"My friends probably see the friendship of the group as a community":
Exploring young people's experiences of friendship and community in a
newly constructed settlement

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Sarah Elizabeth Smith

Department of Geography

University of Leicester

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This thesis sets out to explore the experiences of young people living in a new settlement in rural Northamptonshire, which was constructed in part under New Labour's *Sustainable Communities Plan.* Contextually, this project has been developed and carried out at a time of change in the UK. Economic downturn eventually led to recession, which slowed development on many new places. A change in UK government from Labour to a Conservative dominated coalition in 2010, also impacted on policy surrounding new developments. The young people who took part in my study were also in a unique position in the history of their development with their relationships set against the backdrop of this change but also against the changing and evolving environment in which they lived.

My research focuses on young people's intergenerational relationships, understandings and experiences of community and friendships. Over the course of approximately a year, I used ethnography and in depth interviews in order to collect data from eighteen young people and seven adults. Building on literatures of children and young people, community, intergenerational relationships and friendship, I make an original contribution to knowledge in the often-overlooked area of young people's friendship. Exploring friendships through a wider examination of young people's intergenerational relationships and connections to community, I focus explicitly on how friendships are shaped and what they mean to young people living in a new community, for example, the way these friendships were affected by transition, transport and lack of other young people living in the immediate locality and also the way that these friendships were developed, maintained and dissolved as a result of these issues. I also examine young people's relationships to other people around them and to notions of community.

Acknowledgements

"then I'd dig a tunnel from my window to yours"

For Matt and Astrid, in anticipation of adventures to come

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1. Introduction

Who is your best friend? Do you have just one? Has this changed depending on the different circumstances of your life or has it remained the same since primary school, or when you were even younger?

There are two people I consider to be my best friends. The first, Matt, also my husband, I have known for fifteen years. The second, Hayley, I have known for somewhere in the region of twelve. They are jointly the people I turn to when I am happy, when I am sad, when I need to celebrate or be commiserated, when I need support, when I am bored, in fact they are the people I turn to when I need anything. But at thirty-eight years old, neither are people I met through school, college or even university. Instead, I met both of them whilst working in my first full time job. While social media has enabled me to reconnect with my first best friend, who I met at primary school, I rarely see her and feel that I have little in common with her now. Likewise with other best friends I have had since.

Transitions and changes in my life such as leaving school, starting college, moving away to university, moving back home again after university, starting and leaving a number of different jobs and retraining a number of different times have impacted on my friendships. As have major life events that have occurred both to me and to different friends; births, deaths, marriages and divorces all mean that some friendships have fallen by the wayside and others have been developed. Some friendships have been transitory, others longer lasting but all, in the long run, have impacted on my life for better or for worse.

In the course of my PhD research, I have explored, with young people, the way that their lives have shaped and been shaped by their friendships and also shaped and been shaped by time and place: specifically, living in a new settlement only a decade into its development. For the young people I talked to, many of the factors impacting on my friendships, had also impacted on theirs but they also had the added complication of living in a new development,

specifically a new development where very few other young people in their age group lived.

1.1 Aims

This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in the often-overlooked area of the geographies of young people's friendships with specific reference to the way that young people's friendships are shaped and defined. The context of the research is important, specifically place and time, with my case study site a newly constructed settlement, part of the 2003 *Sustainable Communities Plan*. The experiences of young people in developments like this are largely overlooked within research on both young people and research into *Sustainable Communities.* Therefore, this research addresses the experiences of young people living in a specific place at a specific time.

In order to fully explore the friendships of young people, living in this specific place at this particular time, my research addresses the following aims

1. To explore the intergenerational relationships of young people aged fifteen to twenty-six in a new settlement[1]
2. To explore young people's relationships with community in a new settlement
3. To explore young people's friendship networks in a new settlement

In order to meet these aims, this thesis draws on a range of literature from both geography and from wider research into children and young people. Using ethnography, in-depth interviews and guided walks, I explore with young people how and where their friendships are developed, maintained and dissolved, and the way the design of the space and the places they use impacts on these friendships. The thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge adding nuance, specificity and empirical richness to nascent geographies of

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[1]See pages 87-88 for a further discussion of why this age group was chosen.

friendship, especially with a focus on the local everyday geographies and movements involved in sustaining friendships; revisiting work on intergenerational relations, and especially debates around older young people's 'place' in public spaces, albeit in a new urban context; exploring youth cultures, which remain under-studied in geography (as per Hopkins and Pain, 2007).

1.2 Rationale for the research

This research addresses young people's experiences of friendship, community and intergenerational relationships with specific reference to place and time in that the young people who took part in this study were living in a newly constructed settlement that was at an early stage of its development. This research was informed by two different factors: firstly the current lack of geographical research into young people's friendship and secondly, the way in which young people's experiences of living in new communities are largely overlooked both in policy and in academic literature (see Hadfield-Hill, 2013 as a notable exception to this).

1.2.1 Policy background

Romsworth[2], the newly constructed settlement, the case study site for this research is part of the previous Labour Government's *Sustainable Communities Plan.*

> "The Deputy Prime Minister launched the Sustainable Communities
> Plan (Sustainable Communities: Building for the future) on 5
> February 2003. The Plan sets out a long-term programme of action
> for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural
> areas. It aims to tackle housing supply issues in the South East, low
> demand in other parts of the country, and the quality of our public

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[2]The name of the development has been changed.

spaces.

The Plan includes not just a significant increase in resources and major reforms of housing and planning, but a new approach to how we build and what we build.

The programme of action aims to focus the attention and co-ordinate the efforts of all levels of Government and stakeholders in bringing about development that meets the economic, social and environmental needs of future generations as well as succeeding now."

(Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future, 2003)

The aim of the *Sustainable Communities Plan* was therefore to address housing supply and demand in both rural and urban areas and to rethink approaches to planning and development in order to meet changing economic and social and environmental needs. From a policy perspective, very little attention is paid to the place of children and young people within these new communities and, ten years after the *Plan,* there is currently a literature gap on how children and young people have experienced living in these new places and how they use the space there.

1.2.2 Case study site and links to community

Development initially began in Romsworth, the case study site for this research, in 2001 but Romsworth was later subsumed into the *Sustainable Communities Plan.* The development contains aspects of both the urban and the rural: on the one hand, designed as an urban extension and within easy commuting distance of London, but set within fields and farmland. Various developers have borrowed from traditional notions of rurality; street names tended to follow those of a traditional village, drawing on notions of nature and wildlife - for example Hare's Run, Hedgerow Lane and The Green. The development also encompassed rural design features such as a village pond and the houses are built in a variety of period styles. Community was a significant factor in the everyday lives of people living there, the land on which

the settlement was built having been originally sold to developers with the proviso that a community would be built there. Developers used this notion of community as a marketing tool: the first houses to be built there were marketed with the tagline 'come and create your own community'. The development was also 'branded' as 'Romsworth Village'.

Against this backdrop, and drawing on definitions and critiques of community from Silk (1999), Liepins (2000 a&b) and Young (1990) I explore young people's experiences, understandings and connections to community. I question whether community is a significant factor in the lives of young people and ask what other relationships matter to them in their everyday lives.

