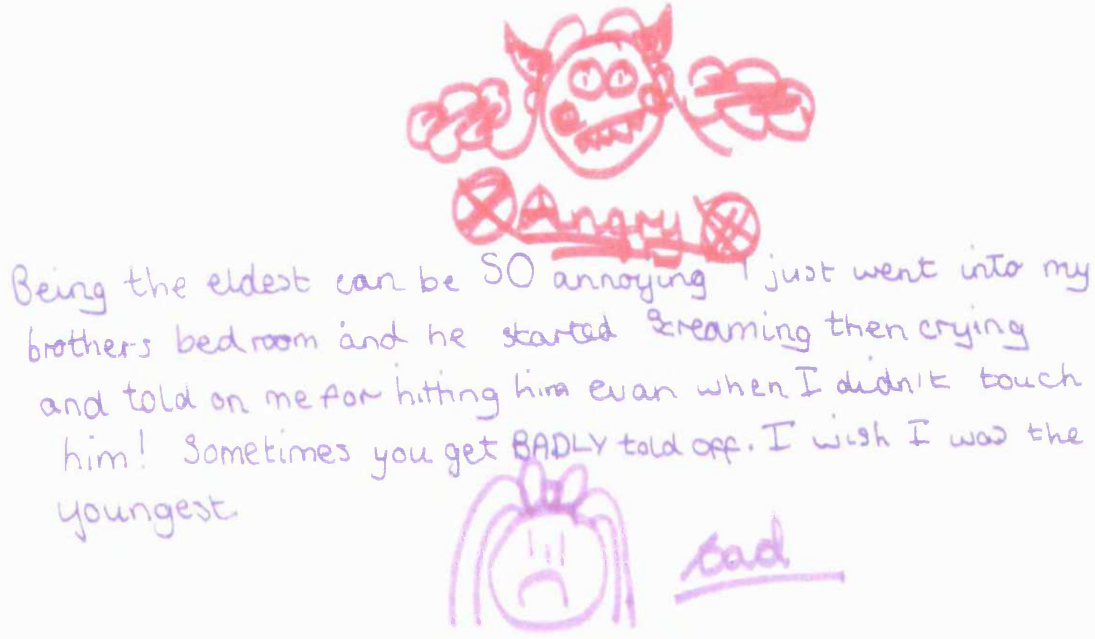
Gary: And then what happens . . like I get it and then he snatches it off me, sits on me and then starts playing on it and he's still sittin' on me and I'm like AHHHHH. It's really annoyin' . . . but, you know, sometimes my brother can be quite cool.

Specifically, whilst providing companionship and pleasure to their lives outside of school, the boys explain that their relationship(s) with their older siblings can also be fraught with irritation, conflict and (physical) pain. Indeed, despite being close to her younger sister (see above) and regarding her as a 'friend', Faith did not regard her as a 'best' friend because they sometimes argued with each other: "I wouldn't say we were best friends or anything like that because we do argue a bit but I wouldn't say not friends at all because we do quite a lot of stuff together anyway so". For Faith then, arguments were not constitutive of a 'best' friendship or role. Gary, however, saw such disputes as a 'normal' part of one's relationships with siblings. In response to Fred commenting that he always 'argues' and 'fights' with his brother Gary asserts "that's a brother's job" and although he voices his annoyance over the way in which his brother behaves, says that he can be "quite cool". The 'naturalness' of such behaviour (i.e. it being a 'brother's job) however, may perhaps be a(nother) reason for Gary describing one's siblings as being "kind of" (as opposed to 'a') 'best' friend.

[8] A 'Gamecube' is a games console.

In describing the conflicts that they have with their brothers, Gary and Fred draw attention to their brothers' physical power and strength. It is not, however, just physical but also hierarchical power imbalances that exist in children's sibling relations/hips. Kai for example, said that the reason he wanted a "little" brother was "because you can sort of make them do anything you want". Naomi's acceptance of her 'inferior' status as the younger sister was illustrated in an interview when she commented: "Sometimes I imagine what it would be like to be the oldest, like bossing my sister around". She describes trying to resist the power her older sister exerted over her by sometimes refusing the requests she makes to her, but how such attempts often proved futile. Some of the girls, however, highlighted the powerful position that younger siblings embody. The following extract, for example, is a diary entry made by Daisy about her seven year-old brother:

Figure 5.1 An Extract from Daisy's Diary



Daisy explains how her brother draws on his physically and hierarchically 'inferior' status, to portray himself as a vulnerable victim of her physical superiority. This, she explains, is in a bid to get her reprimanded by her parents. Similarly, in one of the researcher-facilitated interviews, Kelly admitted that as the youngest sibling she purposefully attempts to subject her older brother to the wrath of their parents.

Throughout my conversations with Kelly, however, she highlighted how her brother still remained a source of sociability and companionship for her out of school. Children's sibling relations/hips were, thus, fluid and fragmentary; they were able to take up and embody a number of different subject positions and constantly (re)negotiated these, and their relations/hips with their siblings in the home. Although many of the children's relationships with their siblings were, therefore, not conflict free, they offered each other both a source of sociability and also emotional protection and support within this (domestic) space.

5.5 'I OWN the Hoover' . . . 'I Have to be a Mum': Children's Contribution to Domestic Work and Care

In researcher-facilitated interviews with their friends and myself, both Daisy and Lynne revealed that they provided their younger brothers with more than companionship, emotional protection and support. Although Lynne had two older brothers (one who was thirteen years-old and the other fifteen years-old), both girls reported having to care for their younger siblings whilst their parents were at work. Lynne, for example, reported spending a considerable part of her weekend "babysitting" her two-year-old brother because her parents worked and her older brothers are either out or refuse to help. Morrow (1994) posits that females are often constructed as being 'naturally' more skilled at childcare and it is consequently stereotyped as more of a feminine role. Such a stereotype can be seen as coming into play in the case of Lynne and her older brothers.

Whilst typecast as being a female role, however, Daisy did not regard the care that she provided for her brother as being a 'child' responsibility:

NC: Do you have to look after your younger brother much?
Daisy: Yeah. Loads.
Hope: Oh tell her you have to be a mum.
Daisy: In the morning I have to be a mum.
NC: Why?
Daisy: My mum goes off at eight o' clock and that's what time my brothers gets up. Sometimes I have to pack the bag as well as get ready myself.
NC: How old is he?
Daisy: Seven. I have to pack the bags and sometimes he's useless at getting himself dressed. He just gets sooo distracted so I just push him everywhere, get him ready and everything. And then I have to like pack all the stuff

> and it gets really frustrating coz he's like 'what day is it today?' and I say 'it's Thursday' and he's like 'oh I don't need to bring my kit' and at the end of the day 'guess what Daisy, you didn't pack my kit'. I'm like, 'Luke you didn't tell me to. You said it was no Games'. It's just soo frustrating.

Although it is common for young teenagers and 'working-class' children to 'baby sit' or 'look after' their siblings and/or other people's children, Daisy appears to regard the care that she provides her younger brother with to be over and above the role of a 10/11 year old child. This is revealed as she constructs herself as embodying the role of "a mum" (see also Mauthner, 2005) as opposed to an 'older sister'. Moreover, she talks resentfully about having to attend to her brother's needs as well as her own and the (consequent?) lack of patience that she has with him. Daisy's narrative in the above extract thus echoes many of the children's constructions of childhood as being a time for 'fun' and freedom from responsibilities. In addition, it highlights how her childhood compares and contrasts with this theorisation. Significantly however, this extract, together with the diary extract (see figure 5.1) again reveals the fluidity and shift in power relations between Daisy and her brother. The previous section, for example, explored how her brother used the power of his 'inferior' status as a 'younger' sibling over Daisy. Yet, in the above extract, it is Daisy who is able to exercise power and control over her brother as she takes up the more powerful and knowledgeable position of carer; enabling her to "push him everywhere" as she prepares him for school.

Whilst Daisy and Lynne were the only children who reported having to "look after" their younger siblings, many of the other children had different domestic responsibilities. Commonly, these took the form of 'chores'. Talking about his experiences of his childhood as it is lived in the social space of the home, Gary, for instance, told me in one interview: 'I've got chores. I OWN the hoover [. . .] Like I always do the hoover and I always have to put clothes upstairs in the ottomans [. . .] and I do that every single night'. 'Chores', however, is a term that is often associated with the small tasks that children 'carry out' in the home to assist their parents with the running of the home and family life. As I highlighted in Chapter 2, for example, in the 2004 report on young carers, over half of carers surveyed were involved in caring for ten hours or less a week; performing domestic tasks in addition to general

and intimate care, and emotional support (Dearden and Becker, 2004). Moreover, they were very different to responsibilities and/or jobs that children in third world countries and a wider global scale are required to carry out. Indeed, Punch (2001) describes how for a ten year-old child in rural Bolivia, a typical daily routine involves: getting up between 5.00 and 6.00am and from this time until between 8.00 and 9.00p.m, they are either at school or contributing to the running of daily family life (e.g. fetching water, firewood, caring for animals, etc.)

Although many of the children complained about the chores that they had to do, however, none of them constructed themselves as embodying 'adult' roles or carrying out 'adult' tasks as Daisy does in the extract above. Chores were not regarded in the same way as caring for children, or paying bills and taxes, which were frequently highlighted as being 'adult' responsibilities and that differentiated 'adults' from 'children.' The children's accounts thus suggest that whilst chores were 'boring', they conceived them as a 'normal' part of childhood, although they should be free from what they conceived as (more demanding?) 'adult' responsibilities. Having said this, some of the children's chores did appear to conflict with many of the children's notion of childhood as being a time for fun and freedom. In one interview, for example, Naomi joked that she rarely had enough time to complete her homework and the list of chores that her mother leaves her sister and herself to do (on a weekend whilst she is at work) before going to bed:

NC: Do you get to choose how you spend your time at weekends then?
Naomi: Well, I still . . . I still do my piano, recorder and then my Maths and English and everything but then . . . after I've done all my jobs and sometimes my mum isn't there so she writes down what I have to do for the day, like say fold the clothes, start the washing machine and ermm stuff like that and after I've done all that and say like/
NC: (laughing) It's time to go to bed.
Naomi: (laughs) Rake the . . . breathe . . . rake the lawn or something and finally watch TV and then I have meals and then go to bed.

When Naomi's mother is out therefore, much of her weekend is consumed with homework and "jobs". Moreover, like the majority of other children in the research, Naomi's contribution to domestic work was unpaid. Indeed, many of the children made a point of telling me that they had chores which they had to do 'for free'. In a researcher-facilitated pair interview with Gary and Fred, however, Fred revealed how

he had the luxury of choosing whether or not to contribute to household duties and tasks:

> Fred: Yeah, I also gain money because my mum and dad, we did the loft conversion and then we did our rooms, now we're doin' our hall, stairs and landing and we're refurbishing the whole house and all the garden and everything. I also get money for doin' like . . . helping 'em like stripping wallpaper off and everything and like painting the fence outside before like the winter and I get like the odd fiver or tenner or something like that. [. . .] I don't have chores. It's usual when my mum's like finished doing the ironing and washing, I'll put it in my wardrobe and everything but, ummm I like clean out my room but anything apart from that, if I do some of the hoovering and everything then I'll get like a quid for it or something like that so doing these things I get like paid for them.
>
> Gary: It's good. It's worth it.
>
> NC: What so like, you go, oh I want a computer game I'll go and do some hoovering?
>
> Fred: Yeah if I like wanna go somewhere like swimming or golf and I haven't got the money in my wallet and ermm I'm running low in my bank like I got about twenty quid in there, I'll like ask my mum what I can do to earn myself a couple of bob and she'll say 'oh you can hoover this' or something and I go 'alright' and then ermm I do that, I finish that and she gives me money and I just go golf or wherever.

Rather than conceiving the domestic tasks that he chooses to do, as a way of helping his parents, Fred regards them as a way of generating an income for himself. Moreover, he would often do different tasks (e.g. vacuuming) if the allowance that his parents gave him each month (from which he had to buy all of his clothes and pay for all of his leisure pursuits) was "running low". Helping out in the home was thus a way to finance his 'middle-class' lifestyle. More than this, however, it was his ticket to freedom; being able to escape the restrictive and boring space of the home and the films that he watched just to "fill up time" (see section 5.2 above).

5.6 'I get told off for absolutely everything' . . . 'I get grounded all the time': Regulations, Reprimands and Retribution in the Home

Whilst, in caring for her brother, Daisy constructs herself as embodying an adult role, along with the rest of the children in the research, she remained accountable to her parents' authority and control. As Brannen *et al.* assert:

"Children's lives are lived within the structural context of power in which adults regulate children's bodies and minds. In their general status as children, and in their particular

statuses as sons and daughters, children's ability to act autonomously and their access to resources are constrained. Within the household and family, children's 'participation' takes place in unequal terms" (Brannen *et al.*, 2000: 178).

In the home then, it was the children's parents who established the rules, what was and was not acceptable behaviour. Moreover, it was their parents who disciplined and punished non-conformity to these standards. Over the course of my fieldwork a number of children informed me of times when they had overstepped their parents' boundary of acceptable behaviour and described being reprimanded and punished. Commonly, punishments involved constraints being levied on the children's movement (e.g. being confined to their bedrooms or not 'being allowed' to go to certain places or clubs) or the prohibition or restricted use of certain media:

Mary-Kate: I have more responsibilities at home because I'm the oldest and I get told off for absolutely everything coz my brother or sister just cry automatically and then I get the blame[9]. I then have to go upstairs and I have to miss dinner.

[. . .]

NC: So you get told off lots?

Mary-Kate: Yeah I get told off like mad.

NC: For what kind of things?

Mary-Kate: I'm banned from using the computer and emailing for a month.

NC: Why?

Mary-Kate: Sorry Faith. I didn't tell you that. I'm not allowed to email you anymore but you can email me.

Faith: Why cant you email?

Mary-Kate: Because err I sort of whacked Becky in the face so . . . it was by accident though. I just go wham (does an impression).

* * * *

Gary: I get grounded but only if I do something really bad. I've been grounded three times and all of those have been from school[10].

Fred: Yeah, in school when I got put on report, I got . . . I been put on report a few times but the first time in Year 5, ermm I, ermm got banned from the Playstation, got banned from my Gameboy, only had a limited amount of T.V., got banned from my P.C, got banned from my ermm, from like everything that's fun and I had to do like chores. I had to do all the hoovering, ermm I had to wash all the dishes. Everything like that.

[9] This echoes a point made in the previous section about the power that younger siblings can be perceived as having over their older brothers and sisters.

[10] This explicates the relationship between the home and school and also how the standards of 'acceptability' that parents set for their children stem beyond the context of the home.

NC: How long for?
Fred: A month.

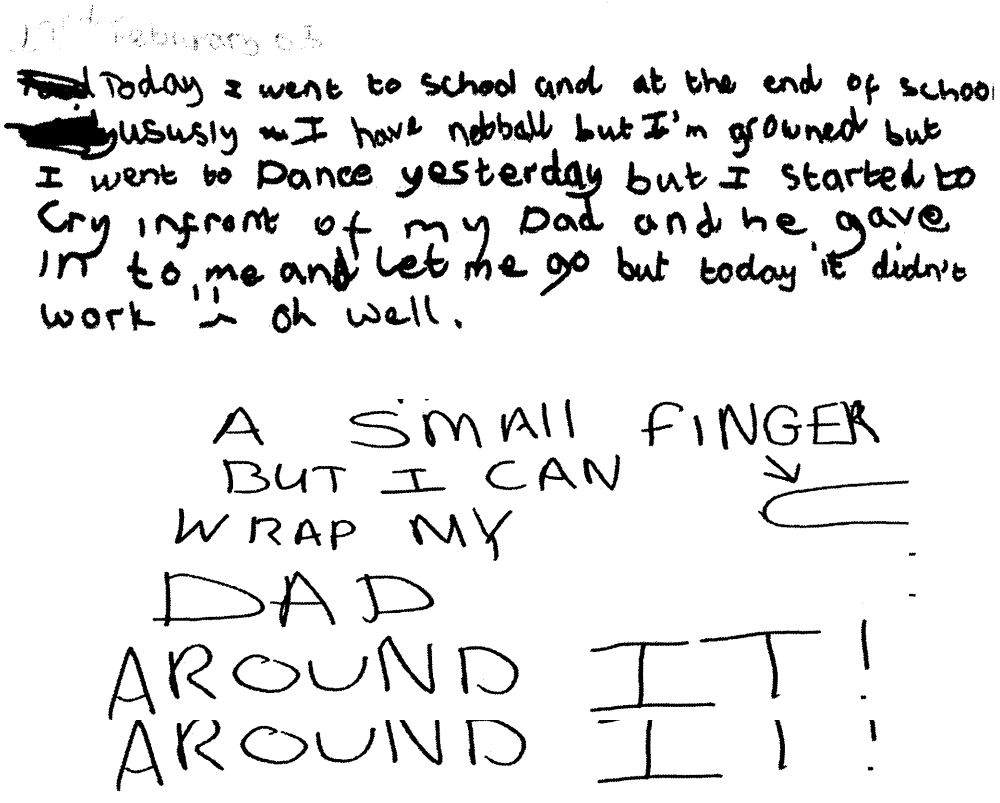
In the first extract, Mary-Kate explains how when punished she is often socially excluded from the rest of her family. Whilst section 5.3 explored the value that some girls attach to privacy and time alone therefore, this (first) extract suggests that, "being sent to one's room . . . is regarded as punishment; it is not the same as going there freely" (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002: 113). We can thus see the complexity and multiplicity of meanings attached to the notion of privacy and time alone; in one sense it can be liberating and provide freedom away from the watchful gaze of other people, but in another it can be a form of social exclusion. Yet, Mary-Kate explains that she is not only socially excluded from her family when her parents confine her to her room. By being prohibited from using the PC, Mary-Kate is also prevented from contacting and thus 'staying in touch' with her friends (via email or MSN) outside of school.

Akin to Mary-Kate, Fred describes being forbidden from using his PC and games consoles (see also Walkerdine, 2007) and only being permitted to watch a "limited" amount of television. By prohibiting or reducing the time that they spend using such media, these children's parents are restricting the entertainment that they compensate them with for the heavy constraints that they place on their access to the 'outdoor' world (see section 5.2 and previous chapter); something that (highlighted in section 5.2) some boys regarded as the 'only' thing to do in the home. Yet this punishment was made even worse for Fred, who was also made do to chores; something he usually has agency over. Similar to the space of the bedroom, for Fred, chores thus had multiple meanings and could be regarded in both positive and negative ways.