Young people's relationships to community are often viewed as complex: Panelli et al (2002) argue that young people are excluded from notions of community and therefore create their own notions and Matthews and Limb (1999) assert that new communities are not designed to reflect the needs of children and young people. But Dwyer (1999) suggests that, for some young people, community can, at times, provide much needed support and protection. Further to this, my research also suggests that for young people, notions of community are also tied to notions of friendship and that there is sometimes a blurring of the lines between the two.

1.2.3 Friendship

Bunnell et al (2012) argue that friendship is an often-overlooked area in research with children and young people. Building on work from subcultures and post-subcultures, this research explores the foundations on which young people's friendships are built. In doing so, I take into account, among other factors, elements of fun (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004; Horton, 2010) rather than suggesting that young people come together in order to resist or serve a political end (Hebdige, 1979). My research also challenges notions that young people's friendships and cultural activities are about coming together to experience similarities (Maffesoli 1994) but are in fact about much more

everyday factors (Horton and Kraftl, 2006 a&b). Young people's friendships can be as much about accidental factors, such as living in the same area, than about commonalities in cultural preferences and therefore, geography is key to friendships, who young people are friends with is often more aboutwhere they live or which school they go to rather than being about other similarities or differences. While Bunnell et al argue that work on friendship is often subsumed into work on community. I argue that at times it is very difficult to separate the two out.

1.2.4 Intergenerational Relationships

Closely tied to these notions of friendship are the way that young people relate to others living around them, to intergenerational and community relationships. But, these relationships between older and younger people are not always borne out of or influenced by tensions. Hopkins and Pain (2007) argue for a focus on intergenerational relationships within research into young people. While work on intergenerational relationships and geographies of age explore a broad range of relationships, friendships between people of different age groups still tends to be largely overlooked. Therefore, this research not only explores young people's friendships with people in their immediate age group but also addresses the different types of relationships young people have with those outside of their age group. This research also explores the way that living in a self defined 'community' impacts on friendships with people of different ages, with place being a significant factor in the way these young people developed, maintained and dissolved their friendships with people of all ages.

1.3 Methodology

In order to explore the aims of the project, I used ethnography and in-depth interviews. Over the course of approximately a year, I generally spent two days per week in my case study site. Ethnography gave me the opportunity to

observe community life and interactions between individuals and groups of people in order to better get to know the people and to give me a sense of place in the settlement I was conducting my research. As part of this ethnographic approach, I also interviewed eighteen young people, aged between fifteen and twenty-six who lived in Romsworth, plus seven adults who either lived in the community and/or worked in a variety of responsible roles within the community. I used the mobile method of guided walks with five of these young people. This is an accepted but relatively novel way of conducting research with children and young people and it gave me the opportunity to see first hand the places young people used and hear why they were important. I informally talked to approximately five young people who were unable to commit to taking part in interviews but who were happy to briefly give me their opinions. Finally, I talked informally to numerous adults both at village events and in the course of day-to-day observations.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In order to address the aims and objectives of the research I have drawn on a wide range of literatures from geography and also from other academic disciplines. Chapter 2 discusses these in more detail exploring studies of youth, studies of community, intergenerational relationships and friendship, focusing on the ways in which these areas of research have been mobilised within geography.

Chapter 3 addresses the methodology used in order to conduct this research. Throughout this chapter I examine the methods I used; ethnography and in depth interviews. The chapter explores ethical issues and problems I encountered during the course of the project, including the difficulties I faced trying to find participants in a place where there were very few young people in my target age group and very few places for the young people who did live there to spend their time. Throughout this chapter I also evaluate whether the methods I used were successful in gaining an understanding of what was important to young people living there.

Throughout the analysis chapters, I explore the connections between young people, community and others living around them, with specific reference to place and space in the way living in a new settlement impacts on these experiences and how the different spaces in this settlement are used both by young people and adults living there. Chapter 4 focuses on Intergenerational Relationships, exploring different tensions in young people's relationships with adults. I explore these tensions through different relationships, from the more formalised relationships between young people and village decision makers and less formal relationships and interactions through which young people felt their behaviour and their use of space was regulated. I also explore media representations of young people, how they felt this impacted on the way they were perceivedand their use of space However, this chapter ends with a discussion of more positive relationships that young people had with adults living in the settlement, their intergenerational friendships. In this section, I argue thatplace is key to these relationships, in other words, living in a new developmentcan mean that relationships between young people and adults are different to the relationships between differentage groups that occur elsewhere.

Chapter 5 examines how adults and young people defined and understood community, addressing specifically how these definitions and understandings are similar and the ways in which they differ. Once again, place is key to these understanding as the settlement in which these young people lived comes with a history of adults attempting to create specific notions of community. Therefore, youngpeople's notions of community were, at times, at odds with adult notions of community. I explore young people's connections to community both in terms of the different stages they were at in their lives and also with reference to hopes and aspirations for the future, suggesting that connections to community change with time depending on differentlife stages. I also examine the different ways young people saw that community took place through different events, times and places and the way they felt either welcomed into or excluded from these notions of community. This chapter also

addresses the ways that the lines between friendship and community were sometimes blurred.

Building on themes that began to emerge throughout the previous chapters, chapter 6 explores young people's friendships, once again, place is key to these friendships with the chapter focussing on the ways in which living in a new settlement affects and shapes these friendships. This chapter explores where young people's main friendship groups lay, whether inside or outside of the development. It addresses some of the factors affecting the way they developed, maintained and dissolved these friendships, such as issues around transport and the work that young people put into actually seeing friends. I explore transitions such as leaving school, getting a job and leaving home and the ways in which these and other factors such as gender and sexuality played a part in their friendships, and their breakdown, and the nostalgia that some of these young people felt for friendships that had dissolved. I also explore the part played by social media in developing, maintaining and dissolving these friendships, looking at what were perceived by young people to be positive and negative benefits of playing out friendships in this way.

This thesis concludes in chapter 7 where I begin with an overview of my research aims in order to summarise my findings and draw out the significant conclusions. In this section, I also address key gaps in current research with young people and explore the potential for further research in these areas.

1.4 Summary

This research addresses the mostly overlooked area of the geographies of young people's friendships. Place is a key factor in these friendships and the research takes into account how these friendships are shaped and affected by the experience of living in a newly constructed settlement. In order to fully address the ways in which these friendships are developed, maintained and dissolved, this research takes into account community and intergenerational relationships. Again, place and time is an important factor in these community

and intergenerational relations with young people living in a specific place, a new settlement self-styled as a community and the specific time of being only a few years into it's development. These notions of friendships, community and generation/intergeneration while, at times, clearly separate factors and influences on the everyday lives of young people are also, at other times, intertwined and this research, alongside exploring these factors as separate entities, also explores the crossovers and the intersections between them.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the different areas of literature relating to my research. Following the aims of my research I explore issues around community, intergenerational relationships and friendship and the way in which these relate to young people. Some of these areas of literature are broad, this chapter therefore draws on the way that these ideas have been mobilised within geography and focuses on the specific literatures relevant to the later analysis of data. The chapter begins by looking at studies of young people.