Whilst the children in this study were accountable to their parents' authority and control, some of them did highlight being able to sometimes escape or negotiate ways out of the punishments that they received. Mary-Kate, for example, told me in another interview from which the above extract is taken that although her parents sometimes prohibit her from watching television, they often fail or forget to enforce such restrictions: "I do get grounded. No I don't. I get off it too quick. They always forget. They say like "your not watching TV for a week" and then in the morning

they forget so I watch T.V". In a similar vein, Fred told me how even when he is prohibited from playing with his games consoles, his 'babysitter' (John's older brother) still allows him to play with them. In the diary that she kept as part of her project, Hope revealed that parents' authoritative powers are not absolute and that she was indeed capable of exercising power in her relationship with her parents:

Figure 5.3 An Extract from Hope's Diary



Despite being prohibited from attending any after school activities, after seeing Hop cry, her father relents and allows her to go to dance club. Indeed, Hope told me that she often tried crying or "bugging" her father by pleading with him to wear him down and get her "own way". As Giddens (1979: 6) (cited in Devine, 2002) thus argues, "however subordinate an actor may be in a social relationship, the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him/her a certain amount of power over the other". Although subject to their parents' rules, disciplinary powers and punishment therefore, there were ways (e.g. emotional power) in which some of the children were able to subvert the restrictions and controls that parents imposed over their movements in (and outside) the home.

5.7 Concluding Notes

This chapter has explored the ways in which some of the children in this research perceived and experienced their everyday lives in the domestic space of the home. Continuing and extending some of the concerns of the previous chapter, the present chapter began by exploring how the tight restrictions imposed on the children's access to, and unsupervised participation within public space meant that (outside of the adult organised/supervised activities/clubs) much of the children's 'free time' was contained within the home. I highlighted the highly gendered (and classed) accounts of what I referred to as the 'domestication' of their play. For the girls, the time they spent at home provided them with a source of entertainment, privacy, and (their own) control. The boys, in contrast, resented what they saw as being confined to the home, and regarded it as a space imbued with restrictions, boredom and adult restraints.

Acknowledging the amount of time that these children spent at home, the chapter also explored children's sibling relations/hips. I explored how siblings provided them with an important source of companionship and emotional comfort and support although, revealed how they could similarly be a source of irritation, conflict and pain. As part of this section, I drew attention to the power relations that exists between siblings and how both physical strength (superior and inferior) and age (younger or older) can be drawn upon and used in various pleasurable and powerful ways. For two of the girls (Daisy and Lynne) in the study, however, having younger siblings also meant that they had to take up what Daisy termed the role of a 'mum'. I explored these girls' construction of this role within a more general exploration of some of these 'middle-class' children's domestic responsibilities.

In the final section of this chapter, I highlighted how these children remained accountable to parental rules and control and how they were reprimanded and punished if they failed to concur with the boundaries set. Exploring the nature of (common) retributions, the chapter revealed that although representing a welcomed retreat away from the surveilling gaze of others and providing some of the girls with a space in which they could exercise their freedom and control, for some (boys and girls), the bedroom also represented an unwelcome space of restriction and (social) exclusion. I further revealed how by being prohibited from playing with/using media

that they were provided with (and thus, from accessing MSN, email and chat rooms), these children were further isolated from their friends outside of school. The chapter nevertheless highlighted how as agents and subjects bound up in relations of power (see Chapter 2) at times, these children were able to resist, negotiate and avoid punishments that their parents imposed on them. Adult-child relations of power, negotiation and resistance are further explored in the following chapter, as I focus on the children's daily lives as they are lived in the space of the school classroom.

Chapter 6

'You're Here to Work, Not to Play': Lesson Time and Learning in the Primary School Classroom

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 I suggested that moral panics (Cohen, 1972) fuelled by the media and government initiatives to tackle so-called 'anti-social behaviour' have contributed to two dominant, yet oppositional discourses with regard to children and public space; children being constructed as either deviant 'devils' or innocent vulnerable 'angels' at risk from deviant Others. Whether 'devil' or 'angel' (Valentine, 1996a) however, I explored the way in which these panics have fostered the adult conception that to be a child 'unsupervised' in public space is to be 'out of place' (Connolly and Ennew, 1996). For children to be seen by adults to be 'in place' is for them to be located either at school or at home (Lee, 2001). Indeed, from the children's accounts, the school and home were the two spaces that they spent the majority of their time. In Chapter 5, I explored the domestication of these 'middle-class' children's 'free' time and play and their childhood experiences of what has increasingly come to be seen as the protective safe haven of the home[1]. The present and following chapter are thus dedicated to exploring these children's accounts of their lives as they are lived in the context of the school. There are a number of reasons why the school space is explored across two chapters. First, the school was a space that many children devoted much of their attention addressing [2]. Second, the classroom and playground are so disparate (both visually and in terms of their purpose) that they are worthy of study and exploration in their own right[3].

In this chapter then, I explore some of the children's lives and experiences within the social space of classroom. I have explored how many of the children's theorisations

[1] Although in chapter 2 I highlighted how some researchers (see for example Kitzinger, 1990; Jenks, 2005) question this image of the home, it being the most common site for sexual and physical child abuse and neglect.

[2] This may have stemmed from the fact that the study was school-based or possibly because it is a space where they spend much (perhaps most) of their waking days. Whatever the reason however, as I highlight in chapter 3, I wanted the focus and structure of the thesis to be driven as far as possible by the children's own concerns.

[3] Although as I emphasised in Chapter 2, I do not regard different social spaces as discrete or independent entities but rather, as existing and constituted through their relations with each other.

of childhood were bound up with notions of fun (see Chapter 2) and that this was a theme that ran throughout the previous two empirical chapters. Discourses of fun were, however, certainly most prevalent in the children's accounts of the classroom space. In this chapter, I thus explore the importance many of the children placed on 'having fun' during lesson time and learning. I examine how under the regulative disciplinarian control of their teacher, in an environment where there was no 'officially' sanctioned fun (i.e. that endorsed by their teacher), some of the children attempted (and both failed and succeeded) in injecting their own (unsanctioned) fun into the classroom. I also explore some of the consequences of this and highlight the unfair distribution of reprimands and retributions. The chapter reveals, however, that for two boys (Gary and Fred) punishment, or even the threat of punishment, was fun in itself and in fact provided them with a freedom away from the surveillance and regulative control of their teacher and the monotony of schoolwork.

Yet, whilst much of the chapter centres around discourses of fun, freedom and resistance from (adult) rules and regulation, in the final section of the chapter I explore the seriousness of schoolwork and learning. Specifically, I draw attention to the fact that for some ('lower-achieving'[4]) children lesson time and learning were not bound up with fun and humour. Instead, they were more characteristically fraught with pressures and emotional stresses and strains. Within this section, however, I also explore how even for those 'high-achievers' who found work 'easy' and spent much of their time 'messing about', there were still pressures for them to secure the academic grades they were predicted and, indeed, expected to gain.

6.2 'Stop Talking, Sit up Straight, fold your Arms and Look this Way': Regulation and Resistance in the Classroom

In Chapter 2 I highlighted how up until the late nineteenth century children in Britain mixed and socialised freely among and alongside adults (Valentine, 2001). The re-conceptualisation of childhood as a state of vulnerability and incompleteness, however, and the subsequent introduction of compulsory schooling in the 1870s, saw the mass removal and marginalization of children from the re-defined 'adult' streets and world of work. Relocated to schools, children were expected to become 'docile'

[4] Loosely defined here as those children who were in the lowest sets/groups for various subjects.

and 'passive' recipients of adult knowledge and expertise (Foucault, 1977). The school "was charged with the responsibility of shaping the child's character through physical and moral discipline" (Wyness, 2006: 143). The adult teacher represented an all-knowing and hence, all-powerful figure within the classroom; whose responsibility it became to instil knowledge, competence and completeness into their pupils (Lee, 2001).

Lee (2001: 77) suggests that in contemporary western societies, there is no longer such a stark power, knowledge and competence dichotomy between teachers and pupils. Specifically, he posits that education is becoming more 'child-centred' and children are increasingly recognised as active and relatively independent creators of information (Lee, 2001). As I explore in this section, however, Mrs Rotheroe (the Year 6 teacher) certainly appeared to draw upon more 'traditional' discourses of teacher-pupil relations. In her late fifties, Mrs Rotheroe was a very experienced teacher who had taught for over thirty years (seventeen of which had been at St Martin's). She had taught many of the children's older siblings and had also been their teacher in Year 5. She thus knew the children and their backgrounds fairly well. Although I did not spend any prolonged periods of time with Mrs Rotheroe[5], from the conversations I did have with her she certainly appeared to care about the children[6] and conveyed (both advertently and inadvertently) her fondness for the majority of children in the class. Outside of lessons and away from the children, she also seemed a kind, considerate, witty and fun-loving person. Despite this, however, neither her fondness for, nor concern about the children or her kind and fun-loving personality was revealed to the children. Rather, as their class teacher, Mrs Rotheroe took up a very authoritarian position and instilled stringent rules and codes of conduct in the classroom context. This is illustrated in the following fieldnote extract below, which is a typical example of lessons that I witnessed with the children and Mrs Rotheroe during my time at St Martin's:

[5] Since as I outlined in Chapter 2, I wanted to spend as much time as possible with the children in order to build a positive relationship with them and for them to grant me access to their social worlds.
[6] Sometimes discussing her concerns about certain children (both academic and more personal) with other school staff and myself.

> Mrs Rotheroe turns on the music for 'brain gym'[7]. Without being told, the class all stand up and begin following the movements that Mrs Rotheroe is doing to the music. Whilst copying her, John knocks one of the pencil pots with his arm and it falls emptying the entire contents onto the floor. The class begin laughing but Mrs Rotheroe glares at him angrily. She tells him to pick up the mess he has just made, to stop being so careless and learn to control his actions. She then reprimands Chloe and Phoebe for not doing the movements properly. She shouts at Andy for slouching and not standing up straight and then reprimands him, Gary and Lucy for being muddy. She tells Andy to wash his hands and to 'get the pen off them'. Tutting she addresses the entire class and tells them how bad they have been today. After 'brain gym' Mrs Rotheroe begins the Geography lesson although after about five minutes she stops the lesson saying that they are not listening. She tells them to close their books and fold their arms and to sit in silence for five minutes. She stands glaring at them before walking into the library to fetch more books.
>
> (Fieldnotes 22/11/04)

Delamont (1983: 73) highlights how every teacher has their own ideas about the degree of control they can exert and maintain over pupils and how much is needed to successfully teach them. The scene presented at the beginning of this fieldnote extract is certainly reminiscent of the more traditional 'disciplinary' schooling outlined at the beginning of this section. Indeed, Mrs Rotheroe appears to have total control over her 'passive' and 'docile' pupils who, without instruction, stand up and begin following her lead. Whilst projecting herself as an all-knowing and all-powerful authority figure, however, the fragility of Mrs Rotheroe's control over the class and the power struggles at play between (at least some of) the children and herself within the classroom is revealed as the scene in this extract begins to unravel. As John knocks over a pencil pot, for example, he triggers disruption and disorder; threatening the control that Mrs Rotheroe has over them as the class attention is turn from her, towards John and the comical (as evidence by their laughter) incident they have just witnessed.

Whilst Mrs Rotheroe draws on developmental discourses of children, constructing them as 'incompetent' and 'unruly' (accusing them of 'slouching', failing to or being unable to comport their bodies in the correct way, being 'dirty' and not listening) these may in fact have been conscious efforts by these children to challenge and

[7] 'Braingym' was a routine comprising of a number of different movements carried out to music, intended to stimulate the brain and aid concentration and learning. It had been made compulsory by Mrs Hayes. All of the classes had to do 'Braingym' every morning and afternoon before registration.

resist the power and control Mrs Rotheroe attempted to exercise over them. Indeed, Simpson (2000) identifies the classroom as a place of complicated power struggle, wherein the body is a 'potent weapon'. Just as the children use their bodies as sites of agency and resistance, however, the extract above reveals how they were also used by Mrs Rotheroe to reinstate her control over them (as she instructs them to wash their bodies, not to slouch, and later, to stop what they are doing and to fold their arms). Throughout the time I spent observing and participating in the class then, there appeared to be a constant power struggle between the children and their teacher. Moreover, I frequently witnessed how the tighter the control that Mrs Rotheroe levied on the children, the more the children resisted her rules and regulatory practices. This relation of power and resistance thus became a cyclical process. It also succeeded in reinforcing the title that some of the children (privately among their peer group) awarded her as the most strict and disciplinarian teacher in the school.

Having introduced Mrs Rotheroe and provided a glimpse into (what I conceived to be) a 'typical' lesson with the children's teacher, I now turn to explore some of the children's own feelings and perceptions of these and their class teacher.

6.3 'She Just Shouts all the Time . . . and Never Lets You Have Fun': The Importance of Fun and Freewill in Lesson Time and Learning

As Year 6 pupils in their final year of primary school, the children had been taught by a number of different teachers. Some of their previous teachers had left the school or taken 'sick leave' and so had been replaced by new/different teachers. Since Mrs Rotheroe was the Maths co-ordinator for the school and had become the 'acting' deputy head teacher, there were sometimes days, or part of days when she was unable to teach the class and so the children were taught by someone else. On a Tuesday, Mr Connelly took the children for Music and choir practice. During the year, Mr Cray who was an ITT (Initial Teacher Training) teacher also took some of the classes. The children had thus experienced many different pedagogic styles and had clear ideas of what a 'good' and 'bad' teacher constituted. In the following two interview extracts then, which are all concerned with 'good' and 'bad' teacher, some of the children's perceptions of Mrs Rotheroe are revealed, and their views of her

'traditional' style of teaching compared with more 'modern' styles adopted by other teachers in the school:

NC:	What makes a good teacher and what makes a bad teacher?
Kelly:	Well the good teachers are funky and cool and fun and they don't do all boring stuff all day and then they do good stuff in subjects and then . . .
NC:	But you have to do certain subjects and topics.
Kelly:	Yeah, but they make it FUN.
Faith:	Yeah.
Kelly:	Like Miss Mason, she's dancing around the class and it makes it funny.
NC:	Uh huh.
Kelly:	And then Mrs Rotheroe, she's just an old bag full of poo and she's just like 'DO YOUR WORK'.
[. . .]	
Daisy:	[. . .] I'd say what makes a good teacher would be like the one that really educates you really well but lets you just/
Kelly:	Have fun.
[. . .]	
Daisy:	Oh and the bad teacher you know they just . . . is too strict, educates you alright but just you know, really strict and tells you off all the time/ and it's not very nice.
[. . .]	
Mary-Kate:	[. . .] And a bad teacher is someone who tells you off all the time and then and then no when other people are getting told off all the time. Well not all the same people but different people and being told off over again, you get really bored and you think it's just a waste of time.

* * * *

Sherman:	[Talking about Mr Connelly] he's the nicest because he actually makes the lessons fun.
Andy:	Yeah.
John:	Yeah I know.
NC:	Like how?
Sherman:	Like Mrs Hayes/
Andy:	Because he like makes jokes in between and/
[. . .]	
George:	Yeah and if you like tripped over or something, Mrs Rotheroe goes 'that's just being careless. You shouldn't have done that'.
[. . .]	
George:	Yeah and Mrs Rotheroe when she umm . . . sorry Mr Connelly, he makes a joke out of everything you do. You're like never bored.
Alex:	It's funny.
Sherman:	Yeah but like/
NC:	Do you still learn as much?
All:	Yeah.
George:	We do/
Sherman:	It's like a fun way of learning.
Andy:	But ermm you remember it coz he taught it but sometimes/

[. . .]

George: Yeah like that polygon joke.

Andy: Yeah.

Sherman: Oh yeah. We were learning about polygons in Year 4 [. . .] and he umm said 'oh yeah I knew this guy, he had ha had a [. . .] parrot called Polly and then he went to bed, got up and said 'where's my Polly gone?' (George laughs).

Alex: Coz it was called a polygon.

John: It just makes us remember it.

In both of the extracts above, discourses of fun infiltrate the children's narratives. In the first extract, Kelly and Daisy describe a 'good' teacher as being one who either "makes" or "lets" them "have fun" during lessons. This is in contrast to the (highly-academic) girls in Delamont's (1983) research, who judged teachers first and foremost on their abilities as instructors. Similarly, however, in the second extract, Sherman identifies Mr Connelly as "one of the nicest" teachers because he has the ability to make lesson time "fun". Moreover, for both the girls and the boys, notions of 'fun' were bound with humour. In the first extract, Kelly and Faith describe Miss Mason as someone who makes lessons 'fun' because she 'dances around the class' which Kelly says "makes it funny". In the second, the "jokes" that Mr Connelly injects into lessons, are identified by some of the boys as the reason why and how they are made 'fun'.

In addition to humour, 'fun' also seemed to be related to notions of freedom for some of these girls. As well being 'funny', against a backdrop of regulative lessons with Mrs Rotheroe ('she's just like DO YOUR WORK') there is a sense of freedom and liberation in Kelly's construction of Miss Mason moving her body and dancing around the classroom. This is echoed in Daisy's account of good teachers (i.e. ones who 'let them' have fun). As well as making lessons more pleasurable, Mary-Kate also highlights academic benefits for less regulatory and controlling practices. Daisy, for example, says 'bad' teachers that are 'strict' and 'tells them off all the time' but still educate them "alright". Mary-Kate, in contrast, conceives that the time spent reprimanding different members of the class actually compromises the rest of the children's learning time.

For Daisy, however, a 'good' teacher also had to be an effective educator. Yet, in the second extract, the boys' comments suggest that by making lesson time and learning

fun, teachers are more effective educators and subsequently make better teachers. Specifically, they state how the humour and fun injected into lessons not only encourages them to listen and to be more attentive. Rather, it also makes the lesson more memorable and so enables them to remember what they have been taught. This is demonstrated as they recount a 'joke' that was told to them by Mr Connelly in a Maths lesson back in Year 4, which was designed to assist their learning. It is also reinforced by Fred and Dave in anther interview as they complain about not being able to remember lessons with Mrs Rotheroe (a teacher who was not regarded by these boys as injecting jokes into lessons and/or making them fun):

Gary: [. . .] like in Welsh we learn words and then I/
Dave: You forget it.
Gary: You just forget it the next time.
Fred: Yeah [. . .] With me when you . . . when you forget it and it's the next lesson and she asks you and you're like . . . and you're looking everywhere and you're like going bright red and then she just goes/ (clapping his hands together and impatiently says) 'come on we learnt this last week' and its like so annoyin' coz you forgot it.

Fun was not therefore, simply desired by these boys because (for them) it was core characteristic of childhood. Rather, it also facilitated their education and learning.

6.4 'I Just Muck about': The Creation of 'Unofficially' Sanctioned Fun in the Classroom

Whilst none of the children conceived Mrs Rotheroe to inject any fun into the classroom, this did not mean that there was an absence of fun in their lessons with her. Rather, it meant that they themselves were involved in creating their own 'unofficial' (i.e. that which is unsanctioned by Mrs Rotheroe) fun. Although having their status as knowledgeable and competent agents denied by Mrs Rotheroe therefore, the following two fieldnotes extracts detail two of many incidences that I witnessed during my time in the field where the children used both their knowledge, competence and agency to resist their teacher's 'outright domination' (Devine, 2003) to carve out their own spaces with which to create their own fun:

> At 12.00 Mrs Rotheroe stops the English lesson and tells them to get their reading books from the shelf, to move into their reading groups and begin reading. She then walks over and sits with one of the groups to listen to them read. The class is silent apart from the one person who is reading aloud to Mrs Rotheroe. I watch Gary whispering to the rest of his reading group and then, giggling he knocks underneath the table. Without looking up from her book Mrs Rotheroe calls 'come in' thinking that someone has just knocked on the classroom door. The whole of Gary's table giggle quietly. He does it a second time. When no one comes in, Mrs Rotheroe looks towards the door and seeing nobody there, asks who is 'being silly'. With no one owning up she tells the class to continue reading their books. Smiling and trying to conceal their laughter, Gary and the rest of his reading group hide their faces behind their reading books for the rest of the lesson.
>
> (Fieldnotes 06/12/04)

* * * *

> There is a constant hum of noise in the classroom as the children sit chatting to each other. I sit at the end of one of the tables where Kelly, Faith, Gary, Daisy and Kai are sat. The whole table have been laughing and chatting with each other since the Maths lesson began over 15 minutes ago. No one on the table has started their work. Mrs Rotheroe is helping some of the other children on different tables. Kelly begins singing one of the 'Black Eyed Peas' (a popular band at the time) songs and doing the actions to the words. Mrs Rotheroe then sees Kelly and standing a few metres away, watches her disapprovingly. Kelly then realises and quickly stops and then pretends to get on with her work. Mrs Rotheroe then glaring at her says, 'last time today Kelly'. She walks away and sits down next to Ashley on a table the other side of the classroom. [. . .] Gary then stands up and goes to talk to Dave who is on another table. He comes back but as he is about to sit down, Kelly pulls his chair from beneath him and he falls, crashing to the floor. The whole table explode into laughter. Moaning in pain but still smiling, Gary gets up and sits back on his chair. Mrs Rotheroe who is still helping some of the children fails to witness any of this.
>
> (Fieldnotes 21/02/05)

Just like the 'official' fun that some of the children conceived Miss Mason and Mr Connelly as injecting into the lessons (see section 6.3), in both of the extracts above humour is again the source of these children's own fun. Not officially endorsed, however, the creation of such fun only seemed possible away from the surveilling gaze of Mrs Rotheroe. In the second extract, for example, Kelly is threatened with punishment ('last time today Kelly') as Mrs Rotheroe's gaze comes to rest upon her. Yet, in the first extract, and at the end of the second extract when Mrs Rotheroe's panoptical vision is both obscured (by the positioning of the children's desk at which she is sat) and averted (by the children she is helping), Kelly and Gary reveal the opportunities available for them to create their own fun.

Interestingly, both Kelly and Gary's pleasure and amusement is achieved at someone else's expense. There are, nevertheless, some fundamental differences between them. Indeed, Francis (2000) comments on the gender differences in classroom behaviour and the way in which girls tend to draw less attention to themselves than boys; something that appears to be mirrored in these two extracts. Although it is Kelly, for example, who pulls the chair from beneath Gary, he is the one who becomes the centre of attention as the rest of the children on the table laugh (it seems to his delight) at him on the floor. Moreover, this incident is staged during the middle of a Maths lesson where there is a steady flow of talk and interaction between other people (adults and children) in the class, rendering it relatively unnoticed by the rest of the class. Gary's efforts, in contrast are forged during 'reading time' where, apart from one person, the classroom is silent. This meant that the slightest noise/incident was audible to everyone. Yet, in addition to this, Gary also rather riskily uses Mrs Rotheroe as the 'butt' of his 'joke'. Not only does he succeed in fooling her into believing that someone is at the door. He also manages to undermine the supreme power/knowledge position she constructs herself as embodying as he succeeds in concealing his identity as the perpetrator of this 'joke' and avoids being reprimanded or punished[8]. Attention is thus focused on him (at least by the people who know that it is him) as he becomes the person in the class who is daring enough to both attempt and succeed in ridiculing and undermining their class teacher.

6.5 'You're Not Pushed at All': 'Brainy Kids', Boredom and the Need for 'Unofficially' Sanctioned Classroom Fun

The majority of the children who engaged in unofficially sanctioned behaviour were 'high achievers' and expressed their desire and determination to do well at school in order to gain the grades necessary for their future careers. Renold (2005: 89) found that in her research, the boys who injected humour into classroom life appeared to be doing so as a way of securing an academic identity that did not equate academic success or studiousness. In my own research, in contrast, there did not appear to be

[8] Indeed, whilst Mrs Rotheroe's more powerful position still enabled her to punish a few or the whole class of children for this incident, which is something she occasionally did if the culprit refused to come forward, she refrained from doing so in this instance choosing instead to ignore them. Gary, however, appeared aware of the limits of this joke and his position within pupil-teacher power-relation since although having the power to conceal his identity after being warned, he refrained from repeating his action (knocking under the table) a third time.

any negative connotations or consequences associated with being 'studious' or 'working hard'. Indeed, Mary-Kate and George were amongst the most popular children in the class but also the two highest achievers in the year. Both thus adopted a 'hard working' academic ethic and often had other children in awe of their work and ability. Moreover, children of all abilities – whether engaging in behaviour that equated to 'messing' and 'mucking about' or not – appeared proud when praised for their work[9]. Rather than attempting to disguise their desire to work and achieve 'high' academic results then, in the extracts below Gary and Fred (who were labelled by Mrs Rotheroe as "the two class clowns") reveal the reasons behind their engagement in such behaviour:

NC: Do you think that you mess about at school?
Fred: YEAH.
Dave: Yeah.
Gary: Kind/ of like today, I was writing a song instead of doing my work.
Fred: (laughing) Yeah.
Dave: He did this hippy song (they all start laughing).
Gary: Do you want me to sing it?
NC: Why do you muck about?
Gary: Coz/ I dunno. I just do. It's the way I am.
Dave: It's boring.
Fred: It's boring.
NC: Do you actually do your work? [. . .]
Gary: We do our work but, you know, we like mucking about as well.
Fred: Yeah I do my work and muck around doing that as well and then when I finished my work, I just muck around [. . .]

* * * *

NC: How do you think that it will be different when you go to high school?
Fred: Coz they don't go over it a thousand times because they [. . .] separate the ermm the brainy kids and the not so brainy kids apart so ermm you don't have to go over it about a thousand times for the people who don't understand because, what I don't understand is why Mrs Rotheroe doesn't just say 'the people who do understand just carry on and the people who don't understand I'll come over to you now'.
Gary: But she explains it to all of us.

Whilst at the beginning of the first extract, Gary asserts that 'messing about' is part of the identity he embodies ("it's the way I am"), the latter part of this extract and

[9] Both in class and in Monday's assembly where certificates were awarded to pupils who had merited acknowledgement.

also the second one, is more revealing of the motives behind both of these boys' classroom antics and the identities (as "class clowns") that they project. Indeed, both boys comment on the boredom of schoolwork. Yet, this boredom stems specifically from the fact that they do not feel challenged by the work that they are set. Both boys, for example, describe completing the work that they are set either before and/or whilst they are 'messing around'. In the second extract, Fred complains about the pace of Mrs Rotheroe's teaching. Indeed, in one interview Fred told me how he conceived Mr Connelly to be a better teacher because "he goes quicker" which he thought they were "supposed to" do in Year 6. The speed certainly appeared to have an effect on Fred's levels of boredom. This is reinforced later on in the chapter when I explore Fred's desire and determination to gain "top marks" in their upcoming SAT exams. From their accounts then, both of these boys expressed an outward desire to learn and achieve 'good' academic results. The injection of humour and unofficially sanctioned fun into classroom life therefore, was a consequence of their own perceived intelligence, the speed and level at which Mrs Rotheroe set the lessons and consequential boredom they experienced, together with the absence of officially sanctioned fun in lessons with their teacher.

6.6 'She'd Tell Me Off but Not Them': Rule-Breaking and the 'Unfair' Distribution of Reprimand and Retribution

Although there were many successful cases whereby children managed to inject unofficially sanctioned fun and humour into lessons and avoid the wrath of Mrs Rotheroe (such as the two cases explored in section 6.3 above), unsuccessful attempts could result in severe discipline and punishment. Often, however, the severity was dependent on the individual child. Indeed, Francis (2000) notes how in her research, teachers were more lenient with girls than they were with boys, commenting how on occasions, where girls and boys were engaged in the same activity, that only the boys were reprimanded for their misdemeanours. Whilst not gender based, there were definitely certain children in the class who Mrs Rotheroe was more or less lenient with and who were more or less prone to reprimand and retribution. This was felt both by myself and children (particularly those who were frequent targets of discipline and punishment) in the study:

Sherman: And ummm, I find that if you talk like ermm . . . say I was

talking and Mrs Rotheroe told me off, and then say Naomi or Mary-Kate was talking and then she wouldn't tell them off.

Dave: Yeah.

Sherman: Coz/

Andy: Coz they're really good.

Dave: Yeah.

Sherman: Yeah, coz they're good all the time just coz they're been more like . . . just coz they've been talking she won't tell them off.

Andy: And she never notices like Naomi or Mary-Kate coz they've got such low voices, and she is like . . . other people on their table/

Sherman: Like me.

NC: That have got booming voices (laughs).

Andy: (laughing) Yeah that have got booming voices.

* * * *

The class are experimenting with batteries, wires and buzzers to find the correct way to operate the buzzer. After about 5 minutes, more of the class manage to wire their equipment up correctly and make their buzzers work. Mrs Rotheroe tells the class to stop what they doing but some of the children continue connecting the wires to the buzzer. After telling the class another six times to put the equipment down she says that the next person to connect their buzzer will have it confiscated. Zoë, who is sharing the equipment with Gary, puts their equipment in the middle of the table but Gary pulls it back towards him and a few minutes later sets off the buzzer. Mrs Rotheroe says that he never listens and tells him to put it back in the box and that he wont be able to join in with the rest of the lesson. [. . .] Just before break time she stops the lesson and again tells them again not to connect the buzzer which someone then does. Mrs Rotheroe stops and asks, "who just did that?" Embarrassed, Yasmine puts her hand up and apologises. Mrs Rotheroe tells her it is "okay" because she said "sorry" and didn't mean to do it.

(Fieldnotes 9/12/04)

In the first extract, Andy posits that because Naomi and Mary-Kate are so quietly spoken, among other louder people in the class (e.g. Sherman), their conversations can go relatively unnoticed by Mrs Rotheroe. Indeed, in commenting that some teachers are more lenient with girls than they are with boys, Francis (2000) suggests that it may be because boys tended to be louder and thus more audible to teachers. In the same extract, however, Sherman offers a different perspective. Resonated in his comment "coz they're good all the time [. . .] just coz they've been talking she won't tell them off" Sherman suggests that because they are usually well-behaved, even if they were talking, they would not be reprimanded. This is in contrast to someone like himself who is louder and engages in much more unofficially sanctioned classroom antics[10].

[10] Although by being quieter in the first place, their 'misbehaviour' may go undetected.

This notion is reflected and reinforced in the second extract. Whilst Yasmine and Gary both engage in the same prohibited act (i.e. activating a buzzer), it is only Gary who is chastised for his actions. Indeed, although Mrs Rotheroe automatically conceives Gary as purposefully activating the buzzer and Yasmine doing it accidentally, both were still touching them. Whether intentional or accidental then, it is something that they have been instructed not to do. Regardless of this, however, Gary's identity as a 'joker' and "class clown" appears to automatically render him guilty and subject to reprimand. Yasmine, in contrast, who is much quieter and 'well-behaved', has her actions forgiven and dismissed by Mrs Rotheroe as an "accident".

6.7 'There's No Point . . . All You do is Have Fun': The Pleasures and Freedom of Threats and Punishment

Out of all of the children in the class, Gary and Fred were targets of the most frequent and severe reprimands and punishments. They were the only two people in the class to be put "on report" both prior to and during my time in the field. They were also the ones who most often found themselves outside Mrs Hayes' (the head teacher) office or the classroom (in either the adjoining cloakroom or library). Whilst designed to make the boys reflect on and repent their actions, in turn preventing them from repeating their actions again, unlike other children (usually girls) punishments for these boys were often counter-productive in their purpose:

Gary:	Like . . . like in class when we were laughing and Miss Cresswell just said/ 'don't laugh', and Mrs Rotheroe would like send us out the room and that.
Dave:	Yeah.
Fred:	Yeah. And all you do is just mess about then.
Gary:	Yeah.
Fred:	Play on the wall and everything like that.
NC:	So you don't think that it's/
Gary:	No. There's no point.
Fred:	Yeah there's no point because you just . . . you're missing your learning time and she's always on about ermm you're disrupting everyone's learning when she's really disrupting your learning and then ermm.
Gary:	Yeah.
Fred:	All you do is have fun because you're not listening or anything. You're just like in a world of your own and it's wicked (laughs).

* * * *

NC:	Why do you always have to put lines on the board Fred?
All:	Ohhhhh

Fred: Because I swing back on my chair.
Gary: Me and Fred have a competition.
Fred: Yeah to see/
Gary: Who wins.
Fred: Yeah who gets the most lines.
[. . .]
Gary: If we get five, we get detention.
Fred: For last play. And we swing back on our chair like that (leans back) and I'm like . . .
NC: But have you ever had to stay in?
Gary: No.
Fred: No.
Gary: I've never got . . . I got four and a half because Mrs Rotheroe kind of saw me but then she didn't so I got half.
Fred: I've got four.
NC: Did you have to stay in?
Fred: No.
NC: She always says that you'll have to stay in and then you never do?
Gary: Yeah.
Fred: Yeah, and then once, before she got the rule out about getting five and then you have to stay in with her. I got eight before because it was half term . . . no I got about eight, nine or ten coz it was the last . . . It was the Friday . . . no it was Thursday before half term and I thought oh well, so I just got loads.

Rather than being seen in the negative and preventative way in which they are intended, for Gary and Fred the punishments or threat of punishment to which they were often subject were regarded as additional sources of fun. When sent out of the classroom for example, Mrs Rotheroe usually instructed them to "stand away from the door" so that neither she nor the other children in the class could see them. In the first extract however, Fred conveys how this becomes a form of liberation from the surveilling gaze of Mrs Rotheroe and the regulative control she exercises over the class as well as from the boredom of their work. Specifically, this punishment provides him with a time and space for fun, escapism and freewill ("All you do is have fun . . . You're just like in a world of your own and it's wicked"). It was thus, an incentive to 'misbehave' as the 'fun' that they had from 'messing about' generated further and different kinds of amusement (and liberation).

As well as being counterproductive in their intentions, in the first extract above Fred highlights how reprimanding them is also disruptive, both to their own, and other children's "learning time". Indeed, Paechter comments that:

"The domination of the disruptive antics of (often only a few) boys directs the focus of teachers' attention onto this group and positions the girls, particularly those who are quiet, as Other both in terms of their learning needs and in terms of how disruption is perceived to affect them" (Paechter, 1998: 22).

This assertion is reinforced by Mary-Kate who, as I explored in section 6.3 of this chapter, complained about teachers who "waste time" by constantly 'telling off' different people. Zoë made a similar comment in a different researcher-facilitated interview with Sam and herself:

> Zoë: [. . .] with the boys in our class I hate it because they're always really chopsy and they're always . . . I know they're not that bad but Mrs Rotheroe stops the lesson to tell them off and then we stop our learning and that . . . and then, sometimes its break time then, and then a piece of work could be really important and then there could be a question in our SATs and then we could . . . and then that could count as our mark like gone from a five to a four so then . . .

Well aware that Mrs Rotheroe knew the effect that she was having on their own and other children's 'learning time', however, Fred and Gary embodied a powerful position over her; able to test the boundaries of reprimand and punishment. Nearer the forthcoming SAT exams[11], the power of their position was increased even further as the disruption caused by reprimanding and punishing them could compromise their learning time and potentially their SAT grades (and in turn possibly jeopardise both the school and her own reputation). Moreover, in the second extract, the boys reveal a similar power that they were able to exercise over their teacher. Although threatened with detention, as Fred and Gary highlight, this threat was rarely followed through. This stemmed from the fact (as Mrs Rotheroe told the class) that it would also be punishment for her since she would be forced to sit in the classroom with them and forgo her own 'break' time. Armed with this knowledge (and hence, power), Gary and Fred were aware that they were unlikely to ever face detention and so took delight in competing with each other and testing to see who could push the boundaries of resistance the furthest. For these boys then, 'fun' existed in many forms, from 'messing about' through to the so-called consequential punishments that they received.

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[11] Although SATs had been abolished in Wales the year I carried out my fieldwork, the school opted to do them regardless.

6.8 'I Wanna do Really Well Though': The Seriousness of Schoolwork and the Pressures and Pains of Achievement

Whilst much of this chapter has explored the importance of fun and some of the children's endeavours to inject their own unofficial fun into lesson time, in this final section of the chapter I explore the counter side of this. Indeed, although all of the children wanted to have fun during lesson time, in previous sections I have noted how it was largely 'high-achieving' pupils who engaged in their own unofficially sanctioned fun in lessons with Mrs Rotheroe. 'Lower-achievers' and those who found some or all subjects challenging could not afford (academically) to engage in the same activities/behaviour unless willing to jeopardise their school grades. For 'lower-achievers' then, there was an absence of fun in lesson time and learning. Moreover, they were often forced to grapple with the pressures and pains of schoolwork as the two extracts reveal below:

NC: What's wrong Phoebs? Shall I stop the mini disc? Do you not want to do this?
Phoebe: (starts crying) I do. It's just I don't like . . . I hate it.
NC: Hate what?
Phoebe: Life.
NC: Why?
Phoebe: It's just really hard. Especially in Year 6. You gotta do loads of work [. . .] They're always on to you, always asking you things, always nippin at you and they never give you a little rest or anything [. . .] But it's just Mrs Rotheroe. Coz Miss Mason's so cool. She gives 'em time to talk and stuff and time with your friends but in Year 6 they can't do that and I'm not used to it. [. . .] And I do like working in quietness it's just I got loads to do. I got essays like from there and then to there (sighs). And then I got like a World War Two project that everyone else is doing [. . .] I got an essay to do about the heart. I got ummmm/
Chloe: Have you?
Phoebe: Yeah.
Chloe: Oh that's with your tutor is it?
Phoebe: (nods) And then I gotta learn how to do long multiplication like we've been doing.
Chloe: Yeah long division.
[. . .]
Phoebe: [. . .] I gotta learn that and everything and I gotta do 'The Hazel Staff' and I don't even get it. [. . .]