2.2 Youth studies and youth cultures

Young people, youth and youth cultures are widely used terms encompassing a multiplicity of different meanings. These terms can be applied to a variety of different age groups and a wide range of different cultural forms and activities. Valentine (2003) argues that youth is

> "popularly used to describe those aged between 16 and 25, a time frame that bears no relation to diverse legal classifications of adulthood" (p.38) (see also James, 1986)

This definition emphasises the difficulty in specifying what is actually meant by youth. Within youth, 16-25 is a broad age spectrum and young people who fall into this age group often vary greatly, both in terms of how they enjoy spending their time and what they are actually able to do, within the restrictions of law, transport and parents. Thus, James et al (1998) point to the way that children and young people with different abilities are treated differently in accordance with different contexts such as school and home. Sibley (1995) also highlights this contradiction discussing the way children and young people are presented and represented in advertising material,

specifically pointing to television adverts depicting children as innocents, in need of protection, or wild and in need of civilisation.

With a focus on childhood, but with arguments that are equally applicable to youth, a range of academics from the new social studies of childhood also argue that age is socially constructed (Prout and James, 1990) and that children are social actors in their own right. Research with children and young people should acknowledge that they are not just shaped by society but are also an active part in shaping it (Prout, 2000). See also Jenks (2005), James et al, (1998), James and James (2004). What it means to be a child differs in accordance with different geographical places and different time periods. Holloway and Valentine (2000) point to the differences between modern and medieval constructions of childhood (Aries, 1962), during medieval times, children were seen as smaller versions of adults whereas in the UK childhood is now seen as something separate from adulthood and children are treated very differently as a result.

A number of different areas of academic research focus on the experiences of children, youth and young people and, in this section, I explore work from Youth Cultures and Subcultures and Post- Subcultures.

2.2.1 Youth Cultures

Relatively, 'youth' is a modern concept (Savage 2008; Hine 2000; Danesi 2003); young people are increasingly encouraged to stay in full time education and as a result of this are economically dependent on their parents for longer (Stauber 2010; France et al 2010; Blasco 2010; Sharland 2006). Therefore, youth is increasingly being extended and this has an impact on the way young people are viewed within society (Valentine, 2003).

Weller (2006) argues for a focus on the teenager within geographical research. She suggests that 'children' and 'young people' are used interchangeably and that the notion of the 'teenager' is key to understanding the relationships

between the two because teenage years signify a transitional period linking childhood and youth. Worth (2009) and Furlong et al (2011) argue that transition is a problematic term which needs to be reconceptualised in order to be relevant to youth studies. Worth suggests that there is a lack of focus on the future within research on transition, and it is only thorough thinking about the future that we can understand the different experiences and the level of change that happens to young people. Drawing on Horton and Kraftl (2006b), Worth argues for the notion of "becoming" which she argues

> "is a useful way to think beyond the dominance of linearity—seeing youth transition as a constantly evolving experience, embracing its changeability and instability" (p.1058).

Furlong at el, suggest a 'social generational' (p.361) approach, which takes account of both transitional *and* cultural approaches to the study of youth. They suggest that youth is now "protracted to such an extent that contemporary researchers are increasingly making a distinction between early and late youth" (p.356). They go on to claim that the experiences of young people have become more complex and therefore research on youth should focus on new ways of exploring and articulating these experiences.

Weller (2006) also goes on to argue that more attention should be paid to the ways in which young people categorise and represent themselves. This is of specific relevance to my project. In the course of this research, I address issues around representations and young people focusing on the way they represent themselves and the way they feel about representations of their age group.

Scholars of youth have defined youth cultures and subcultures in a variety of ways; Hopkins (2010) draws on Kehily (2007) in defining subculture as 'a group within a group' (p. 83). Hopkins goes on to suggest that the subcultures of young people often mark themselves out as different to other groups and rely on members having common interests. Valentine et al (1998) explore a number of ways in which youth cultures and subcultures are defined and

represented drawing a distinction between spectacular associations with music, drugs and consumerism (Lucas 1998; Blackman 1998; Malbon 1998) and more private cultures relating to the home, work and relationships with people in these places (McNamee 1998; Bowlby et al 1998).

Thornton (1997) acknowledges that defining subculture is difficult given how the focus of research and subcultures themselves have changed since the 1940s. She suggests that

> "subcultures are a group of people that have something in common with each other (i.e. they share a problem, an interest, a practice) which distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other social groups" (p.1)

But Thornton also acknowledges that this could be equally applied to other groups and draws a parallel with subcultures and communities. She goes on to suggest that authors of subculture sometimes use the two terms interchangeably.

Youth culture is also often closely associated with music-based cultures (Hebdige 1979; Muggleton and Weinzierl 2005; Thornton 1996) but this in itself is complex and tied to wider notions of cultural practices and representations. Affiliation to a music-based culture often includes certain dress codes and modes of behaviour; for example, mod, punk and rave all had a clear style through which its members were recognisable over other cultural forms. Representations from outside, in the mass media, often encompass certain stereotypes and moral panics such as violence, drug taking and other such 'threats' to society that often have little to do with the music.

Early work on youth and their associated cultures tended to problematize young people and focus on areas such as delinquency and criminality. This section explores these literatures, their associated critiques and their

approaches to the study of youth beginning with work done in the early part of the twentieth century on subcultures.

2.2.1.1 Subcultures

There are two key schools in the study of subculture; Chicago University's Chicago School and The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University. In both schools of subculture, the focus was on young people's resistance to and subversion of dominant ideologies and on activities that young people engaged in that were seen to be on the fringes or outside of the mainstream. The term 'subculture' itself suggests activities and pursuits, which fall outside of mainstream cultures.

Much of the work of the Chicago School was undertaken during the early part of the twentieth century. They focused on using ethnographic methods in urban sociological studies of delinquency within Chicago. Within these studies there was an explicit focus on male cultures, specifically those perceived to be problematic in the USA in the post-war period (Valentine et al, 1998). Issues such as gang cultures and juvenile delinquency were addressed in relation to class- based explanations with urbanisation blamed as part of the problem (Cohen 1955; Miller 1958 and Matza and Sykes 1961 among others, explore these issues)

The CCCS moved away from the methods used by the Chicago School and focused on media representations, literature and popular culture in their examination of subcultural groups and developed semiotic understandings of 'style' within subcultures. They focus on class-based explanations (Cohen 1972; Hall and Jefferson 1976; Willis 1977) of the existence of subculture and in particular on problematic or sensational subcultural groups (Cohen 1967; Hebdige 1979). Cohen (1972) argues that subculture arises from a

> "contradiction, at an ideological level, between traditional working
> class Puritanism and the new hedonism of consumption; at an

economic level, between a future as part of the socially mobile elite
or as part of the new lumpen proletariat." (p.89)

Cohen suggested that the early 1970s saw a change in the lives of working class young people. New urban housing developments led to a change in family lives and parent/child relationships and young people were caught between traditional working class values and a culture of consumption and media. Cohen argues that this led to tensions in the sort of cultural groupings that young people involved themselves in.

The CCCS used a variety of methods in their research into young people and their subcultural groupings, Valentine et al (1998) divide this into two broad groups; ethnographic and textual. Ethnographic work was based around observations whereas textual analysis

"drew on techniques of critical analysis drawn from semiotics,
literary theory and structuralist anthropology' (p.13).

This textual analysis often drew on newspapers, magazines and other such media representations of different youth cultures (see Media and Representation, below). Valentine et al point to the way that this textual analysis was informed by different theoretical backgrounds including those developed by Gramsci, Levi-Strauss and Barthes.

As a result of the different methods used, the CCCS produced a variety of different studies but key works tended to focus on spectacular or problematic subcultures and class based analyses and understandings of these. Cohen's 1967 *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* was an ethnographic study of the mods and rockers, with specific reference to the violence that reportedly happened between the two groups in Brighton in the summer of 1964. Hebdige's (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*

> "used semiotics, literary criticism and structural anthropology to interpret the ambiguous meanings produced by the dress, music, language, gestures, postures and behavioural styles of publicly condemned youth sub-cultural groups such as Teddy Boys, Mods, Rockers, Rastafarians, Skinheads and Punks" (Valentine et al, 1998, p.15).

These groups were often problematized and associated with violence, drug misuse or unemployment. He explores the emergence of punk, tracing its roots back to the 1950s and 60s, assessing the importance of immigration from the West Indies on working class life. Hebdige (1979) focuses on the way in which style: clothing, hair, make up, accessories, etc. are relevant to an understanding of a subculture. He concludes that punk was a rejection of traditional working class values and that the style punks chose operated as a form of resistance. He makes reference to the way in which punks chose clothing that could be described as fetish style clothing fur, leather etc. and clothing that serves no useful purpose as working clothing. He also points to the way other groups such as skinheads wore clothes that were traditionally seen as working class, such as Doc Marten boots, braces and jeans, in order to subvert their working class identity.

While much of the work of the CCCS focused specifically on white male subcultures (and has been critiqued by feminists as a result, see Post-Subcultures, below) there were a handful of studies into the experiences of girls. Notably, McRobbie and Garber's 1977 *Girls and Subcultures* in which they argued that girls are rarely written about within studies of subculture and ask whether this is because girls are genuinely absent from subcultures. They suggest that this is not the case but because the majority of writing on subculture concentrates on masculinity, the place of girls within this is reduced to accounts of their sexuality and the way this also relates to boys. They also ask why girls are largely absent from accounts of spectacular incidents within subcultures and conclude that they are present but remain largely invisible. One of the main reasons for this, they suggest, is that in the 1950s-1970s boys

had more disposable income available to them and were therefore able to buy the accessories that went along with particular subcultures. They conclude that, during this time, girls had different expectations placed on them and, as a result of this, their focus was much more towards the home than that of boys.

While my research focuses on a similar age group to that of the work on sub-cultures, I have explored issues relevant to young people that move beyond many of the issues raised here. For example, friendship is notably absent from the reasons that young people come together and develop subcultures and there is also little focus on the way that young people interact with those outside of their immediate age group.

2.2.1.2 Media and representation

A large area of the work of the CCCS was the role of mass media and representation within youth subcultures and this is also an area that has been widely studied beyond work on subcultures and into other work on young people in post-subcultures and beyond. The precise role that mass media and representation play within youth subcultures has been widely debated.

Cohen (1967) explored the role played by the media in the fights between Mods and Rockers in the summer of 1964. Cohen used the term 'moral panics' to explain the way in which media representations of both groups of young people led to them being labelled as deviant. Cohen argues that these media representations caused the problem, and even went on to make it worse, with both groups responding to the ways they and the other group were being represented.

Hebdige (1979) assesses the emergence of punk in the summer of 1977, also looking at media representations surrounding this as a subculture. He argues that the mass media stand outside of subculture with the purpose of bringing it back in line with mainstream culture. Hebdige illustrates this with examples from newspapers and magazines from the late 1970s that either represented

punks as anti-social, on the fringes of society and condemned their behaviour or served to neutralise the shock value that punks used as resistance, bringing them back into mainstream culture.

Other writers have critiqued the way that the CCCS saw this relationship between mass media representation and youth subcultures. Muggleton and Weinzierl (2005) argue that the relationships between mass media representation and subcultures are more complex in the early part of the 21st century than at the time when Cohen (1967) and Hebdige (1979), among others, were writing. Young people in 21st century, they argue, are far more aware of media influence than ever before and while various forms of media may represent their cultural practices from the outside, some assist the development of cultures. They point to examples from the Internet and specialist magazines.

Thornton (1996) looks at youth based music cultures during the mid-1990s taking a 'post Birmingham stance' (p.8). She is critical of the CCCS's focus on media representations from the outside of subcultural groups and argues that in fact many subcultures have their own niche media, which represents the culture from within. This media also serves another important purpose, according to Thornton, and that is to keep a subculture niche. In this sense, representation is still an incredibly relevant area but it is the difference between the way subcultures represents themselves from within and the way that they are represented from the outside that is important (see also Hodkinson, 2002)

Of specific relevance to my project is the way that young people feel about mass media representations of their age group and the way that they feel they are perceived by the wider public and communities as a result of these representations. In addressing young people's relationships both with community and with other people living in the same local area, I have asked both adults and young people how they feel young people are represented both

locally and nationally and how this feeds into both perceptions of themselves and the way they are perceived in wider society.

2.2.2 Post Subcultures

Post-subcultural studies, while not one cohesive body of work, provides a critique of much of the work done by the CCCS. Different approaches critique the work of the CCCS for a variety of reasons. Feminist critiques focus on the way that girls are mainly ignored in work on subculture arguing that girls are written out of these accounts. Garrison (2000) discusses the Riot Grrrl movement, suggesting that girls' subcultures can be and often are politically based.

> "Riot Grrrl is an alternative subculture built around opposition to presuppositions that young (usually white) U.S. girls and women are too preoccupied with themselves and boys to be interested in being political, creative, and loud." (Garrison, 2000, pp.142-3)

For Garrision, girls are perceived as not having the same engagement with politics and creativity but she argues that these perceptions are essentially what Riot Grrrl is about. Reddington (2004) argues that girls were as instrumental and involved in the development of the punk movement as boys but that the female place in this has been ignored, not just by academics but also in wider histories of 'the collective memory of punk' (p.239) (see also Piano, 2003 and Gottlieb and Wald, 1994 on punk and Riot Grrrl).

Lincoln (2004) critiques McRobbie and Garber's bedroom culture questioning whether this still accounts for the lives of teenage girls today (and, indeed, boys – Lincoln argues that boys are as much a part of bedroom culture as girls). She suggests that we need to reconsider the importance of bedroom culture: far from being a place that young people withdraw from the world, young people are active in which aspects of the outside world are allowed into this space and what they do when they are there and who they do this with.

Muggleton and Weinzierl (2005) argue that theories of youth culture need to 'capture the experience of fragmentation, flux and fluidity that is central to contemporary youth culture' (p.3). In this sense, youth culture is not something that exists in a vacuum, it is one part of a wider world of cultural experiences and young people are often part of more than one cultural grouping at any given time. For Muggleton and Weinzierl the idea of 'contemporary' youth culture is a key aspect of post subcultural studies. They suggest that the CCCS fail to provide an appropriate framework for a critical evaluation of youth culture today and instead, work on youth cultures should account for movement and change.

Bennett and Kahn-Harris (2004) also critique studies of subculture. They argue that the behaviour of specific subcultural groups does not always serve a political end and that the CCCS do not consider the 'issue of young people playing their subcultural roles for 'fun'' (p.8). Further to this they argue that

> "subculture has arguably become little more than a 'catch all' term
> for any aspect of social life in which young people, style and music
> intersect." (p.1).