* * * *

Yasmine: It's really upsetting as well because you're sat there, and I think it's upsetting with Welsh coz I sit there, and when

you're doing that thing and you know, when we're doing that thing/

Ashley: And you're new really aren't you?

Yasmine: Yeah and you know when we were doing that thing when we had to do it by ourselves with no help. I went over and asked and she goes 'oh just try' and I didn't have a clue and I was just sat there like that and I'd done three lines in the hour. And like it's just really stupid that [. . .]

In contrast to some of the extracts presented in previous sections, the two extracts above are both very emotive representations of the difficulties and seriousness of lessons for two of the girls[12] in the study[13]. In the first, Phoebe discusses her struggles to cope with the amount and level of work, and with this the lack of 'free' time they are awarded in Year 6. Treading a fine line between childhood (with breaks and 'rests') and adolescence (with work and exams), and between finishing primary and beginning secondary school, Phoebe was thus forced to learn and cope with difficult masses of work without what she describes as "a little rest".

For Yasmine, however, it was not the mass of work nor the difficulty of the whole of Year 6 syllabus. Rather, for her it was only Welsh lessons that caused her grief and emotional upset. Having only joined the school in September and never learnt any Welsh prior to this (in contrast to the rest of the children in the class who had been taught Welsh for the past six years), Yasmine was finding Welsh lessons extremely challenging. In the second extract above then, Yasmine conveys her feelings of humiliation and helplessness in the Welsh lessons wherein they were producing their own individual booklets (without the help of Mrs Rotheroe) to take to high school demonstrating their knowledge of the Welsh language. Such feelings may have been augmented by the fact that in all other subjects, Yasmine was a high achiever and in "top set". Far from being pleasurable then, for Phoebe and Yasmine, lessons and schoolwork were challenging and emotionally stressful endeavours.

Although maybe not finding work difficult, some of the high achievers in the class still felt under pressure to do well at school and achieve the high grades they were predicted and expected to gain. Naomi, for example, was one of highest achievers in

[12] None of the boys expressed the same, or similar feelings to me during my time in the field.

[13] Since Phoebe was rather upset in this interview, I sought her consent to include this extract in my thesis.

the class but still expressed her concern over the forthcoming SAT[14] exams. Perhaps more surprising, however, was that these concerns were shared by both Gary and Fred. Although these boys were perhaps the most intent (in the class) on having as much 'fun' as they could during lesson time, and went to the greatest lengths to achieve this, they were also the ones who expressed the most concern and desire to do well in their SAT exams. Even though they did not feel challenged by the work they were given, they still needed to secure the grades. The following two extracts presented below thus reveal a 'seriousness' to these boys attitude to work and their learning, the pressure they felt under as well as the lengths they went to ensuring "top marks" in the SATs:

> Yeah for the SATs, everyone's worried about the SATs because it's just like 'oooo SATs', and it's like, going up to high school now. Mrs Rotheroe doesn't really help because she's on about (in a high pitched voice imitating Mrs Rotheroe) 'now we gotta revise for the SATs now children. Now this is gonna help you with the SATs because if you cant do this you wont be able to answer the question and you'll lose lots of marks'. But then I'm like shut up because you only need to get one question more than halfway and you get a four which is pretty easy so he says. Ermm and it like really reassures you in the studying book. It goes like . . . oh I'll tell you what it goes like now (walks across his room and fetches the revision book). [. . .] It goes 'English this weird lesson you have to do. Maths this weird lesson you have to do. Science this weird lesson you have to do. SATs . . . this weird test you have to do' and they make it sound like nothing [. . .] The SATs, Mrs Rotheroe is like over reacting about it like and then other people are over reacting about it coz Mrs Rotheroe is over reacting about it and its just everyone's going 'ooo revising for the SATs next term' and I'm like 'yeah so' and ermm they're like 'ooo well you better start revising then' and I'm like 'I am'. It's just gonna be a piece of cake I reckon. Me and Gary are revising already. I been revising for ages but so has Gary and it's like if you revise loads then you're gonna get a four or a five coz all it is, is you just memorise it and then just write it down on a piece of paper.
>
> (Fred's audio recording)

* * * *

NC: Tell me about SATs then.
Gary: Oh yeah. I do some SATs practice.
Fred: Snap.
Gary: You do as well?
Fred: Yeah.
NC: Are most people?
Gary: Yeah.
Fred: I got all the books.
Gary: Ermm, well I dunno whether they've started yet but I've started early to get like . . . coz I need to get five, five, five in my SATs.
Fred: Why?
Gary: Coz my brother did and my mum's putting loads of pressure on me

so . .

NC: Why, what does she say?

Gary: Ahh, she just like, ahhh well if I get like five, five, five I get a new phone and then/

Fred: I get nowt.

Gary: Don't you?

Fred: No. I get nothing. Just/

Gary: And I get twenty quid for each five.

NC: Do you?

Gary: Yeah. But if I get five, five, four, I get a phone. No, if I get five, five, four I don't get a phone. I do, but it's probably like a really rubbish one. And I don't get any money. Well, I get two twenty quids because two fives and a four is ten quid.

Fred: My mum and dad they just say . . . they just want me to do as best as I can and you're not getting anything for the SATs but they expect me to get five, five, five but . . because ermm I'm more intelligent than my brother.

Gary: And I am. My mum said I'm the most intelligent child.

[. . .]

NC: Are you bothered about your SATs or not?

Both: Yes.

Gary: I am.

Fred: Because then/ in primary school . . they like . . what you get in your SATs they ermm use that to split you up into different groups in high school and that, and then, ermm like you either go in the lower group, middle group or higher group depending on what you get in your SATs, so I wanna get the best that I can coz in primary school its really borin' coz they just go with the ermm they go at the speed of the people who are less intelligent and you're not pushed at all.

Gary: I'm really nervous.

In the first extract Fred criticises Mrs Rotheroe for the constant emphasis she places on the SATs and the scaremonger tactics she uses to get the children to revise. Yet, despite this and downplaying the difficulty of the exams, Fred admits having already begun his revision. His criticism of Mrs Rotheroe may thus stem from the fact that he is actually one of the 'worried' people he refers to in the extract. The numerous references that he makes about the 'easiness' of the exams may in actuality, therefore, be his attempt to comfort and reassure himself. All of this, however, may stem from the importance he places on the SATs and his strong desire to achieve level five in all three (English, Maths, Science) of the papers; grades which Gary also had a strong determination and desire to gain. Indeed, in the second extract, both boys highlight that their parents expect them to achieve these results. Yet, not only did they risk being subject to their parents' disappointment if they fail to secure three level fives but also personal humiliation and shame if they did not match or 'beat' the results of their older 'less intelligent' brothers. In addition to this, Gary's

determination was also driven by the material incentives (a mobile phone and money) that his parents were offering him. For Fred, in contrast, there were academic incentives to gaining 'top marks'. At the end of the second extract, for example, Fred highlights the potential risks of being placed in a "lower group" with "less intelligent" people at high school and the boredom he will be forced to endure (not being challenged by the level and pace of the work they are given) if he does not achieve top grades in all three of his SATs papers. Whilst subject to boredom in primary school (which as I explored in previous sections above, was the reason he 'messed around' and was subsequently subject to frequent punishment), the upcoming SATs thus provided an escape from this and a chance for him to enjoy and be academically challenged at high school.

6.9 Concluding Notes

This chapter has been concerned with exploring some of the children's lives as they are lived and experienced in the space of the classroom. I began by first outlining and exploring the children's relations/hips with different teachers in the school. Specifically, I suggested that although Lee (2001) has charted a move away from traditional disciplinarian approaches to school and learning, Mrs Rotheroe (their class teacher) seemed to draw on and attempt to implement such discourses in her own teaching practices and relations with the children. Throughout this chapter however, I sought to reveal the fragility of the power, authority and control that Mrs Rotheroe's status as a teacher afforded her over the children, and drew attention to the circulation and simultaneous process of undergoing and exercising power between them (Foucault, 1980: 98). I explored, for example, how despite a perceived lack of officially sanctioned fun in lessons with their teachers, the importance that the children placed on 'having fun' during lesson time and learning encouraged some of the (high achieving) children to inject their own fun into these lessons. I revealed the need for creating such fun away from the surveilling gaze of Mrs Rotheroe in order to avoid the keen detection of Mrs Rotheroe, and being subjected to subsequent reprimand and retribution. Nevertheless, I examined how such consequences were contingent on the individual child/ren rather than simply the nature of the act. I highlighted how Gary and Fred in particular were the most frequent targets of Mrs Rotheroe's wrath although I explored the pleasures and freedom both boys'

perceived reprimands and retributions from offering them and their consequential efforts to actively seek punishment during lesson time and learning.

Although much of the chapter centred around discourses of fun however, the final part of the chapter was dedicated to exploring the seriousness of schoolwork and the pressures and pains of achievement. Specific attention was devoted to two girls who as low achievers in certain/all subjects, could not afford (academically) to create their own fun and who conveyed their frustrations and emotional distress with the level and amount of work they were set. I nevertheless examined how even 'high-achievers' – for academic, material and personal reasons – still felt pressure to secure their predicated grades.

In the following and final empirical chapter in this thesis I turn to explore children's experiences and perceptions of the playground and explore how, whilst it is a space within the school that is officially dedicated to play, fun and freedom, the children's narratives of the playground were more typically imbued with discourses of restrictions, boredom and control.

Chapter 7

Give us a Break!: Rules, Responsibilities and (Adult) Restrictions in the Primary School Playground

7.1 Introduction

Having explored children's accounts of their lives as they are lived and experienced in the school classroom – a space specifically designed for work and learning – this chapter examines their narratives of the school playground. As the term 'playground' suggests, this is a space demarcated specifically for 'play', and where children are afforded a 'break' from schoolwork. Writing about break and lunchtimes in schools, Blatchford and Sumpner (1998) posit that they are a significant and generally enjoyable time for most children as they offer them both a freedom and independence from teachers' control and a chance to socialise and play with friends. Indeed, Blatchford *et al.* (1990: 164) suggest that as parents concerns about allowing their children to play unsupervised in public space continues to mount, the school playground may be one of the few spaces where children can and do play outside the home "completely free" from adult control. Certainly, for the children in this research, break/lunch times in the playground were the main time and space where they could not only 'hang out' and socialise with friends but also, where they could develop, experiment and engage in (hetero)sexual relations/hips.

In this chapter, however, I explore how far from being enjoyable times and spaces "completely free" (Blatchford *et al.*, 1990) from adult control, that many of the children's accounts of their break/lunchtimes in the playground were more characteristically imbued with discourses of constraint, boredom and adult control. In the first part of the chapter for example, I focus on children's representations of their break/lunchtime responsibilities ('buddying' and 'prefecting'). Specifically, I reveal that whilst for two girls (Ashley and Lucy), these responsibilities provided them with an escape from the boredom and relatively marginal position they embodied amongst their same-age peers, the majority of children resented these responsibilities impinging on their fun and freewill. Continuing and extending discourses of boredom and control, the second part of the chapter explores the restrictions imposed on the children's playground play. I highlight how despite their agentic attempts at

resisting these constraints, the authoritarian position that the head and other teachers embodied meant that ultimately, the children's efforts proved to be futile endeavours. With restrictions imposed on their favourite games, the chapter charts the increasing gendered nature of playground interactions and play and the simultaneous emergence of a boyfriend/girlfriend culture. Identifying the playground as the main space for these children's heterosexual relations/hips, in the final part of the chapter I explore the changing and transitional nature of and adult school staff's response to boy-girl interactions from platonic innocent friendships to older sexualised re(a)lationships.

7.2 'They Get to Have Their Break Time But We Have to Look After Them': 'Play' Times/Grounds as 'Work' Times/Grounds

At St Martin's there were clear spatial and temporal boundaries demarcating when and where pupils should 'work' and when and where they were permitted to 'play'. The 'junior'[1] school pupils had one (twenty minute) morning and one (ten minute) afternoon break. They also had an hour-long lunch break at 12.30 which (weather permitting) pupils spent in the playground[2]. For these Year 6 children, however, 'break/lunch' times in the 'play'ground were not always as these terms suggest, times and spaces to 'play' and have a 'break' from work. Specifically, as the oldest in the school, and so (as they were consistently reminded) would soon be starting high school and should be therefore demonstrating their maturity and responsible nature, they were all delegated the responsibilities of 'buddying' and 'prefecting'. The former of these involved two Year 6 children in each of the playgrounds (infant and junior) to monitor, befriend and socialise with the other pupils in the school. They were also required to address any 'minor' conflicts or disputes that occurred during the lunch hour[3]. The latter of these responsibilities involved "looking after" (their words) and supervising the other year groups during morning and afternoon break times whenever it was "wet play". All of the children in the class were assigned a specific year group which they were then responsible for. Spatial boundaries of 'work' and 'play' thus became blurred whenever it was "wet play" as 'playtimes' were relocated to the classroom; the playground being deemed too dangerous to play on in the wet weather. Yet, whilst Zoë told me that Mrs Rotheroe

[1] The infants in the school were allocated longer breaks than the junior pupils.
[2] There were two playgrounds in the school, one for the 'infants' (Reception-Year 2) and one for the 'juniors' (Year 3-6).
[3] A rota was drawn up stating when and which playground each pupil had to buddy.

portrayed these responsibilities as privileges and said that if they were not "good enough" then they would be prohibited from being 'buddies' or 'prefects', the following extracts and discussion reveal some of the children's conceptions of the so-called 'privilege' of these roles:

Kai: (discussing prefecting) The Year 5's are boring.
NC: Why are they boring?
Kai: Ermmm, they just don't do anything.
Nigel: I like telling them off.
NC: Do they listen to you when you tell them off?
Nigel: My brother doesn't or/ like . . . none of the boys.
Kai: He thinks he's tough.
NC: What do you mean when you say that they don't do anything?
Kai: They just, they just/
Lee: Infants, they like talk to you and stuff.
Kai: Infants are a pain yeah. They look up to us and they hug us and stuff.
Lee: No they don't.
Kai: It's annoyin' when they start cryin'.
Lee: Yeah I know. You can't do anything about it.
NC: What do you do when they cry?
Kai: I just walk away.
Lee: (sarcastically) Oh that's nice.

In contrast to the positive way that Mrs Rotheroe portrays the roles of 'buddy' and 'prefect', in the extract above Kai bemoans having to prefect the Year 5 pupils because they are "boring", "don't do anything" and fail to keep him entertained. Moreover, although Nigel says that he enjoys reprimanding Year 5 pupils, he describes how the boys in this year undermine his power and authority. Yet, whilst Kai describes the Year 5 pupils as not 'doing anything', he complains about infants in the school 'doing something' (i.e. hugging, talking to them and crying). Moreover, he resents and rejects their positioning of him in a pastoral way ("when they start cryin'"). This is interesting and reinforces the notion in Chapter 5 (see section 5.5) that 'care work' is typically stereotyped as a feminine role. Nevertheless, in the following two extracts, Samantha, Zoë and Ashley's resentment of being assigned the tasks of 'prefect' and 'buddy' has resonance with Daisy's construction of the care that she provides her younger brother (see section 5.5 in Chapter 5) as an 'adult' role:

NC: What about prefecting?
Samantha: Oh okay. I don't like that either.
Zoë: I don't like that.
NC: Do you have to do it?

Samantha: Yes [. . .] It's boring.
Zoë: Coz they [the other pupils] get to have their break time but we have to look after them and like we're still children. Its not like we're grown up yet so we should still have our break time really.
[. . .]
NC: Do you get to choose who you prefect with?
Zoë: No.
Samantha: No.
NC: Mrs Rotheroe chooses?
Samantha: Yeah. So it's not exactly a fun thing to do in our playtime.
NC: Do you think that you should have to do it?
Zoë: No.
Samantha: No. The teachers should stay there.
Zoë: It should be up to the teachers/ or unless they get like . . . like dinner ladies but wet play monitor thingies.

* * * *

NC: Do you think that you should set the example?
Ashley: Yes in a way but we should have our own space coz we always have to look after like and help other people. We're the ones that like . . . they might as well not have dinner ladies. They might as well like make us do everything coz they always make us do everything so its really annoying.
NC: Don't you like having to do everything?
Ashley: No coz it's sooo annoyin. All the teachers expect you to do everything around the school. Like they might as well not have dinner ladies like I just said because they get the Year 6's to do it and the dinner ladies just like sit around being . . . doing nothing.
NC: Do you think that you should have to do it?
Ashley: Look after them?
NC: Yeah.
Ashley: No [. . .]

Specifically, in carrying out such tasks, a fluidity is created between their 'work' and 'play'/'break' time as they are forced to "look after" other pupils in the school. Indeed, having such responsibilities conflicts with the children's own theorisation of childhood as being a time of fun and freedom (from work and responsibilities – see Chapter 2). This notion resonates in Zoë's comment as she states, "we have to look after them and like we're still children". She constructs Year 6 pupils as being marginalized from the other children in the school and lifted out of the category 'child'; inadvertently implying that they are made to embody what she conceives as an 'adult' role. Moreover, she reinforces their theorisation of childhood wherein they conceive that adults work and have responsibilities while children have fun and freedom as she argues that they are not yet "grown up" and so "should still have our

[their] break time really". Through her comments, Zoë thus constructs "break time" as being a childhood right. In doing so, she implies that this is something that adults do not have the same privilege to; although of course they do, and this is precisely the reason Zoë and the rest of the class are delegated the roles of 'buddy' and 'prefect'.

In the second extract, Ashley similarly constructs herself and the rest of the Year 6 children as having to carry out an adult role as she likens the role of 'buddy' to that of a "dinner lady". Furthermore, in arguing that the Year 6 pupils do "everything" while the lunchtime supervisors "sit around" "doing nothing", she presents themselves – at least in the way that the majority of children in the study conceptualise childhood and adulthood – as being caught up in a generational role-reversal. Yet interestingly, through her comment "we should have our own space coz we always have to look after like and help other people", Ashley contends that they should be accorded the same privilege and private space away from the other children like the adults (with their staff room) have. Indeed, Devine (2002: 311) highlights that the relatively barren space of the playground in schools that she visited indicated the lower status of children within the school hierarchy. Being treated (in Ashley's eyes) not as 'children' but as 'adults', however, Ashley makes a case for the 'work' that they do and their superior status in relation to younger pupils, to be recognised and rewarded accordingly.