Therefore young people often do things because they are fun and enjoyable rather than because they are trying to resist or subvert. Distinguishing between subcultural 'meaning' and a less representational sense of 'mattering', Horton (2010) discusses the way a group of primary school children responded to the release of a record by one of their favourite groups, arguing that seemingly banal occasions like this matter greatly to children and young people in their everyday lives.

Bennett and Kahn-Harris (2004) go on to argue that there is a lack of geographical focus within CCCS conceptions of subculture pointing out that they only look at the UK. Further to this, Pilkington (2003) examines whether UK work on subculture is applicable to subcultures that exist in other

countries. In a comparison of the UK and Russia, she questions whether "young people experience late modern urban space similarly wherever they are located?" (p.121) and concludes that this is not the case.

Maffesoli (1994) reconceptualises the idea of subculture and suggests the term 'neo-tribe'. He argues that society consists of smaller groups and that rather than belonging to one group, individuals move from one group to another. He argues that neo-tribalism consists of 'fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal' (p.76). Maffesoli also goes on to claim that clothes, hair, accessories etc. are all part of the game played by members of a group in order to identify themselves with that group. This contrasts with Hebdige's (1979) argument that only certain types of style (punk, ted, skinhead, etc.) were significant in reading subcultural groups. Instead, the suggestion here is that all forms of style are, in some way or another, a form of affiliation with a particular group. Maffesoli also draws a distinction between what he calls the social and sociality, claiming that sociality is characterised by playing out roles within particular groups

While the majority of the work on subcultures concentrates specifically on youth subcultures this is not always the main focus and some subcultures are not necessarily youth based (see for example Brown, 2003 on heavy metal; Hodkinson, 2002 on goth; Bennett and Hodkinson, 2012 on ageing and youth cultures). Much of the work surrounding subculture is rooted in Marxism and as a result looks at the relationship between groups of young people and the state or ruling and hegemonic classes. There is a strong focus within much of this work on working class, particularly (though not exclusively, see McRobbie and Garber, 1977 on girls and their place within subculture) male subcultures. There is also a focus on 'spectacular' subcultures 'heroically resisting a hegemonic culture' (Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2005, p.3-4). Hebdige (1979) looks at the evolution of punk in the summer of 1977 discussing some of the ways it was represented by the media. Cohen (1972) looks at the way in which mods and rockers clashed in Brighton during the 1960s.

The term subculture suggests something that is not part of mainstream culture. I find this problematic as it automatically places young people involved in the subculture in opposition to mainstream culture. It is my intention to argue that youth cultures exist for a multitude of different reasons, while this may sometimes be as a form of resistance this is not always the case. Bennett and Kahn-Harris (2004) argue that the CCCS don't consider the 'issue of young people playing their 'subcultural' roles for 'fun''. Many youth cultures exist as a means to experiment with identity, as a way to have fun or simply because there's nothing else to do.

It is clear from these examples that youth cultures and their relationship to the world around them, including the spaces (both physical and virtual) they use, the technology they interact with and the way they are represented and represent themselves is complex. While studies of subculture provide valuable accounts of spectacular subcultures and the way they are represented, their accounts are criticised for a focus on predominantly male, white, working class cultures and their explanations of these are often reduced to class based analyses. While post-subcultures is not one coherent body of work, there is an acknowledgement that to understand the cultures of young people, one must move past reductive analyses and focus on the 'fragmentation, flux and fluidity' Muggleton and Weinzierl (2005) of young people's cultures. In terms of my own research, I feel that 'fun' and 'friendship' should be added to this list. While some of the work of post-subculture takes into account fun, neither subcultures nor post-subcultures account for the way that friendship is a factor in the way that young people spend their time. In terms of young people's friendship, fragmentation, flux and fluidity are often key factors and my research explores why this is the case. My research also addresses issues of representation but explores with young people the way that they themselves feel about the way that they are represented and how they feel that this impacts on their relationships with others.

2.3 Children's geographies

Evans (2008) outlines the aims of Children's Geographies as being

> "to centre children and young people in geographical research, to challenge negative stereotypes of children and young people, to empower children and young people, and to challenge barriers to children and young people's participation in policy decisions" (p.1660)

Holloway and Valentine (2000) argue that childhood is a social construct dependant on time and space. A number of other children's geographers outline how this conceptualisation of the 'child' changes according to different geographical spaces. Punch (2000) outlines the way children in Bolivia negotiate play times around the work and school schedule of their daily lives. Robson and Ansell (2000) explore the experiences of young people's responsibilities as carers in Zimbabwe. Karsten (2003) examines planning policies that do not take into account the needs of children and Leyshon (2008) discusses the experiences of young people in rural areas. Evans (2008) focuses on geographies of youth and young people but argues

> "the development of geographical work on young people and on children is inextricably intertwined." (p.1661)

This outlines the difficulty in separating children from youth. Evans goes on to discuss classifications of children, youth and adulthood arguing that there is an overlap between these and that legal classifications are contradictory.

It is clear that what it means to be a child varies greatly, not only in different geographical locations but also in different spaces such as home, school and different public spaces. While the focus of children's geographies is on children, much of what is researched and theorised equally applies to young people. My research focuses on young people living in a specific place at a specific time,

that of a new settlement in the United Kingdom in the early stages of its development, part of a specific government initiative. Therefore, the experiences of these young people may not be comparable to the experiences of young people living in other places and/or at other times.

Children's Geographies addresses issues in the lives of children and young people over a wide range of areas. Holloway and Valentine (2000) draw together work by a number of scholars focusing on the broad themes of playing, living and learning. Within this, Jones (2000) and Skelton (2000) focus on the way that children and young people spend their free time; Christensen et al (2000) and Beazley (2000) address children's connections and belonging to home and family and Fielding (2000) explores children's experiences of school. Holloway and Valentine (2000) argue that geography has contributed to an understanding of children and young people through a focus on place, space and spatial discourses.

Other scholars have concentrated on different areas: Valentine (2003) focuses on transition discussing the difficulty of defining where childhood, youth and adulthood begin and end. Valentine discusses a range of different life events that can signify this change such as leaving school, entering the labour market and leaving home. For the purposes of my research, many of the young people I spoke to were in the process of some or all of these transitions.

Horton and Kraftl (2006 a&b) address emotion and embodiment arguing that a focus on these areas within research can help us to understand less articulated aspects of the lives of children. Horton and Kraftl (2006a) argue that a focus on the everyday and the banal within research is often overlooked and Horton and Kraftl (2006b) address four areas of their own experiences of childhood in order to attempt to address what is important to children and young people in their research.

Children's geographers have also concentrated on relationships between adults and young people, for example Skelton (2000), Tucker (2003) and

Nayak (2003) (see section 2.4 Intergenerational geographies and geographies of age). Work in Children's Geographies that is of specific relevance to my project (particularly in relation to their intergenerational relationships and their wider relationships with community) is the way that children and young people's use of space is seen as problematic. Skelton (2009) acknowledges the wide range of work that the sub-discipline of Children's Geographies now addresses. Skelton goes on to look at children's mobilities and migration and the way that their use of space is contested both by adults with conflicts over the street (see below) but also by other children with conflicts over play space.

Valentine (1996) discusses the notion of 'the child' as an angel/devil figure arguing that while this binary exists within historical texts, it is still significant to a modern setting (see also Jenks, 2005). For Holloway and Valentine (2000) the child is either seen as an innocent that needs to be protected or as a threat, which creates fear and anxiety. Key to this are media representations of children and moral panics surrounding either threats to children in the form of abduction, abuse, accidents, etc. or threats from children such as anti-social behaviour, gang violence, etc. Valentine (2003) argues that underlying parental anxieties over 'dangerous children' is an assumption that the street belongs to adults (p.582).

In order to discuss different spaces used by children and young people, Matthews et al (2000a) use the term 'the street' which they define as

> 'a metaphor for all public outdoor places in which children are found, such as roads, cul-de-sacs, alleyways, walkways, shopping areas, car parks, vacant plots and derelict sites'(p.63)

They suggest that the street is a significant space because it is used differently by children and adults and is a place where young people can assert their independence and identity. This assertion does not always take the form of resistance (as Hebdige, 1979, see above, would argue) but instead, spending time with peer groups on the street is a credible pursuit. They further this with

the claim that for many young people there is no access to 'backstage space' (p.71) in the same way that there is for adults. The street is the only place where they are able to socialise with others. Many of the children in Matthews et al's study suggested that socialising in big groups on the street afforded them feelings of safety. This is perhaps why many young people choose to use the street rather than the out of the way community spaces I have discussed above that have been designed for them. Matthews et al, go on to discuss the street as a ''thirdspace', where young people can gather to affirm their sense of difference and celebrate their feelings of belonging' (p.64). But this space has to be won from adults and is always in danger of being once again lost to adult culture.

Children's Geographies has also been critiqued by a number of scholars. Hopkins and Pain (2007) argue that a focus away from viewing age as fixed and discrete means that space and place become more significant. As in the (above) examples, experiences differ according to different places, at different times for different ages. But they go on to suggest that this has led to a focus on the fringes of age, with research concentrating on the very old or the very young. Therefore, they call for a reconceptualization of age. Vanderbeck (2008) also critiques children's geographies claiming that there is a lack of debate over key issues and an ambiguity of claims. Horton and Kraftl (2006a) argue for more engagement with theory within children's geographies. And Horton and Kraftl (2005) argue that more considerations should be paid to the role of children and young people within policy and that what is considered to be 'useful' within research should not be defined in advance.

While much of children's geographies focuses specifically on the experiences of children, many of the issues explored are equally applicable to the experiences of young people. Of particular relevance to my project are tensions over young people's use of space and the way this impacts on their relationships with others. In the next section, I examine literatures around young people's relationships outside of their immediate age group.

2.4 Intergenerational geographies and geographies of age

Hopkins and Pain (2007) suggest that

> "The study of age in geography is also undergoing striking change,
> with a recent explosion of interest in children and young people
> following a far more limited interest in the very old." (p.287).

However, they go on to suggest that there is a danger of fetishizing these age groups by focusing on the fringes of age. As with many other scholars of youth (see above) they suggest that age is 'socially constructed' (p.287) and as a result of this there is an emphasis on time and place because what different age stages mean varies across different places and different times. Instead, they suggest that we should begin to think about geography in relational terms meaning that we conceptualise "age as being produced in the interactions between different people" (p.288).

Hopkins and Pain go on to explore three different ways in which geographers have thought about age; intergenerationality, intersectionality and lifecourse. Thinking intergenerationally, they claim, relies on thinking about the similarities and differences between people of the same and different age groups and that these similarities and differences will vary according to the different age groups.

Hopkins and Pain suggest that an intergenerational approach to age means that identity is shaped through age and

> "It also suggests that identities of children and others are produced
> through interactions with other age/generational groups and are in
> a constant state of flux. Therefore, children and childhood interact
> with others in family and community settings and so are more than
> children alone; studying them in context adds new layers to our
> understanding." (p.289).

Hopkins and Pain argue that work in Geography has raised, but not fully explored, the issue of intergenerational conflicts. They also make links to work on community suggesting that the intergenerational aspect of community tensions is often ignored but this is often a key aspect of community tensions with either young people's use of space viewed by adults as problematic or tensions over young people being included in notions of community. Further to this, more 'positive' intergenerational relationships are also often excluded from research. Aside from work between family members, there is little focus on young people's casual or fleeting relationships with older people and also, little focus on intergenerational friendships, particularly within communities.

In a government report on intergenerational relations and practice in sustainable communities, Pain (2005) argues

> "While intergenerationality is an established theme across the social sciences, relatively little research has focused at the community/neighbourhood/public space level." (p.9)

Qvortrup (2000) addresses the role that generations can play in understanding the lives of children and young people, arguing that a focus on generations within research on children and young people can be compared to the role that class, gender and ethnicity play in research in other areas of society. Mayall (2000) argues that generation is a key factor in understanding childhood and the lives of children. She suggests that home, school and public spaces are all areas in which work on generations is important in understanding children and young people's relationships with those around them.

Childhood scholars such as Mayall (2002) and Tucker (2003) have drawn on Mannheim (1952) in addressing generations. Tucker argues that work on generations can help to understand children and young people in the same way that gender helped develop an understanding of issues relating to women. She suggests that generation is a useful concept because it encourages us to think

about how childhood and adulthood relate to each other, particularly how childhood is constructed in relation to adulthood but helps us to think about the commonalities between members of a group who consider themselves to be a generation.

Tucker (2003) suggests that

> "The concept of generation is widely used in the everyday world to help make sense of differences and similarities between age groupings in society and to locate individuals within historical time." (p. 112)

and that clearer focus on generation helps to develop our understanding of the way in which "childhood is defined in contradistinction to adulthood" (p.112). Childhood and adulthood are seen as discrete categories and as polar opposites of each other. But as I have already discussed (above) this is not the case with young people moving in and out of both childhood and adulthood at different times and according to different circumstances.

Skelton (2000) explores girls' use of public spaces focusing on a group of fourteen to sixteen year olds, an age group that falls between the adult/child binary and is 'ambiguous' (p.82) because it can defined in a number of different ways from children to teenagers to young people, all of which come with them a different set of assumptions. A focus on this binary means that we are able to move beyond simply looking at generations as relationships between adults and children and address wider implications of relationships between different age groups. Tucker (2003) argues that young people's use of space is often in conflict with both that of adults but also with that of other young people too, with young people feeling that they are unable to use certain spaces because they are used and watched over by adults but also because they are also used by other young people. Nayak (2003) explores children and young people's fear of crime and discovers, again, that there are tensions across age groups with children and young people fearful of adults who may commit crimes

against them but also of older young people who they perceive to be exhibiting anti-social behaviour or to be in gangs.

Horton and Kraftl (2008) respond to Hopkins and Pain (2007) querying

> "the precise role that the concept of intergenerationality could play in explaining social geographies." (p.284)

They argue that thinking about generations does not add anything to research into the social and, in fact, could potentially propose challenges to Children's Geographies and children's geographers.