7.3 'Sometimes it's Just Nice to Get Away From My Friends and to Just go into a Different Playground': The Freedom of 'Responsible' Roles in the 'Play'/'Work' Ground

In the two extracts in section 7.2 above, Zoë, Samantha and Ashley all seem to share the view that they should not be responsible for the younger children in the school. Unlike Zoë and Samantha, however, Ashley does not bemoan the fact that these tasks impinge on (and thus restrict) their break/lunch time. In fact, in a separate interview from which the above extract was taken, Ashley and Lucy actually convey the role of 'buddy' in a positive light:

NC: What about your life at school? Do you like it?
Lucy: Kind of. I like school coz I get to see all my friends but I don't like it coz I have to do work (laughs). So . . . and I like

it coz you get to buddy and stuff.

NC: Why do you like to buddy?

Lucy: Coz, I dunno why, but you can just get away from that playground (points to the junior playground) [. . .]

NC: Do you like buddying Ashley?

Ashley: It's alright coz like Lucy said, you can get away from like the junior playground coz sometimes its like soooo boring. It's . . . if you go onto the infants, I know they're younger than you but it's more fun.

NC: Why? How is it?

Ashley: Because, I know I'd rather spend time with people my age but sometimes it's just nice to get away from my friends and to just go into a different playground with younger children or different children. So it's kinda good.

Whilst many of the boys and girls in the study regarded 'buddy' duty as a laborious and restrictive infringement on their lunchtime and sought various ways to avoid it[4], Lucy and Ashley construct it as offering them an opportunity for fun and freedom away from the boredom that they experienced in the junior playground with their same-age friends. Indeed, the extract above reveals just how appealing 'buddy' duty is for Lucy as she identifies it as one of only two things that she likes about school. This sentence is, however, interesting since although saying that she likes school because she can see her friends, she also likes 'buddying' because it enables her to "get away" from the junior playground; suggesting that her friends are actually younger peers. Certainly, it is significant that it was Ashley and Lucy who valued the escape from the junior playground that 'buddying' the infants provided, since these were the only two girls who were not members of any particular friendship group at school and who I often observed attempting (sometimes succeeding and sometimes failing) to 'join in' with other groups in the playground. Indeed, Ashley told me that her best friend was someone who lived in the same street but did not go to St Martins. Being a 'buddy' thus enabled Ashley and Lucy to escape the relatively peripheral position they had in the junior playground and embody a more powerful one amongst their younger peers. Yet, in addition, it provided them with an escape from the boredom ("sometimes its like soooo boring [. . .] if you go onto the infants, I know they're younger than you but it's more fun") that they experienced in this playground which may indeed have been a consequence of the position they occupied in the junior playground in relation to their friends.

[4] By eating their lunch slowly or hiding somewhere in the playground where they would not be seen by Mrs Rotheroe.

7.4 'Everything Fun . . . Has Been Taken Away From Us!': The Regulation and Resistance of Playground Play

It was not, however, only Ashley and Lucy who admitted being "bored" at break/lunch times. Indeed, over the course of my fieldwork these feelings were increasingly shared by some of the other children in the study. However, their reasons stemmed beyond reluctance and resentment of having to 'buddy' and 'prefect' younger pupils in the school. Indeed, far from offering a period where children have freedom and independence from adult control (see Blatchford and Sumpner, 1998: 81), many of the children in this research constructed break/lunch times as heavily regulated by adult rules and surveillance which, prevented them from enjoying their playground play. Many of these rules and regulations came into force following the appointment of Mrs Hayes as head teacher in 2002. Since taking up the position of head teacher, she had introduced many changes to the school and to the way in which it was run. One of the most resented of these (for the majority of the children in the study) was the "banning" of football and netball in the playground during break and lunch times; all but one of the boys complained about the prohibition of football and over half of the girls objected to the prohibition of both of these sports to me throughout my time in the field[5]. Indeed, the extent of some of these children's resentment was revealed to me when I was told of the prohibitions placed on these games during the first few hours of arriving at the school[6].

The popular activity that superseded netball and football and played (I was informed) by nearly all of the children in the class was, the well-known game 'British Bulldogs'. This game involves high levels of skill, fitness and speed as players attempt to outwit and outrun the 'bulldogs' whom attempt to catch players and make them 'dogs' alongside them. Significantly, Swain (2002) found that in a school where there were little competitive games or sports, the most valued form of masculine status was achieved from various forms of embodied physicality and

[5] I remained unaware of whether these girls did participate in games of football since it was banned prior to me beginning my fieldwork. Yet, whilst this may have been the reason, they may have just been supporting the boys and/or using this as a reason to fuel their dislike for Mrs Hayes and their longing for the reinstatement of Mr Windell (the previous head) as head teacher.

[6] Specifically, in one of the first small group discussions designed to introduce myself, the study and their potential involvement in the research.

athleticism. Prior to me beginning my fieldwork at the school, however, this substitute game was also banned for the same reason as football and netball; namely, that it was 'too dangerous' and risked injuring not just themselves but younger children in the playground. At the cusp of adolescence (i.e. in be'tween' childhood and adolescence) these 10/11 year olds were simultaneously and contradictorily positioned as both the victims and perpetrators of risk and danger in the school playground. Having already had their previous favourite activities curtailed, however, they were unwilling to renounce what they saw as the next best thing. Nearly all of the children in the class (including children such as Naomi and Mary-Kate who, as I conceived, were the most well-behaved and obedient in the class) thus joined together in a 'whole class' approach to resist Mrs Hayes and the restriction imposed on their favourite playground pursuit:

Andy:	Well it was quite funny though coz we called it 'Colours' and it's actually 'British Bulldogs'.
NC:	Oh I know that. Yeah I used to play that.
Andy:	But ermm . . . Mr Connelly/
NC:	We got banned from playing that at our school.
Sherman:	(laughing) It was banned so we just called it 'Colours'.
Andy:	And then Mr Connelly said, 'that's a nice game. What are you playing?' and then he goes . . . and then we go, 'oh Colours' and he goes 'that's really nice' (all laughing). And if we said 'British Bulldogs' he would have said 'oh well you'll have to go to Mrs Hayes' or something wouldn't he? But he's probably the nicest teacher isn't he?
George:	Yeah.

By changing the name of the game 'British Bulldogs' to 'Colours' the children used what little agency their (relatively powerless) position as 'pupils' made available to them, to avoid the real game they were playing from being identified, and the fun that it accorded them being curtailed. In the extract above, the boys express their delight at being able not only to foil the teachers into believing that they are playing a different game, but also by having Mr Connelly actually comment on how 'nice' this supposed 'dangerous' prohibited game was. It also suggests that it may be the stigma that is attached to the game 'Bulldog' (i.e. that it is a rough physical game frequently banned in schools) that contributes to the prohibition of this old and well-known playground game.

Following the reinvention of this game, many of the (Year 6) children continued to play 'British Bulldogs' (or rather 'Colours') relatively untrammelled during the first two months that I spent in the field. At the beginning of December, however, they were presented with two major obstacles and further restrictions to what they constructed as their already highly regulated break/lunch times. These resulted in the subsequent and eventual death of these and indeed other games/activities of speed. The first was the re-surfacing of the junior playground. Specifically, the semi-circles which they used to play 'Colours', were tarmacked over and replaced with road markings; intended for those children practising for their cycling proficiency test. More problematic, however, was the ban on running "too fast". This came into force following two "serious" (Mrs Rotheroe's words) incidents (Andy breaking his arm and Fred "charging" into one of the lunchtime supervisors) that had occurred when they had been playing this game. Indeed, as with the previous prohibition placed on the playing of 'British Bulldogs', some of the children attempted to address the increased regulation imposed on their play with progressive levels of resistance. As the following extract reveals however, the enforcement of this restriction by more powerful adults in the school, proved too great and attempts at resistance consequently futile:

Mary-Kate:	Can you remember when we 'walk-ran'?
Faith:	Oh yeah, that was so cheeky. Mrs Rotheroe goes 'don't run' and we were all going 'okay last one there is it' and we were all going like that (stands up and shows me a 'walk-run' which involved semi walking and semi running with the arms down by their sides and maintaining the appearance of walking).
Kelly:	(laughing) Yeah. And then we all got sent into the classroom.
Daisy:	And also what was really funny was when . . . we were being really rude to the dinner ladies. We were . . .they were sayin', coz we were running and somebody zoomed past them and nearly knocked somebody over and she goes, the dinner ladies said, 'DON'T RUN. You must walk in the playground' and we were like 'what? What are we supposed to play? Walking Colours?' And then, ermm, everyone said just walk and then John said to me 'I dare you to zoom as fast as you can' coz I used to be the fastest girl in the class and then Faith took over me.
NC:	So did you?
Daisy:	Nah coz they would've only told Mrs Hayes or Mrs Rotheroe.

The creation of the "walk-run" (another defiant attempt to resist the restrictions imposed on their playground play) was an attempt to negotiate their way around the ban on running "too fast" and of enabling them to continue playing their game of 'Colours'. Yet, whilst they succeeded in concealing the identity of 'British Bulldogs', disguising the act of running proved a more arduous and ultimately unsuccessful endeavour. Positioned as less powerful within the pupil-teacher discourse, these girls describe how their attempts at resistance resulted in punishment ("then we all got sent in the classroom"), which was enforced by the more authoritative and powerful teacher position that Mrs Rotheroe embodied. Although, in comparison to teachers, the lunchtime supervisors embodied a less powerful position and so enabled them to push the boundaries of these regulations with them (i.e. by running and then being "rude" by answering back), as pupils they were still less powerful. Moreover, these girls were well aware of the consequences of pushing the boundaries too far as Daisy's final comment ("they would've only told Mrs Hayes or Mrs Rotheroe") suggests. This extract thus exemplifies child-adult relations as they operate in school, and these children's struggles for agency within these different relationships of power. With this latest and most imposing restriction conflicting too greatly with the aims and objectives of 'British Bulldogs' (which was designed around a competitive test of speed) proving too much for these children to resist, they were forced to turn to alternative playground pursuits. These alternative activities are the subject of the first half of the subsequent section below.

7.5 Going their Separate Ways: The Gendering of Playground Play and the Emergence of Boyfriend/Girlfriend Culture

The restriction imposed on running "too fast" and, the curtailment of the game 'British Bulldogs' certainly appeared to have a significant impact on the Year 6 boy-girl interactions and the gendered nature of their playground pursuits. At the end of the autumn term, I was witnessing an increasing lack of mixed-sex interaction and games/activities. The girls, for example, began engaging much more in stereotypically feminised activities (e.g. walking and talking, singing and dancing, and on a Monday – when it was their 'turn' for the playground equipment – skipping and playing 'elastics'). The boys, on the other hand, whilst often spending their (morning and afternoon) break times talking together, began engaging in alternative

'masculine' practices (all of which when detected where subsequently banned by the teachers) during the hour-long 'lunchtime'. Like Swain (2002: 94) then, I found that the interdict on football (and in my study, also running 'too fast' and playing British Bulldogs) affected "the possible storylines the boys were able to use in the construction of their masculine identity". Between the months of December and March, for example, the boys substituted various items in place of a football (e.g. leaves wrapped in tape, stones, beanbags, rolled up gloves) in an attempt to pursue their favourite playground game. On one day, I witnessed their creation of a catapult, which they made from a piece of elastic (from the playground equipment) and then used to fire beanbags at unsuspecting victims. Whilst not involving speed, such an activity still involved levels of skill and was competitive in a different sense. Thus, although they seemed to interact freely together in the classroom and also outside of school, on the rare opportunities they were able to 'hang out' with each other (e.g. at 'Junior club' and swimming on a weekend which they arranged themselves), at the end of December there appeared to be a clear gender divide in the playground.

Something that may have contributed to, or perhaps reinforced the gendered segregation of playground interaction and activities, however, was the emergence of a boyfriend/girlfriend culture. This began to surface during my first term at the school and by the end of my first phase of fieldwork (at the end of the spring term) had firmly established itself as part of the playground culture. Indeed, Renold (2005) argues that the playground is one of the most commonly reported sites within the school where the development of heterosexual relations takes place. Over my time in the field then, a number of boys (four of the most popular) and girls (just over half in the class) identified themselves as potential heterosexual partners and began participating (some regularly) in the emerging boyfriend/girlfriend culture. Those who did not identify themselves as potential partners or participate in this culture could and did continue to engage in platonic cross-gender interactions[7]. Yet, interactions between boys and girls participating/wanting to participate in the boyfriend/girlfriend culture became much more hetero-sexualised and over the course of my fieldwork, more Year 6 pupils began 'going out' with different boys/girls in their class. Because of the tight restrictions imposed on their

[7] Although there still remained a lack of social interaction between the genders in the playground.

(unsupervised) access to the outside world, however, break/lunch times in the playground constituted not only the main time and space that they could hang out and socialise with friends but also where they could develop, experience and engage in heterosexual (boyfriend-girlfriend) relationships. Moreover, like Renold (2005: 95) I thus found that despite the 'active connotation' of the term 'going out', these year 6 pupils rarely, if ever, physically went anywhere together beyond the confines of the school gates; most if not all, heterosexual relationships remaining school bound. In the following researcher-facilitated interview extract below, Phoebe and Chloe thus explain what it meant to 'go out' with someone[8]:

Phoebe: [. . .] But the thing is . . . I want a boyfriend that is not afraid to talk to me.
Chloe: Oh my God. They don't talk to you.
Phoebe: Or go like this/
Chloe: Hiya how you doin'?
Phoebe: Yeah, coz none of the boys do that. You're just like there. Say Dave comes along or one of the boys comes along and you're going out with them/
Chloe: They all try and make you hug and kiss. You're like, if you won't even talk to me why do you want to kiss me?
Phoebe: Yeah, and say he sits there and you're like there and you're like, why don't you sit next to me? I don't mean to say why don't you sit next to me but what's the point you know . . . I'm your girlfriend or whatever.
NC: So what do you do?
Phoebe: Nothing. And it's really bad that's why.
Chloe: You . . . and Mary-Kate went out with Gary. She didn't even fancy him coz she just . . . she'd never ever been out with anyone. No one had ever asked her.
Phoebe: Yeah they don't even do this (stands up and walks past me and then looks at me and says 'hiya'). They don't even do anything.
Chloe: They see you and they just go (stands up and turns her head away from me).
Phoebe: I can't believe it.
Chloe: Right what was that question?
NC: So what's the point?
Phoebe: Exactly.
Chloe: I know. I know. That's why I'm not gonna . . . every time even if I fancy them.
[. . .]
NC: Do they like speak to you when you're not going out and then when you start going out with them they stop speaking to you?

[8] Unfortunately, since this thesis is driven by what the children themselves wanted to address, almost all of the data generated on their boyfriend/girlfriend culture is from my own observations and the girls' constructions of this. This is despite the fact that both girls and boys were involved in initiating and maintaining heterosexual relationships.

Phoebe: Yeah then it stops.
Chloe: It's like you can't speak with them coz you're going out with them.

Far from the subject positions 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' creating close relations/hips between the two people embodying them, Phoebe and Chloe describe how 'going out' with someone (and thus becoming a girlfriend or boyfriend) violates and leads to the dissolution of any kind of relationship that previously existed between them (i.e. not talking or going anywhere near each other) (see also Renold, 2005, 2006). Exemplified by her comment "They all try and make you hug and kiss. You're like if you won't even talk to me why do you want to kiss me?", Chloe highlights how this dissolution is created by the boys' reluctance (or possible disinterest?) in engaging in any kind of emotional and interpersonal contact (which these two girls appear to desire). These girls subsequently refuse to engage in any physical sexualised practices that Chloe constructs the boys as desiring. Yet, whilst I question what "the point" of 'going out' with someone was if they did not even talk with each other, in the extract above, Chloe importantly reveals precisely what 'the point' is. Specifically, she describes how Mary-Kate 'went out' with Gary not because she 'fancied' him but because she had never been asked by anyone before. Her comments thus suggest that Mary-Kate's motive stemmed from the fact that it was the first time that she had become identified and positioned as heterosexually desirable by a boy and, significantly, by Gary, who from my observations and the girls' accounts, appeared to be the most heterosexually desired boy in the class. Moreover, it is this, and her possible desire to be seen as such, together with the status accrued by 'going out' with the most desired boy in the class, that prompted her to risk the dissolution of any friendship she shared with Gary, and to be "ignored" by him, in order to become his girlfriend.

Yet, unhappy with the way in which she perceives boys in their class as ignoring them, in the extract above Chloe expresses her refusal to be treated in this way. She thus reveals the power that the position of 'potential girlfriend' has (and her ability to overturn traditional heterosexual relations where females are usually positioned as passive within these relationships) as she intends to reject any offers to 'go out' with anyone even if she is attracted to them. Indeed, the implication and extent of this power over the boys who invested in the boyfriend/girlfriend culture, is exemplified

in the following two extracts (taken from two separate researcher-facilitated interviews) wherein Chloe and Phoebe and another group of girls (Kelly, Faith, Hope and Daisy) are discussing the 'need' for certain boys in the class to constantly have a girlfriend:

Chloe: Two boys in our class do it a lot [. . .] Gary and Fred do it a lot. They ermm they go out with someone for the sake of it. Coz, Gary, I don't think he's ever not been out with a girl for more than twenty days.
Phoebe: Yeah.
Chloe: Seriously/
Phoebe: Really desperate like.
NC: Who is he going out with at the moment then?
Phoebe: No one.
Chloe: No one. He's been not going out with anyone for about five days so far. He'll be goin' out with someone/ by the end of the week.
Phoebe: Hope, I think. Hope.
Chloe: He fancies someone and he's an attention seeker I think/

* * * *

Kelly: Who does Dave go out with now?
Faith: He don't.
Kelly: He fancies someone though don't he?
Faith: Yeah.
Hope: He just goes around the class fancying different people.
Daisy: I know. I don't see what the point is. Wait until high school.
Kelly: I know like Gary he's on like . . . the other day . . . yesterday he's on you and then Mary-Kate and she said 'no' and now he's on to like/
Faith: And now tomorrow he'll have someone else.

Through her comment, "I don't see what the point is. Wait until high school", Daisy undermines the existence of the emergent boyfriend/girlfriend culture in her class (although she herself participated in it). Drawing on age-appropriate developmental discourses she thus constructs high school (i.e. adolescence) as the appropriate time/space for developing 'proper' or 'real' relationships. Yet importantly, in the first extract above, Chloe asserts that Gary does not necessarily 'go out' with girls because he likes them ("they go out with someone for the sake of it") but because he is "an attention seeker". Constructing him as constantly changing his girlfriend, both Kelly and Chloe's comments also lend themselves to this notion. Moreover, it is also reinforced by Gary himself, in a group interview with Fred and Dave as they discuss moving up to high school:

Gary: I'm looking forward to ermm the girls in high school.
Dave: Yes, a different variety.
NC: You mean to 'go out' with them?
Dave: Well yeah, he does.
Fred: Well there's more girls there instead of like the sixteen in our class.
Dave: I know.
Gary: And like three of them are nice.
Fred: Yeah.
Gary: And the rest are like/
Fred: Mingers.
Gary: Yeah and then . . . but in high school it's like five hundred nice ones. It's like a doughnut selection.

By 'going out' with someone then, Chloe conceives that Gary strives to become more visible in the peer group ("an attention seeker") (even if it is in the negative light that these girls portray him). Girls, or more specifically, 'girlfriends', are thus commodities that Gary can use to enhance his prominence or hierarchical status in the class. Nevertheless, whilst Gary may appear to occupy a powerful position, being able to call upon girls for his own self-gratification, he is reliant on girls to achieve this. By rejecting offers to engage in any heterosexual relations, Chloe would thus prevent Gary from accessing this position and render him powerless; and herself in turn, as powerful within this heterosexual relationship.

Interestingly however, Chloe was one of just a few girls to reject offers to become a girlfriend. Indeed, whilst many of the girls complained about their boyfriend not talking to them and certain boys 'going out' with girls for "the sake of it", they usually accepted offers to become their girlfriends. Notwithstanding this, whilst the extracts above portray girls as being oppressed and used solely for male gain, in one interview, Phoebe admitted that she herself had "pretended" to fancy Gary in order to "get attention". Indeed, it was not just the boys who approached the girls (albeit through someone else) with an offer of becoming their boyfriend. Yet crucially, the "attention" that Phoebe sought was not from Gary (as her potential 'partner'), given the lack of interaction between girls and boys who engaged in so-called 'romantic' relations/hips. Rather, as I witnessed, it was from other peers asking questions such as whether or not they still 'fancied' them, if they were going to "ask them out"; what the other person's response was, and whether they were still 'with' them. By admitting her motive for 'fancying' (or more accurately, pretending to 'fancy') Gary,

Phoebe thus reveals the contradictory position (i.e. being oppressed and thus powerless as boys use them for their own self-gratification but at the same time being the oppressor and thus powerful as she uses Gary for her own status) that the subject position 'girlfriend'/'boyfriend' accords them.

Although Phoebe explains 'going out' with one of the boys in the class for attention, this was not the reason Daisy and Hope took up the position of 'girlfriend':

> I am stood on the terrace with a group of girls. Hope says to me that she doesn't know whether to carry on 'going out' with Gary because he never talks to her. Samantha then says to her that she only went out with him to get attention anyway. Hope looks a bit hurt and told her that she wasn't very nice. Samantha laughed and said "What? It's true." At that, Mrs Rotheroe comes outside and blows the whistle signalling the end of break time. Hope storms into the classroom.
>
> (Fieldnotes 4/3/05)

* * * *

Hope:	[. . .] And I would like to be able to . . . I know this sounds a bit weird, but I'd like to go out with some boys and just chill and stuff.
Daisy:	Yeah, so would I.
Hope:	Coz/
NC:	What you mean? 'Go out' as a boyfriend or just like 'hang out' with boys?
Hope:	Boyfriend and girlfriend and just like with loads of boys.
Daisy:	Yeah. Dunno why but/
Hope:	Coz you see people hangin' around with their boyfriends and you just like think ahh cool.
Daisy:	Not cool. It would just be funky to do.
Hope:	Yeah.
NC:	What do you wanna do with them?
Hope:	I'd like to . . . I wouldn't like to urggghh (pretends to passionately kiss a boy) but I'd like to/
Daisy:	Urgghhhh.

Hope was the most heterosexually desired girl in the class (as identified and by many of the boys in the class) and was nearly always in a relationship with one of the boys (usually either Gary or Dave). Yet, in the first extract Hope considers terminating her 'so-called' relationship with Gary because he does not speak to her. This certainly suggests that she does not take up of the position of girlfriend for attention but rather, her desire for an emotional/interactional relationship with the opposite sex. This is supported by her reaction to Samantha's accusation that she was only with Gary to get attention and also in the second extract where she expresses her desire for a

boyfriend with whom she could 'hang out' and "chill" with. Indeed, this latter extract illustrates both Hope and Daisy's desire, not for a physical relationship ("I wouldn't like to urghhh") but for the company, which may of course been accentuated by the increased separation and lack of interaction between the girls and boys in the study. Indeed, Renold (2006: 500) highlights how some of the Year 6 girls in her study appeared "to be actively manipulating the boyfriend/girlfriend culture and drawing upon the discourse of romance and romantic relations to achieve and develop close boy-girl friendships". Over the course of two terms then, I witnessed a transition in cross-sex interactions from 'innocent' platonic friendships to ones that were increasingly (hetero)sexualised. Whilst girls constructed the boys as desiring 'older' erotic attachments and interactions, they sought for emotional interactions and attachments that were more reminiscent of past ('sexually innocent') relations/hips with the boys in their class. Speaking at the end of March (when the interview from which the second extract above is taken was conducted) Hope and Daisy express their desire for something more than the ambivalent relationship that hetero-sexual relationships with boys in their class, offered them.

7.6 'We've Been Banned from 'Going Out' with Each Other': The Regulation and Resistance of Engaging in Heterosexual Relationships

One of the things that the 'new' sociology of childhood has been at pains to stress is that children's childhoods are localised and differ and/or change across different spaces, contexts and time (see Chapter 2 for more detail). I was not surprised, therefore, on returning to the school after four months away, to find marked changes in these children's heterosexual relations/hips and their engagement in what Renold (2005: 25) describes as the 'take up' and 'shake up' of childhood discourses of (sexual) innocence and older 'adolescent/adult' discourses of sexuality. Reading through some of their interview transcripts and reflecting on what they had said in interviews at least four months earlier, in the fieldnote extract below Chloe highlights these changes and the resulting consequences:

> I am sat on the grass outside with Phoebe and Chloe looking through some of their interview transcripts with them. They are reading through a part where they were commenting on their relationships with boys when they 'went out' with them. Chloe tells me that it has changed since then because they now talk to them and hug each other "every day".
>
> (Fieldnotes 13/07/05)

> Chloe reads out the part in the interview where she had said that she wasn't going to have a boyfriend until she went to high school. She tells me that she has been 'out' with Fred and Gary since and that Phoebe has been 'out' with Andy, Fred, Gary and Dave several times whilst I have been away although she wasn't 'going out' with anyone at the moment.
>
> (Fieldnotes 15/07/05)

Whilst in previous interviews with these girls, Chloe and Phoebe had bemoaned the fact that (as they conceived) boys "ignored" them if they 'went out' with them (see previous section), in the first extract above, Chloe describes the 'older' heterosexualised practices (e.g. 'hugging') that they now (regularly) engage in with their partners. This is suggestive of the reason that Chloe (as she notes in the second extract above) has since been 'out' with Fred and Gary. Indeed, the latter extract highlights how earlier in the year, Chloe had benchmarked 'high school' as the time/space that she would engage in heterosexual relationships after resenting the way in which boys in their class treated them. Nevertheless, the boundary for having a boyfriend appeared to shift following the take up of older (and thus perhaps more acceptable, pleasurable and 'real') hetero-sexualised boyfriend/girlfriend practices later in the academic year.

More sexualised discourses did certainly seem to infiltrate break/lunch time talk much more than before. On one of the first few days back in the field for example, some of the girls told me how at break time Gary had admitted "having a boner" over nearly every girl that he had been out with. On another day, I heard Samantha telling John that he had "a nice bum" and that she "fancied him". These were typical of the numerous sexually charged comments I witnessed/heard different boys and girls in the study make. Yet, whilst such comments continued throughout my short return to the field in the summer term, on my first day back, I learnt of the prohibition that had been imposed on these children from 'going out' with anyone. This had been brought into force following an incident where two of the most popular/romantically desirable girls had sexually teased one of the boys who was perceived as being the least sexually desirable in the class (by proclaiming their sexual attraction to him) and where Mrs Hayes (the head teacher) had been forced to become involved[9]. Indeed, on one day, I observed Mrs Rotheroe closely surveilling Dave and Hope on

[9] Although this incident could be regarded as being more about power and bullying than the boyfriend/girlfriend culture.

the field as Dave ran around the field holding Hope in his arms. After a few minutes, she called over to Dave and instructed him to "put her down". After dinner the class were then reminded of "the no-go rule", which I later learned, was the prohibition of engaging in close (or sexually charged) cross-sex interactions. Indeed, Renold (2006: 490) comments how "the 'child' and 'sex/uality' not only continue to be presented as oppositional and incompatible but unthinkable when it comes to children of primary school age (4-11 years old)". By prohibiting and denying the presence of sexualised/erotic attachments, Mrs Rotheroe was thus attempting to keep the children innocent and ensuring the nurturing and protective space of the school does not become an arena for sexual/erotic practices.

As I highlighted in Chapter 2 however, Epstein and Johnson (1998: 97) assert that sexual innocence "is something that adults wish upon children, not a natural feature of childhood itself". In one of the coding sessions with Phoebe and Chloe where they were reading and reflecting on things they had said in previous interviews they had participated in, Phoebe concurs with Epstein and Johnson. Specifically, she told me that she did not know what the big deal was about desiring and engaging in heterosexual relations/hips because it was just a part of "growing up" and they couldn't "help it". Despite Mrs Rotheroe's surveillance and policing of 'improper' or "too" sexually suggestive or charged physical/social interactions then, these girls, along with many other children in the class, rejected and resisted the "no-go rule" and the notion of childhood innocence inscribed upon them by the school[10]. Shifting the boundaries of what they conceived to be 'acceptable' age-appropriate behaviour they thus continued to experiment, develop and engage in the same hetero-sexualised practices that had, for many, become a 'natural', 'inevitable' (see Chloe's comment above) and pleasurable part of their break/lunchtime in school.

7.7 Concluding Notes

This last empirical chapter has been concerned with children's experiences and perceptions of their lives as they are lived in the school playground. Specifically, I have explored how despite the connotations of the terms 'break'/'play'times and 'play'grounds and the notion that these are times/spaces that are 'completely free'

[10] Ironically, the prohibition of certain games and running "too" fast, may have left these children with not much else to do except concentrate on these relations/hips.

from adult control (Blatchford *et al.*, 1990), for many children playgrounds were more characteristically imbued with restrictions, 'work', boredom and (adult) control. I began, for example, by exploring how some of the children resented the responsibilities ('buddying' and 'prefecting') that they were expected to carry out; conceiving them as blurring the spatial and temporal boundaries between 'work' and 'play' and as conflicting with their own theorisation of childhood. I nevertheless revealed how for Ashley and Lucy, 'buddying' the infants provided them with both a source of fun and freedom as well as an escape from the boredom (in the junior playground) and the relatively subordinate position that they occupied amongst their same-aged peers.

Many of the other children in the research also admitted feelings of boredom in the (junior) playground. This stemmed from the numerous regulations that were imposed upon their play within this space. Whilst describing some of the children's (agentic) attempts at resisting and rejecting the obstacles and restrictions imposed on their favourite games I documented how ultimately their endeavours proved futile because of the subordinate position they occupied within (head)teacher-pupil relations.

Highlighting the change in their playground activities and interactions the final part of the chapter documented the onset and developments of a boyfriend/girlfriend culture over the course of the academic year. I explored how at the emergence of this culture, girls and boys appeared initially to engage in so-called 'romantic' relations as a means for gaining status and attention amongst their peers. Over time, however, I explored how hetero-sexualised discourses and practices (e.g. talking and hugging) increasingly suffused lunch/break times. Continuing and extending notions of restrictions and control, I highlighted how prohibitions were placed upon these children for discussing or engaging in 'romantic' relations. Unwilling to renounce what for some, had become a pleasurable and 'natural' activity, I nevertheless highlighted some of the children's rejection and resistance to adults' requests and described how they continued to invest and engage in hetero-sexualised relations/hips; albeit away from the surveilling gaze of adult school staff.

Having explored the construction and 'realities' of the children's childhood experiences and perceptions in four of the main spaces in their everyday lives, in the

following and final chapter of this thesis I identify and bring together both key methodological and empirical 'findings', and consider them in relation to current policies and practice, before providing some final comments and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 8

Everyday Spaces, Everyday Lives: Reflections and Concluding Comments

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored how 10 and 11 year-old children negotiate their everyday lives across and within the public, home, classroom and playground space. The majority of the children (all but two) were 'white' (self-defined) Catholics and (all but one) came from privileged 'middle-class' families. Apart from three of the children, all lived in two-parent families. All twenty five of the children who participated in the study lived in a prosperous suburb in the south of Wales.

Beginning with a number of broad and exploratory research questions in order to enable the children to shape the direction of the research, I sought to examine the children's accounts of what it means to be(come) 'a child' in today's society. Specifically, I explored how they are multiply and contradictorily positioned/actively position themselves, and the way/extent that notions of agency and control feature in their everyday lives. I was also interested in how this relatively homogenous group of children differ in their own experiences and theorisations of children and childhood; how they theorise themselves and their own lives in relation to what they conceive as normative notions of children and childhood and 'Others'; and to what extent their experiences and perspectives on 'being a child' resonate/differ with popular notions of children and childhood.

In this concluding chapter, rather than provide a summary of each of the empirical chapters, I identify a number of key themes and 'findings' that cut across and run throughout these four chapters; and (hence) these children's everyday experiences of the home, school classroom and playground, and public space. These key themes and 'findings' are not used, however, in order to suggest and/or inform implications for policy and practice. This was not the purpose of this research. Rather, it was a methodologically directed exploration of children's everyday lives concerned specifically with foregrounding their voices, choices and ideas, and contributing to

the growing field of participatory research 'with' children. This chapter thus begins by critically and honestly reflecting on the methodological approach adopted and identifies some salient methodological 'findings'. Identifying the key empirical 'findings' of the research, the chapter then locates the children's accounts 'in the 'moment' by outlining some of the Government's policies and concerns regarding children and childhood. The chapter ends by highlighting the 'new' knowledge that this thesis has produced and possible opportunities for future research.

8.2 Methodological 'Findings' and Reflections

In Chapter 2 I highlighted how although the 'new' sociology of childhood played a pivotal role in changing the ways in which many social science disciplines theorise children and childhood, this (now not so 'new') paradigm is perhaps in need of re-conceptualisation. The idea and increasing acceptance that children are competent social agents and should be respected in their own right has nonetheless remained a useful concept in the quest to involve children more directly in research. Indeed, within the social sciences, an expanding field of (what is termed) 'participatory' research with children now exists. Researchers working within this field, approach research from the 'standpoint' of the child (Alanen, 1994) and works together 'with' rather than 'on' children, privileging and taking seriously what they have to say.

One of my intentions has been to contribute to this expanding field of research. From the outset, one of my main commitments in this research was to foreground the children's 'voices', choices and ideas. In fact, the success of the research and this thesis owes much to the children themselves, and the active and directive role they played throughout the research process. Actively involving children in research is not only possible but also productive as they are the experts in their own experiences and perspectives. Jones (2004: 114) thus highlights how it can be argued that "knowledge about children is incomplete unless it takes into account the knowledge that children have of themselves". As I highlighted earlier in the thesis, there is much to gained from providing children with the opportunity to "define themselves through collaboration in the research process, rather than being defined solely by adult interests, biases and agendas" (Grover, 2004: 83). Unlike Kellett *et al.* (2004) however, I do not claim to have enabled the children to design, plan, carry out,

analyse and 'write up' their own research although equally, I did not involve them in a more tokenistic sense (e.g. 'allowing' them to choose from a number of pre-developed methods). As I explained in Chapter 3, I began with a broad overarching research aim (what is it like 'be(com)ing' a 10/11 year old child?) and methodological approach (an in-depth study of one class of Year 6 children with one of the methods being participant observation). I then endeavoured to involve the children in processes of consent, the research design and focus, coding procedures, and sought their views on the research following the fieldwork. This not only ensured that the research and the children's participation within it, was more in line with children's experiences, interests and values (Christensen and Prout, 2002). It also went some way towards making the research more ethically sensitive. Specifically, the children could provide their fully informed consent, knowing how they would participate and what issues would be discussed. In addition, the length of the study, together with the eclectic methodological approach the children chose, and the broad range of issues discussed, enabled experiences and perspectives to be told and re-told over the course of the fieldwork period. This in turn, produced diverse and insightful data as accounts were modified or altered across the course of the fieldwork. As Chapter 3 outlines, for example, children's experiences and perceptions cannot simply be collected since 'realities', 'facts' and 'truths' do not just exist 'out there'. Instead, we create them about the world and the people in it and these are partial, multiple and incomplete.

Listening to children and respecting their voices, choices and ideas involved being privy to their childhood cultures. Over the course of the fieldwork then, I remained reflexively aware of my status as a young 'white' 'middle-class' woman researcher and both positioned/was positioned in various ways and participated in their lives to varying degrees. Spending time with them and sharing information and experiences as well as being honest and committed about listening and privileging their voices, choices, and ideas was pivotal to developing a positive relationship with the children.

Honesty was not, however, only integral to building a positive respectful relationship with the children. As Chapter 3 highlighted, providing an honest and reflective account of fieldwork is central to the reliability and validity of research. I thus

described a number of tensions involved in conducting research 'with' children in the institutionalised setting of the school. Specifically, I highlighted how the children's relatively powerless status in schools and precedence for the active consent of parents over that of children prevented some children from participating in the study. I discussed how the authority and status of teachers limited the children's autonomy to decide when to participate in the study. In addition, I illustrated how the regulations and boundaries operating in the school and indeed the teacher's own perspectives could sometimes potentially conflict with my commitment to foregrounding children's agency, choice and ideas (e.g. with regards to methods). I also highlighted how my desire to gain 'quality' insightful data for my doctorate, and the children's desire to assist me in this quest, may have affected the children's involvement (i.e. the 'how') and issues (i.e. the 'what') that were addressed.

A different research setting (e.g. the local youth club or the home) might have provided the children with more freedom and agency in the research. It might also have generated very different data. Time restraints and other commitments at school also meant that I did not spend as much time as I would have liked reading and coding transcripts with the children. Indeed, this was an aspect of the study that a number of the children highlighted in their feedback responses of the research as something that they enjoyed and would have liked more opportunity to do. Overall, however, from the feedback responses the children provided, they regarded themselves as having a fair degree of autonomy in the research and enjoyed being and playing a(n active) part in it. I would also argue that the research still went some way to providing a platform for the children to voice and address their own agendas/concerns and generated mass of rich, insightful data that we, as adults, can learn from.