Horton and Kraftl go on to suggest that other sorts of relations are often more important than generational relationships

> "And this is the crunch: generational differences themselves can be ascribed to much more powerful, cross-cutting differences in attitude, education, assumption, morality, experience (themselves intersecting with gender, class, ethnicity, etc.)" (p.285)

This is not to say that intergenerational relationships are always unimportant, but that they need to move beyond simply describing simple phenomena and add something more. While I agree that a focus on intergenerational relationships could potentially detract from other signifiers of difference, I also feel that in certain circumstances, a focus on generation can help to develop an understanding of some areas. Hopkins and Pain (2008) respond to Horton and Kraftl (2008) suggesting that a focus on generations can help to explore family relationships and can be potentially relevant in looking at social issues like fear and reduction of crime. For my own study, intergenerational relationships provide an extra dimension to the way in which young people perceive and experience community and to young people's friendships. In both these instances, young people are not necessarily only involved in relationships with

people of their own age but with people across age groups and this can be significant to place and time.

Horton and Kraftl (2008) go on to discuss that differences between their perception of intergeneration relationships and those of Hopkins and Pain are (possibly) down to theoretical differences in their approaches to Children's Geographies. They draw a distinction between non-representational, cultural geography and critical social geography, suggesting that these differences signify a fracture in approaches to Children's Geographies.

Pain (2005) focuses specifically on the relationship between under 25 and over 60 year olds but stresses that intergenerational initiatives do not necessarily have to focus on this age group. Pain goes on make the link between intergenerational relationships and the way that young people are perceived and represented in the wider world, suggesting that intergenerational relationships

> "are forged through social and bodily practices and interactions, in relation and sometimes in opposition to each other. So for example, the antagonism between older and young people in some communities - and the ways this is talked about and represented - actively constructs wider social perceptions about what older people and young people are like (good citizens/trouble-makers, timid/aggressive, and so on)." (p.10-11)

Pain suggests that initiatives that bring together younger and older people differ from participation and consultations because they are things that are organized within the community rather than by outside decision makers. But consultations and participations are not always organized by outside agencies, sometimes they are organized within the community by particular members.

But Pain concludes that practice surrounding intergenerational relationships has a key part to play in the success of sustainable communities. Therefore, my

research explores the extent to which the intergenerational relationships of young people are a part of their understandings and experiences of community. While my research does consider more formalised intergenerational relationships such as young people being asked to participate or volunteer, I also consider less formalised relationships such as intergenerational friendships.

2.5 Community

My research was conducted in a settlement that is part of the *Sustainable Communities* Plan and aim 2 focuses on young people's relationships with the notion of community, therefore, this section explores literature around community focusing on how scholars have defined community, research undertaken on young people and community, sustainable communities and community space and young people's role in the use of it. I begin by addressing some of the different ways community has been defined.

2.5.1 Definitions of 'community'

Community is a much used but complex term; it is widely used in policy and media and in my case study area, community was a key foundational principle on which the new settlement was built. Community is also something that has been studied in a variety of different fields and contexts. Here, I focus principally on definitions from within disciplinary human geography. Often, as will become clear, these individual notions of community differ and are some times contradictory.

Silk (1999) discusses different characteristics of community.

> "'Community' suggests any or all of the following: common needs and goals, a sense of the common good, shared lives, culture and views of the world, and collective action. None of these is possible

without interaction and communication between community members." (p.8)

These characteristics highlight the difficulty in defining the term and resonated with my research because they are suitably broad to encompass a number of different understandings of community. My chosen fieldwork site comes with a significant history of community and people I spoke to often used the term. I often felt that while there were overlaps with what individuals understood to be community, there were also clear differences and tensions in what they thought community did and should mean. Our day-to-day interactions involve membership and affiliation to any number of different communities but this may take a variety of forms. For example, does living within a geographical community mean the same thing as being part of an online community? In some instances this may be the case, for example if the online community is about living in the geographical community but this may not always be the case.

In two interconnected papers, Liepins (2000a&b) aims to

"create a better understanding of the notion of 'community' that embraces recognition of meanings, heterogeneity, spatial forms, dynamism and the relations associated with uneven expressions of power" (Liepins, 2000a, p.29).

She aims to develop this further attempting to create a detailed understanding of community. Drawing on Harper (1989) she outlines and critiques four different approaches to the study of community. She argues that early studies structuralist/functionalist approaches saw community as separate and stable entities (Tonnies, 1955). The second approach, she argues, used ethnography in order to try to represent the experiences of people living in rural places (Murdoch and Marsden 1995). The third approach saw community as a key part of sustainability (Troughton 1996; McMichael 1996) and the fourth approach looks at the meanings surrounding community (Wright, 1992).

Liepins feels that while each of these approaches has some value, they focus on specific aspects and therefore do not fully help us to develop an understanding of what it actually means to be part of a community.

Valentine (2004) addresses the problematic nature of the term community

> "The notion of 'community' has a long and contested history with geography and urban sociology. In particular, in terms of theorising the decline of neighbourhood community; questioning the extent to which the term has analytical value because it means so many different things to so many different people; and in terms of critiquing it as an exclusionary concept" (pp8-9)

However, Valentine goes on to acknowledge that community does have meaning to people in their everyday lives. She draws on Anderson (1983) and Rose (1990) using community as a term that is neither fixed, stable nor measurable. This has wider implications for my research. While there is much policy and academic debate over what the term means, there is also individual debate about what community does and should mean and who is involved or excluded from this.

The notion of community also brings with it certain assumptions, often that it is positive and therefore something to be aimed for. Young (1990) discusses the way that 'the ideal' of community suggests something positive that people should aim to be active members of. But Young goes on to argue that this ideal 'often operates to exclude or oppress those experienced as different' (p.234) because those enacting this ideal work to ignore and suppress difference and instead focus on and actively seek out those who are the same. Therefore, those who are different are excluded from these created notions of community. Cresswell (1996) argues that 'space and place are used to structure a normative landscape' (p.8), where certain behaviours are deemed to be appropriate in particular spaces whereas others are not.

Building on these notions of community oppressing difference, Staeheli (2008) gives a number of examples of community initiatives (including one initiative attempting to reduce vandalism and another to create a community garden), which worked to exclude or to exert pressure on other members of that community. She argues that community is problematic because it is often defined in policy as the way through which individuals can become active citizens. Staeheli concludes that 'Citizenship is constructed in and through the contradictions of community' (p.18) and as a result of this the two will always be in tension. And Smith (1999) argues that the term community is intertwined with morality suggesting that there are two strands to this 'that community is good in itself; and that it speaks with moral authority' (p.20)

Liepins (2000b) suggests that the notion of community needs to be reconceptualised in order to account for difference and diversity. She argues that, within rural studies, there have been two broad schools of thought one which sees community as 'a discrete, relatively stable and homogenous object' (p.326) and the other that sees community as complex and changing. She argues for a conceptualisation of community that takes into account this complexity suggesting that there are four key aspects to the notion of community. The first is that community is a social construct, made by the people living there but also by people beyond this such as governments and policy makers. Secondly, community members develop shared understandings of community based on 'local discourses and activities' (p.327). Thirdly, community is produced through a variety of practices. Fourthly, Liepins argues that spaces and structures are key to the production and development of community. Highlighting each of these with examples from a study conducted in three case study sites in rural New Zealand, Liepins contends that the interplay of these four areas is important to an understanding of community and outlines the way these four areas interact with each other in order to form individual notions and understandings of community.