8.3 Key Empirical 'Findings'

8.3i These children's lives are subject to heavy regulation, surveillance and control by different adults within and across difference spaces and times.

All four of the empirical chapters have revealed how these children's lives were subject to heavy adult regulation, surveillance and control in different spaces in their

everyday lives. Chapter 4 explored how some children described being subject to strict surveillance (being followed and watched) and control (only being allowed into shops for a limited period of time or else with an accompanying adult) in the public place of the shop. Indeed, quite the reverse to initiatives working towards greater recognition and respect for children and young people, Sherman asserts that children are not "respected like *as a person* like adults"; which as middle-class children with cultural capital, they believed that they had an inherent right to. In one interview – echoing the sentiments and slogan of the 'Respect Agenda' ('Give Respect, Get Respect') – Alex exclaimed: "They [adults] reckon that we should respect them but if we respect them then they should respect us".

In the following 'key empirical finding' below, I highlight how these children regarded themselves as simultaneously and contradictorily positioned as both 'a risk' (by adult strangers) and 'at risk' (by their parents, themselves and also working-class 'Others') in public space. Both positions, however, subjected the children to heavy regulation and control. Specifically, Chapter 4 examined the tight restrictions that – as a result of perceived risks and dangers – some of the children reported their parents imposed on their access to and movement within public space. A significant part of Chapter 4 outlined and explored some of the alternative 'safe' play spaces that the children in the study were provided with. Yet even these were organised and/or supervised/controlled by adults; placing further adult control over these middle-class children's already heavily (adult) regulated lives.

Chapter 5 explored how aside from these activities, much of their 'free' time was contained within the home, protected from the perceived dangers that pervade public space. Subject to the close supervision, surveillance and control of their parents, I revealed how failure to adhere to rules and boundaries set resulted in further restrictions and control being levied on their time outside of school. Being prohibited from attending clubs/activities or from using the media (e.g. PC, games consoles) and socially excluding them from family and friends (by confining them to their room) were for example, all commonly identified punishments.

It was in the school, however, that these children were perhaps subject to the most stringent rules, surveillance and levels of control. Indeed, akin to adult shop staff and the way in which they perceived themselves to be constructed in public space, Sherman and his friends identified Mrs Rotheroe (their class teacher) as another adult who denies their personhood and fails to respect them in the same way that they respect adults. Drawing on, and projecting herself as an all-knowledgeable and powerful authoritarian figure, Chapter 6 highlighted Mrs Rotheroe's endeavours to instil states of docility into the children's bodies and minds via means of surveillance, discipline and control. Prohibitions were also imposed on their favourite playground games after Mrs Hayes (their head teacher) deemed them too risky to both themselves and other pupils in the playground. Moreover, they were prevented from engaging in hetero-sexualised interactions and/or practices in the summer term following an incident in which a less desirable boy was sexually teased by two of the most popular/romantically desirable girls. Akin to the domestic, public and school classroom therefore, the playground – a space that Blatchford *et al.* (1990: 164) suggest is one of the few spaces "completely free" from adult control – was also fraught with discourses of adult constraints, domination and subsequent states of boredom.

8.3ii Dominant discourses of children and childhood prescribe and permit these children's access to, negotiation of, and participation within different spaces in their everyday lives.

Chapter 4 revealed that at present, children are (and perceive themselves to be) constructed by adults as one of two polar opposites – either 'at risk' or 'the risk' when unsupervised (by adults) in public space/places. I explored, for example, how some of the children described being regarded with suspicion by adult shop staff when 'unsupervised' in shops and subsequently discriminated against, being prohibited from entering shops without an accompanying adult. I also highlighted how at the same time they were subject to the equally dominant, yet oppositional discourse that constructs them as 'at risk' and in need of protection from the perceived 'dangers' that pervade the outside world. Roche (1999: 486) however, argues that "it is central to the citizenship project, whatever form it takes, that children are not seen simply as 'trouble' or 'in trouble'" as this "is a denial of any

real agency in the world". Indeed, in the preceding key 'finding', I highlighted some of the strict boundaries that the children described their parents as imposing on their access to, and movement within public space. Moreover, I drew attention to the 'safe' alternative play spaces and opportunities that they were offered, either within adult controlled/supervised activities or the protective space of the home. Discourses of vulnerability and risk also permeated the school playground. Chapter 7 explored the prohibitions placed on their playground play (e.g. running "too fast", ball games, and chase games) as a result of perceived risks and dangers they posed to themselves and other pupils (i.e. a threat unto others and themselves) in the playground.

Within the space of the school, however, developmental discourses of both sexual innocence and also knowledge and competence abound. In Chapter 6, I revealed how in the classroom Mrs Rotheroe (their class teacher) drew on traditional developmental discourses of childhood, constructing the children as 'incompetent' and 'unruly' (accusing them of 'slouching', failing to or being unable to comport their bodies in the correct way, being 'dirty' and not listening). In Chapter 7 age-appropriate behaviours and developmental discourses of childhood were drawn on by adults and children alike. Initially, for example, when the girlfriend/boyfriend culture first emerged, there was a distinct lack of any physical or social interaction between so-called 'romantic' partners engaged in a relationship. I thus highlighted how by drawing on age-appropriate discourses, some of the girls undermined the existence of the emergent boyfriend/girlfriend culture in their class by benchmarking high school (i.e. adolescence) as the appropriate time/space for developing and engaging in heterosexual re(a)lations/hips. Over the course of the academic year, however, these age-appropriate boundaries began to shift for these, and other children in the class. Describing it as a "normal" and "natural" thing to do, at the end of the summer term, I witnessed an increasing hetero-sexualisation of these children's relations/hips, interactions and practices. As Chapter 7 documents, however, the presence of 'older' sexualised/erotic attachments was suppressed and denied by adult school staff as attempts such as the "no-go rule", strove to keep the children 'sexually' innocent and the school, a nurturing and protective space free from sexual/erotic practices.

8.3iii Relations of power and resistance were pivotal in the way in which these children both 'interactively' position/are positioned by others, 'reflexively' position themselves and consequently 'live out' their lives in different relationships, spaces and time.

Although the children's lives were heavily regulated and controlled by adults, in Chapter 2 I outlined how multiple and contradictory discourses that are made available to these children provide new possibilities for the way in which they speak, think and act. It also highlighted that power exists in a network-like fashion, operating everywhere as an open cluster of complex and contradictory relations; enabling individuals to become powerful or powerless depending on the terms in which their subjectivity is constituted (Walkerdine, 1990). I thus noted how these children are able to resist and reject certain discourses and subject positions, enabling alternative ones to be taken up. Even in cases of dominance then, power relations are never totally one-sided. This allows us to retain a place for agency and see how power relations can be modified and altered.

In Chapter 4 I thus highlighted how adult shop staff – by virtue of their adult status – had the power to 'Other' these children, marginalizing and prohibiting them from shops. Indeed, although Yasmine attempted to resist the shop keeper's request to 'hurry up', amidst moral panics of child and youth 'culture', her actions and status as a 'child' reinforced and reproduced the shop keeper's construction of her as an ungovernable child and subjected her to further discriminatory practices. As 'respectable' middle-class children they nevertheless had the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to reject the positioning of themselves. Moreover, they were able to position 'working-class' children and young people as the 'real' risky and ungovernable 'Others'. Indeed, in comparison to their 'working-class' peers, they embodied a culturally powerful position and were able to attribute value to their own identities, by ascribing negative value to their lower-class counterparts. Chapter 4, for example, revealed some of the boys' endeavours to do this, not only in relation to their behaviour and actions, but also to their clothes and physical appearance. Embedded within an open cluster of complex, contradictory and ever-changing relations (as I described above) however, in Chapter 4, I revealed their physically inferior position against their 'working-class' peers, as both Sherman and Andy were

'mugged' by a "rough lad". Moreover, I highlighted the measures these boys went to (i.e. their management of the local outdoors) to avoid confrontation and possible attack from these 'Others' and how this compromised their freedom and opportunities to 'have fun' in public outdoor space.

Subject to their older, more knowledgeable and hence powerful parents' rules and control, Chapter 4 and 5 explored how aside from adult organised/supervised clubs and activities that they attended, many of these children had no choice but to spend their 'free' time residing within the home. Although (as I highlight in section *8.3v* below) some of the girls regarded the time they spent at home as proffering them with freedom to play, be alone and experiment with their identities, some of the boys, in contrast, regarded the home as a space imbued with boredom and adult restrictions. Restrictions however, existed not only in the form of their containment within the home (because of fears of outdoor 'dangers') but also in the form of retributions they received if they failed to comply with the boundaries and rules that they set. I nevertheless highlighted how as agents and subjects bound up in relations of power, at times these children were able to resist, negotiate and avoid punishments that their parents imposed on them. Hope, for instance, used emotional blackmail to persuade her parents to lift the punishments imposed on her.

Power relations between siblings were also highlighted and discussed by many of the children in their accounts of their lives within the home. In Chapter 5, I explored Daisy's account of the way in which her brother used his physical and hierarchical 'inferior' status to portray himself as a vulnerable victim of her physical superiority in order to get her reprimanded by her parents. However, when positioned as his carer during the mornings whilst her mother was at work, Daisy embodied a more powerful and knowledgeable position and she is able to "push him [around?] everywhere".

Just as I suggested in section *8.3i* above that the school was the space where children were subject to the tightest regulation and control, it was also the space that relations of power and resistance appeared most prevalent. Although Mrs Rotheroe projected herself as an all-powerful and knowledgeable figure and initially appeared to have

'total' control over her pupils, Chapter 6 revealed the fragility of this control in the classroom. Indeed, a significant part of this chapter was concerned with the various ways in which different children attempted (and both failed and succeeded) in subverting the rules and restrictions imposed on them by their teacher through the creation of their own (unofficially sanctioned) fun. I also highlighted the knowledge/power relations at play between the children and Mrs Rotheroe in processes of reprimand and retribution. I focused on the ability of two boys (Gary and Fred) in particular – who aware of Mrs Rotheroe's reluctance to punish them[1] – had the power to test the boundaries of acceptable behaviour.

Notions of power and resistance were also prevalent in children's accounts of the time they spent in the school playground. 'Buddy' and 'prefect' duty, for example, provided Ashley and Lucy with the opportunity to escape the relatively peripheral position they had in the junior playground amongst their same-age friends. Moreover, they enabled these girls to take up a more powerful position over younger pupils in the school. Many of the other children however, resented these responsibilities. Nevertheless, the more powerful and authoritative position of the head teacher in the school meant that the children were forced to occupy these roles. The power the head teacher status afforded Mrs Hayes also meant that these children were subject to other rules and restrictions that she imposed on their social interactions and activities on the playground. Indeed, they did initially attempt and succeed in thwarting the prohibitions placed on their favourite playground games and activities (e.g. British Bulldogs). Yet, their position as pupils meant that they were unable to resist more stringent restrictions subsequently imposed on their playground play (i.e. not running 'too fast') over the course of the year and eventually, they were forced to engage in alternative activities.

They were, however, more successful at resisting the restrictions the school staff imposed on their engagement in heterosexual relations/hips. As I highlighted in

1 Because punishment for these boys would also mean punishment for Mrs Rotheroe as she would be forced to sit in the classroom with them and forgo her own 'break' time. Moreover, by reprimanding these boys during lesson time, Mrs Rotheroe would disrupt both the boys' and other children's learning and possibly jeopardise both the school and her own reputation if they failed to gain the grades they were predicted.

'finding' *8.3ii* above, over the course of the academic year, engagement in such relations/hips became seen as a pleasurable and "natural" thing for these children to do. Moreover, it served to potentially enhance the children's power amongst their peers. I outlined in Chapter 7 the relations of power at play between so-called 'partners', each being reliant on the other to achieve prominence or greater status in the class. Many of the children who participated in the boyfriend/girlfriend culture thus carved out spaces away from the surveilling gaze of adult school staff with which to continue engaging in so-called 'romantic' relations/hips.

8.3iv These children draw upon dominant contemporary discourses of childhood themselves to construct their own and Other children's and young people's identities.

As I highlighted in *section 8.3ii* above, dominant oppositional discourses of children as either innocent 'angels' or deviant 'devils' (Valentine, 1996a) suffused these children's everyday experiences and perceptions of their childhood. Arguing for the right to be respected and treated in the same way as adults, in Chapter 4, for example, I examined how one group of boys rejected the negative way in which adult (strangers) depicted them and how they instead took themselves up as vulnerable, innocent and respectable 'middle-class' citizens. Drawing on discourses of class, these boys describe 'typical' characteristics and practices of 'deviant' children and young people (i.e. 'chavs' who dress in white tracksuits and engage in anti-social and violent behaviour). Moreover, they describe cases where they have become targets, or potential targets of these 'Others' anti-social behaviour, and highlighted the consequential ways that they managed and negotiated public space. In a similar vein, some of the girls in the research highlighted their risks and fears of public space. Whilst aware that some of the boys regarded working-class peers as their biggest threat a number of girls in the research – aware of the potential sexual desirability of their bodies – perceived adult male strangers as the greatest risk to their safety in public space. Positioning themselves as vulnerable and at risk, these girls described both rehearsed and actual ways in which they would/have safely negotiate(d) the outdoor world.

In Chapter 5, Daisy draws on romantic discourses of childhood, and the notion that childhood is a time of fun and freedom from responsibilities and work. In describing the care she provides her younger brother, she constructs herself as embodying the role of a "mum". These same sentiments are echoed in Chapter 7. I explore how some of the girls perceive the roles of 'buddy' and 'prefect' as stretching beyond the responsibility of a child. Specifically, Zoë comments that "we have to look after them and like we're still children". Moreover, she reinforces the conceptualisation that adults work and have responsibilities, while children have fun and freedom as she argues that they are not yet "grown up" and so "should still have our break time really". In section *8.3ii,* I highlighted how when the boyfriend/girlfriend culture first emerged in the playground, some of the girls in the research undermined this culture and the girls and boys who engaged in it. Drawing on developmental and age-appropriate discourses, they benchmarked high school (i.e. adolescence) as the 'right' time to engage in this culture. Notwithstanding this, over the course of the year, some of the children began to engage in 'older' hetero-sexualised practices (e.g. hugging) and shifted the boundaries of age-appropriate sexualised relations/hips. They thus rejected discourses of sexual innocence which some of the adult school staff drew upon as they prohibited them from investing or engaging in hetero-sexual(ised) interactions and relations/hips; this culture continuing to operate in the playground, away from the adult surveilling gaze.

8.3v Fun and freedom are fundamental and distinguishing features of these children's own theorisations of childhood although in reality they often conceived their own lives as being more characteristically being imbued with boredom, responsibilities and control.

Throughout this thesis I have emphasised how the children's own theorisations of childhood were bound up with notions of fun and freedom. In the extract presented at the beginning of Chapter 2 for example, Samantha posits that the "main parts" of 'being a child' are:

- Being yourself
- Having fun
- Doing what you want to do

- Stop worrying about the future and future responsibilities
- Focus on the 'here and now'

All four of the empirical chapters have nevertheless revealed that, in reality, many of these children conceived and constructed their lives as being imbued with boredom, responsibilities and control. In public space/places, for example, they were either subject to surveillance and control (from adult strangers) or forced to take measures (e.g. walking on the other side of the road, avoiding certain streets/places) to protect themselves from attack and/or confrontation from the 'real' threats (e.g. 'chavs'/'rough people', sexual male predators) that walked the streets. Moreover, their fun and freedom in the public outdoor world was further restricted by the limits they reported their parents imposed on their access to and movement within, this space. Alex, for instance, was prohibited from venturing any further than the cul-de-sac where he lived. Neither the positioning of these children as 'the risk' or 'at risk' therefore, appeared to afford them (as they perceived) with much freedom to enjoy themselves in public space.

The alternative 'safe' play spaces/opportunities they were provided with, were also supervised and/or organised by adults. Interestingly, however, none of the children in the research seemed to object to adult surveillance and control that was exercised over them in these contexts. Indeed, in talking about the clubs he attends, Dave commented that, "you get told what to do but you're enjoying yourself". As I explored in Chapter 4, some of these children perceived such activities/opportunities, as helping them to develop and improve their skills, opening up future career opportunities and helping increase their chances of fulfilling their dreams and fantasies. Moreover, Junior Club was regarded by some as providing them with opportunities to have both fun (playing with games consoles, eating sweets, socialising with friends) and freedom (to 'mess around' without being chastised or regarded with suspicion) within a 'safe' – albeit adult controlled – place.

There were however, gendered responses to what I have referred to as the 'compulsory domestication' of their free time and play. Although relishing the alternative adult organised/controlled activities/clubs they were provided with for

example, many of the boys resented the time they spent at home. As John commented "you're like restricted from having fun really [. . .] I just have to stay inside and be bored". Yet, for many girls the home provided them with opportunities for fun and freedom within another 'safe' adult controlled space. Chapter 5 revealed how some of the girls relished watching/using the array of media with which they were provided in the home. Different places within the home (e.g. bedroom) also offered a space of privacy and pleasure (for them to experiment with their own identities) and (their) control.

The chores and domestic tasks which many of the children carried out within the home further compromised their opportunities for fun and freedom[2]. I explored above how Daisy did not conceive caring for her younger brother as being in concordance with the responsibilities of a child. Breaching the rules set by their parents, however, often meant these children were faced with even more states of boredom and control. Indeed, Chapter 5 revealed how punishments levied on children by their parents commonly involved constraints being placed on their movement (confining them to the bedroom) and/or access to clubs/activities, media and friends.

With regards to the school classroom, Chapter 6 explored how the children conceived that lessons with Mr Collins and Miss Mason were commonly filled with fun. Lessons with Mrs Rotheroe, in contrast, were characterised by discipline, regulation and control, and an absence of officially sanctioned fun and/or freedom. Feelings of boredom were, nevertheless, accentuated for some of the high-achieving children the class, who did not feel that academically, Mrs Rotheroe "pushed them" enough. Yet, exploring the unfair distribution of reprimand and retribution in the class, Chapter 6 revealed how for two boys (Fred and Gary), retribution (or threat of retribution) was fun in itself. Punishments levied on them, for example, provided them with a form of liberation from the surveilling gaze of Mrs Rotheroe, the regulative control she exercised over the class and the boredom of work, whilst threat of punishment provided them with a source of fun and something to do besides their school work.

[2] Although I did highlight in Chapter 5 that none of the children constructed chores as 'adult' responsibilities or tasks.

Chapter 6 did, however, reveal the stresses and strains of schoolwork (and specifically, achieving the grades they were predicted to gain) that low and high achieving children alike, experienced in their final year of primary school.

Feelings of boredom, responsibilities and control were similarly felt by some of the children within the space of the school playground. Although Lucy and Ashley enjoyed buddying the infants in the school precisely because it enabled them to escape the boredom they experienced on junior playground and embody a more powerful position amongst their younger peers, these feelings were not shared by other children in the study. Indeed, many children regarded 'buddy' and 'prefect' duty as 'boring' and an infringement on their inherent childhood right to both break/lunchtimes and no responsibilities. Having said this, it was not only Ashley and Lucy who experienced feelings of boredom in the junior playground. Over the course of my fieldwork, these feelings were increasingly shared by some of the other children in the study as rules and regulations were increasingly levied on their favourite playground pursuits.

8.3vi Although quite a homogenous largely 'white' 'middle-class' sample, the children who participated in the study held both concurrent and conflicting perceptions and experiences of their childhoods in different relationships, spaces and time.

Throughout the four empirical chapters of this thesis, I have endeavoured to maintain and re-present the partial, messy and multiple realities of these children's everyday experiences, perceptions and lives; revealing both concurrent and conflicting accounts provided by different children in the study. Despite the relative homogeneity of the sample, it is impossible and indeed, undesirable to completely typify their lives and experiences. A number of boys and girls, for example, told how they are 'Othered' by adult strangers in public spaces (e.g. the streets) and places (e.g. shops) when unaccompanied by an adult. Yet in taking up the position of vulnerable 'middle-class' victims of 'real' dangerous 'Others', Chapter 4 revealed the perceived gendered risks that infiltrated their accounts. Indeed, girls have previously been regarded as being more vulnerable in public space because of the risks of sexual abuse and attack. However, with increasing anxieties surrounding anti social 'youth'

culture and rises in reports of attacks and even murder in and around the streets, there now appear to be similar fears regarding boys' safety and their welfare in public space. This was echoed and reinforced in my own research. As I have outlined in previous 'findings' above, Chapter 4 explored one group of boys' fears of "rough" peers and "chavs" following a mugging incident involving Sherman and Andy. It also highlighted Zoë and Samantha's positioning of themselves as at risk from male sexual predators and examined their account of what they perceived as being a lucky escape from a adult male paedophile after being chased by a man who was sat alone in a local "children's park".

The majority of boys and girls reported their parents levying heavy controls over their access to and movement within public space. This was apart from Dave, who had siblings in their late teens and described being given a relatively free reign in public spaces and places. Like the rest of the children in the study, however, he was provided with 'safe' alternative play spaces/activities. Nevertheless, the domestication of their free time and play was met with conflicting gendered perceptions. For many of the boys, television, PCs and games consoles were regarded as things which they used simply to 'fill up' time they were made to spend confined within the home. Fred thus often attempted to tag along and go out with his older brother. This is in contrast to many of the girls who, in fact, enjoyed the media they were provided with. For three girls (Phoebe, Daisy, Hope), places within the home offered them privacy, pleasure and (their own) control. Specifically, they were able to carve out retreats for themselves, away from the surveillance and control of others. For Faith, however, her bedroom was a place where her sister and herself could talk and 'hang out' together. Indeed, Faith certainly appeared to relish the company of others and disliked time alone; complaining about feelings of loneliness. Although Phoebe valued privacy and time alone, she nevertheless, sought her (older) sister's companionship, security and support and felt a sense of loss when they 'fell out' with each other. Siblings were, for example, sources of both pleasure and pain. Most children did report arguing with their brothers and sisters. Indeed, Fred described always 'arguing' and 'fighting' with his brother. Gary, however, asserts this is an inherent part of siblings' relationships with each other as resonated in his comment, "that's a brother's job".

In Chapter 5, I also highlighted how nearly all of the children were expected to contribute, in various ways and varying degrees, to domestic tasks within the home. Daisy and Lynne were made responsible for 'looking after' their younger siblings when their parents were at work. Gary, in contrast, was responsible for vacuuming and sorting the clothes. Whilst the majority of children in the study were not paid for their efforts however, Fred was and in fact, had the agency to decide how and when to contribute to the running of the home. All of the children however, faced similar punishments if they failed to adhere to their parent's rules and regulations which mst commonly took the form of 'grounding' and the removal of certain privileges (e.g. media, clubs/activities).

Chapter 6 explored how the majority, if not all of the children in the study shared a determination and desire to achieve academically at school. Yet, many perceived fun (through the form of humour) as central to the learning experience and described a 'good' teacher as an effective educator who either "makes" or "lets" them "have fun" during lessons; few perceived Mrs Rotheroe as doing this. Whilst lower achievers could not afford (academically) to create their own unofficially sanctioned fun, Chapter 6 explored some of the higher achievers attempts at this. It also examined some of the consequences of these endeavours if discovered by Mrs Rotheroe, and revealed different levels of leniency and the unfair distribution of her reprimands and retributions. Although punishments were designed to make the children reflect on and repent their actions and prevent them from repeating them again, I highlighted in Chapter 6 that for Gary and Fred, they were often counter-productive in their purpose. Unlike other children (usually girls) who found them humiliating and subsequently regretted their actions, punishments were regarded by these boys as sources of pleasure and freedom from work and Mrs Rotheroe's control.

Previous 'findings' have also drawn attention to the conflicting perceptions some of the children held about buddy and prefect duty. Whilst Chapter 7 highlighted some of the boys' and two of the girls' negative and restrictive constructions of these responsibilities, it described the positive way in which Ashley and Lucy portrayed these roles. I nevertheless suggested that these children's different positions (of

power) within their own peer group may have impinged on these perceptions and their experiences of play/lunchtimes in the playground with their same-aged friends/peers. All of them were, however, subject to the curtailment of certain games in the playground and creation of new and/or alternative activities. All were also privy to the emerging boyfriend/girlfriend culture during their first term in Year 6. As I outlined in Chapter 7, over my time in the field a number of boys (four of the most popular) and girls (just over half in the class) identified themselves as potential heterosexual partners and began participating (some regularly) in the emerging boyfriend/girlfriend culture. Those who did not identify themselves as potential partners or participate in this culture could and did continue to engage in platonic cross-gender interactions[3]. Interactions between boys and girls participating or wanting to participate in the boyfriend/girlfriend culture, however, became much more hetero-sexualised, and over the course of my fieldwork more Year 6 pupils began 'going out' with different boys/girls in their class. All were also subject to the prohibition levied on them, prohibiting them from engaging in heterosexual relations/hips in school. Whilst this did not affect those who did not identify as potential players in the boyfriend/girlfriend culture, those who did, were forced to reject and resist 'the rule' and the notion of childhood innocence inscribed upon them by the school.

8.4 Participation, Policing, Protection and Provision: Children, Childhood and Current UK Policies and Practices

It has been over fifteen years since the UK ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). Since then, there have been increasing efforts in England and Wales, to promote children's rights and their participation in (adult) society. Such efforts recognise children as social actors and "presupposes and encourages their agency, the expression of their self-defined needs and interests" (Roche, 1999: 485). As I have highlighted in section 8.2 above, there is a growing field of social science research that involves children as 'participants'; which listens to and (in some cases) actively involves children throughout the research process. Sinclair (2004) also comments on the rapid increase in the participation activities

[3] Although there was still a lack of social interaction between boys and girls in the playground.

involving children and young people in society more generally. A recent report by Save the Children (2006) highlighted the increased participation of children and young people in Wales, in policy developments that are of direct relevance to their lives. Indeed, by the year 2005 (the year during which the main part of my fieldwork was conducted), Wales had appointed a Minister for Children, a cross-cutting Cabinet Committee on Children, an independent Children's Commission and a peer-led young people's assembly[4]. In evaluating the development in children and young people's participation in Wales, the Save the Children (2006) report states that children and young people are becoming more influential in policies relating to children and young people's services. This same report does however, conclude that their participation and influence in direct policies and services is less developed and posits that there is a long way to before the principle of Article 12 (of the United Nations on the Rights of the Child) is respected and reached in Wales[5] (Save the Children, 2006: 48).

At the same time as calls are being made for greater child participation and rights, a number of efforts are also being made towards promoting the welfare, protection and the provision of/for children and young people. The 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' initiative, for example, which emerged in 2004, sets out an English national framework for local programmes to build services around the needs of children and young people (aged between 0-19 years). The Government aim is for every child (rather than just the 'needy') whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government has published a similar initiative. Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the 'Children and Young People: Rights to Action' (2004) initiative aims to ensure that 'all' children and young people in Wales:

- Have a flying start in life.

[4] This peer-led young people's assembly is called 'Funky Dragon' and has the ability to influence the shape of government policy which affects children and young people (Save the Children, 2006).
[5] For example, involving children in setting agendas rather than consulting with them on matters of pertinence to government or organisations.

- Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities.
- Enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation.
- Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.
- Are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised.
- Have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional well-being.
- Are not disadvantaged by poverty.

The 'Respect Handbook', which outlines the key principles underpinning the 'Respect Agenda', claims to work alongside the 'Every Child Matters' framework (and hence the 'Rights to Action' framework which mirrors many of the aims of the 'Every Child Matters' initiative). This agenda, which emerged as a broad idea during the New Labour 2005 general election campaign, aims to tackle anti-social behaviour and reinstate the law-abiding majority back in charge of their local community. The handbook states that, underlying the 'Every Child Matters' 'stay safe' outcome is, "for children and young people to be safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school". Moreover, it argues that the 'making a positive contribution' outcome is underpinned by the aim that children and young people should engage in positive behaviour, again both in and outside of school.

The 'Respect Agenda' has nevertheless, been written against a backdrop of incessant media reports and moral panics surrounding children/young people and their engagement in so-called 'anti social behaviour' in and around local communities. On the 29th of March 2007, for example, the BBC reported how the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair had said that 'gang culture' could cause serious problems for society if left untreated. His comments followed a series of fatal shootings and stabbings of teenagers in London during February and March[6]. Indeed, I suggested in Chapter 4, how media reports of these and similar cases may have proliferated moral

[6] In March 2007 Kodjo Yenga and Adam Regis were both stabbed to death in London. Three other teenagers, James Andre Smartt Ford, Michael Dosunmu and Billy Cox were shot dead in February 2007.

panics to such an extent that at present, all children (and young people) – regardless of their age, class, race, behaviour or intentions – are demonised by adults (and sometimes other children and young people). The 'Respect Agenda' may fuel such panics and intensify these dominant discourses of children and young people. Although not targets of anti-social behaviour and respect agendas, this thesis has illustrated the powerful impact both discourses of childhood (i.e. as vulnerable 'angels' or dangerous 'devils') has on one group of privileged 'respectable' 'middle-class' children's childhood identities and experiences. At the same time, it has shown how far the 'Rights to Action' initiative is both succeeding and failing to meet its aims with regards to these children. Indeed, the foreword to the 'Rights to Action' paper states that although concerned with 'all' children and young people, priority must be given to those who face more problems than others. Yet, this thesis has focused on, and revealed the accounts of 'privileged' children rather than those with 'more problems'. Moreover, although I would agree that those children more 'in need' should be given priority in such initiative, having explored in great depth, the issues that this one group of 'middle-class' children face in their day-to-day lives, I would suggest that in implementing and evaluating government initiatives, it is important to also focus on the experiences of children who not the highest/specific targets of their initiatives and concerns.

8.5 Final Comments and Reflections

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 21) assert that a researcher's primary goal must always be and remain the production of knowledge. As this final chapter has described, this thesis has revealed the value and even necessity of actively engaging children throughout the research process, listening to their 'voices' and taking seriously what they have to say about their lives. It has also identified and explored issues of concern to these 10 and 11 year-old largely 'white' 'middle-class' children about their childhoods at a time when contradictory representations and childhood agendas (e.g. anti-social 'child'/'youth' culture, child welfare, provision and protection, and also child participation and rights movements) abound.

One of the most pervasive themes, that was explored in-depth throughout all four of the empirical chapters, was how constrained and protected these children's lives are.

Moreover, I have suggested that the restrictions levied on their movement and participation within different spaces (specifically, the home, school and public space) may be a product of both their class (possibly their sub-urbanism?) and the risk society in which they live. What is equally important to stress, however, and is something that must not be overlooked, is that although discourses of adult surveillance and control dominated children's accounts, each of the empirical chapters highlighted the pockets of fun and freedom that that these children either found or created in their everyday lives. In Chapter 4 for example, Junior Club and other adult organised/supervised activities were formal places where they were able to have fun. Chapter 6 revealed the how the informal place that Mrs Rotheroe created for punishment (i.e. outside the classroom) was re-created by Gary and Fred into an informal place for pleasure, freedom and their control. Having fun was certainly central to these children's theorisation of childhood, and finding ways in which to have fun appeared to play a pivotal role in negotiating the home, public and school space. Indeed, unlike much social science research, which has focused on either one or two spaces (e.g. home and school), this thesis has explored children's everyday lives across multiple sites. Moreover, it has focused on children who are not generally the focus of research given their 'ordinariness'. Future research, however, could explore the everyday experiences and lives of different class, race and aged children/young people in different demographic locations. Locating the research in a different setting (i.e. outside of school) may also generate very different data. This may go some way to understanding the effect that different research settings/contexts have on the children's accounts and agendas, and hence the research data that is subsequently generated.

More attempts could also be made to engage child/young people participants more directly throughout the whole of the research process, particularly in stages of analysis and the re-presentation of data. Indeed, as the body of research that 'actively' involves children in the data generation processes, for example, continues to expand, research that reports 'actively' involving children in processes of analysis is comparatively slight (but see Thomas and O'Kane, 1998; Smith and Barker, 2000; Allan, 2006). However, by engaging children more directly and throughout the research process, social science research could assist in the search for children's

participation and rights in society to be recognised and accepted; their own 'voices' and concerns being listened to and heard in policies and practices affecting their experiences and lives.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Map of Fieldwork Progress

DATES	DAY				
1 Nov to 17 Dec 2004	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
Week 1	obs.	obs.	obs.	obs.	obs.
Week 2	obs.	obs.	obs.	obs.	—
Week 3	—	obs.	obs. p/gr.int x2	obs. p/gr.int x2	obs. p/gr.int x2
Week 4	obs.	obs. p/gr.int x2	obs.	obs.	Inset
Week 5	obs. p/gr.int x1	obs. p/gr.int x1	—	obs.	—
Week 6	obs.	obs. p/gr.int x1	—	obs.	obs. p/gr.int x1
Week 7	—	obs. p/gr.int x1	obs.	obs. p/gr.int x1	—
10 Jan to 18 Mar 2005					
Week 1	obs.	obs. p/gr.int x1	obs.	—	obs. p/gr.int x2
Week 2	—	obs. p/gr.int x1	obs.	—	obs. p/gr.int x1
Week 3	—	obs. peer int x2	obs.	—	obs.
Week 4	obs. p/gr.int x1	obs.	—	—	obs.
Week 5	obs. p/gr.int x1	obs. p/gt.int x1 peer int x2	obs. p/gr.int x1	—	Inset
Half Term					
Week 1	obs. p/gr.int x1	obs. p/gr.int x2	—	obs. photo int x1	obs.
Week 2	obs. p/gr.int x2 photo int x1	—	obs. p/gr.int x2	obs. photo int x2	obs. p/gr.int x1
Week 3	—	obs. p/gr.int x1 photo int x2	obs. p/gr.int x1	obs. p/gr.int x1	obs. p/gr.int x1 photo int x1
Week 4	obs. p/gr.int x3	—	obs. p/gr.int x1 photo int x1	—	obs.
11 July to 18 July 2005					
Week 1	obs.	—	obs.	obs.	obs.

	gr.int x1 trans.dis. x1		trans.dis. x 2	trans.dis. x2	trans.dis. x4
Week 2	obs.	—	—	—	—

Key for Table
Obs. = Observations/Participations
P/gr. Int = Paired/Group Interviews
Photo int = Paired/Group Photograph Interviews
Trans.dis. = Transcript Discussion
— = Not in field

Appendix 2

Parent Consent Letter

28 September 2004

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Nicola Critchlow and I am a postgraduate PhD student being supervised by Dr Emma Renold at the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.

I am currently researching children's accounts of their daily lives. I am particularly interested in children's thoughts about what it means to be 'a child' in today's society with their peers and other adults. Issues that might be explored include: day-to-day activities, rules and responsibilities, aspirations and expectations, and freedoms and choices.

St Martin's Primary School has kindly agreed to participate in my study from November 2004 to February 2005. The study will be based in Mrs Rotheroe's class where I will be spending time helping out and making general observations. I will also be organising different activities with children in the class that want to be part of the study. These activities will depend on what the children who take part want to do.

All of the children will receive information about the study before being given the opportunity to take part. Involvement in the project is completely voluntary and so it is fine if your child does not want to take part. They can change their mind to take part at any time.

The school and any children who participate will **not** be named in any reports arising from this study.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact either Mrs Hayes via the school or myself on the email address or telephone number given below.

Yours Sincerely

Nicola Critchlow

Telephone:
Email: CritchlowN@Cardiff.ac.uk

I am willing/unwilling (please delete as appropriate) to let my child

..... take part in the study

Signed ..... Date .....
(Please return by 15th October 2004)

Appendix 3

Children's Information Sheet

'Being a Child'

Who I Am

My name is Nicola Critchlow and I am a researcher at Cardiff University.

What I am doing

I am doing a project about children's lives. I am interested in what children say it is like being 10 and 11 years old in today's world.

How I will do this

I will be spending time with you in your class over the next few months. I will be watching things that go on and also organising different activities with children in the class that want to be part of the project. These activities will depend on what the people who take part want to do.

How I will use what I learn from you

I will use what I learn from you to write the project. Other people will be able to read it BUT the name of the school and your name will be changed so nobody else will know who took part and what they said or wrote. Only I will know what you said unless something is said about someone being harmed in any way and another adult needs to know.

Taking part in the project

It is up to you whether or no you take part in the project. Your parents also have to agree to you taking part. You do not have to take part if you do not want to and it is fine if you change you mind about wanting to be in it at any time. Just let me know.

Questions

If you have any questions about the project you can ask me at any time.

Appendix 4

Key to transcripts

. . .	Brief Pause
/	When a speaker is interrupted by another speaker
[. . .]	When material is edited out
(comment)	Background information (including body movement, tone of voices, emotion, etc.)
???	inaudible response
Italics	to emphasise a word or phrase
" "	Direct quotation within fieldnotes
* * * *	to signal that they following extract is from a different interview, diary, discussion, or fieldnote

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