Liepins concludes that community space is contested because different community members place value onto different aspects of and have different

understandings of community. She highlights this with examples from her fieldwork and points to the way that community space allows people to come together, for specific events and experience a temporary notion of community. But she also suggests that community spaces are problematic because they are used differently by different people and at different times. Once again, this is particularly relevant to young people's use of community spaces. If young people are designed out of the spaces that are supposed to be used by all community members, there will always be a tension between what they want to do with the space and what adult community members think they should do with the space. In my fieldwork site there are a variety of different clubs, groups and organisations in which young people can get involved but many of these seem to be directed at a wider age group or at a specific age group that excludes them (for example the drama club currently has members ranging from 5-60 whereas youth group ends at age 13).

Panelli and Welch (2005) ask why community is of continual interest to social researchers especially given the difficulty in providing a clear definition. They suggest four themes that are key to developing an understanding of community; context, people, meaning, and practices and spaces. Therefore community cannot be completely understood without reference to socio-historical background, different people within the community, the way that meaning is created by these people with this background and the way that practices and spaces work to reinforce this. They argue that community should be understood through the interplay of social processes, material conditions and symbolic meanings.

The application of this interplay is significant to my fieldwork site. Being a relatively new development, it comes with a significant history in that the land on which it is built was initially sold to developers with the provision that community was built there and this included a number of buildings and facilities. The promotional material for the development invited people to build their own community and from informal discussions with residents I have discovered that the first people to move in established a residents' association

and began to develop community activities and events but found it very difficult to get the planners to agree to building a community centre and recreation grounds. In this sense, spaces and structures of the community have been influenced by the social construction of local discourses and this arguably leads to different processes and practices being played out there.

2.5.1.1 Young people and community

Panelli et al (2002) investigate the way that young people experience the notion of community. They define community

> "as a term denoting a social collective as well as space and institution…with (corpo)real and imagined character that people (usually adults) construct when describing where they live." (p.108)

They examine the relationship between youth, community and exclusion concluding that this relationship is a complex one. Young people at times feel alienated from the experience of community and therefore they also create their own versions of community. Panelli et al draw on Valentine (1996) and argue that 'youth are not passive in accepting their positions within a community' (p.124).

Matthews and Limb (1999) argue that 'most places are designed to reflect only adult values and usages' (p.65) Further to this, it is difficult for young people to become active members of their communities if they are designed out of the spaces they use. Therefore, Silk's definition of shared living and common goals is, perhaps, at odds with the day-to-day community experiences of people of all ages. See also Skelton (2000) (discussed in section 2.4 Intergenerational geographies and geographies of age).

Dwyer (1999) provides a clear illustration of how the notion of community can be understood and experienced in a variety of different ways by young people. She looks at understandings of community among a group of Muslim girls in a

small town in Britain arguing that there are 'no natural or self evident communities' (p.64). She discovered that the term 'community' was used in a number of different (and sometimes contradictory) ways to refer to different experiences the girls had. For example, community was viewed by these girls as a site of safety and security from wider issues of racism but, within the same community, they felt they were subject to surveillance from adults who knew their parents (see also Dwyer, 1997 for discussion on Muslim girls and culture and Dwyer et al, 2008 on young Muslim men, community and representations). Community was both something they were part of and something they were excluded from or chose not to participate within different contexts. In this sense, belonging to a community is incredibly complex. Members of a community may choose to participate or opt out or may be excluded completely.

Back and Keith (2004) discuss the impact of local government initiatives into improving community safety, arguing that through these, young people become the personification of society's fears (see also Aitken 2001; Valentine 2003). They argue that there have been some major changes in the way that institutions responsible for the socialisation of young people are run. Many of these changes are occurring at the level of local government and therefore are different in different areas of the country. Initiatives like these have an impact on the way that young people are perceived and represented. Back and Keith go on to suggest that community is critical to the relationship between the state and society so, if young people are written out or even demonised within the conceptualisation of community then community isn't something that includes all.

Gaskell (2008) argues that New Labour's Respect Agenda is "based upon a specific conceptualisation of childhood and youth as potentially dangerous and in need of (state) control" (p.224) and goes on to suggest that this has implications for the way young people are perceived and for the way they live their lives. Cobb (2007) also looks at New Labour's approach to perceived anti-social behaviour, exploring this from a Foucauldian angle.

Assumptions around the ideal of community also impact on perceptions around young people's participation in initiatives surrounding community. Kraftl and Horton (2007) discuss the increase in popularity of participation with children and young people amongst local authorities in the UK. They suggest a number of arguments for this; firstly the view that young people should be 'morally' (p.1014) entitled to have a say in decisions affecting them; secondly, that participation is seen as being a key part of democracy; thirdly, that it helps young people to become active community members; and finally, that it is practical to involve young people in decision making processes about what they want to see in their local communities. In my case study site, community was a much talked about notion and I explore the differences and discrepancies between adult notions of community and those of young people.

2.5.2 Young people, consultation and participation

Young people's notions, involvement and engagement in community are closely tied to notions of consultation and participation. My case study site was keen for residents to be involved in the decision making process but their attempts to engage young people were often unsuccessful. Hill (2006) discusses some of the issues surrounding young people being asked to participate in matters that affect them addressing the fine line between issues of consultation and participation and those relating to research ethics. She suggests that problems such as involving young people as individual versus a group setting need to be considered. Hill goes on to argue that consultation events, although extremely popular are also costly and are often ineffective. Therefore, although decision makers want to demonstrate that they are engaging children and young people, most of the time the ideas of children and young people are not taken into consideration.

Faulkner (2009) points to the way that, often, young people who are invited to participate and to give their opinion are not representative, there are few young people from perceived 'at risk' groups. It is arguably even more important that these young peoples' voices are heard so issues of why these

young people are not involved need to be addressed. Further to this, Faulkner demonstrates the way in which young people who are asked to participate are expected to speak for *all* young people, in this example, in their geographical area. Faulkner also notes that adults in these participation meetings didn't moderate or explain the terms and jargon that they used. Young people were expected to understand what they were saying and to respond accordingly, formalising their language to fit the needs of the group asking for their opinions. However, when these young people spoke in language that was seen as being too adult, they were laughed at or ridiculed.

Tholander (2007) makes the point that while young people being asked to participate in the decision making process is viewed as being democratic, this is only the case if young people themselves actually want to take part. Tholander gives the example of young people taking part in decision making at school where one young person was given a role they did not want to take on, arguing

> "the supposedly democratic order was thus deconstructed as something undesirable. All in all, this shows how difficult it is to create a democratic order in which everyone is satisfied. Hence, democracy should not be seen as a fixed state, which in a simple way may be said to exist or not exist, but as an ongoing interactive process." (p.464)

The process of consultation or participation is only a democratic one if young people actually want to take part and it is difficult to suggest that it is a democratic process if the input of young people is rarely implemented.

Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) argue that participatory methods with children and young people, particularly those that are policy related, are actually about regulation. They go on to suggest that while this does not necessarily have to be viewed as 'sinister' (p.504) it still views the lives of children and young people through an adult lens. Further to this, Percy-Smith and Malone (2001)

argue that while children and young people are encouraged to participate in the adult decision making process, they are often actively engaged in participation outside of these adult worlds. They highlight the challenge of participation

> "to incorporate the cultural practices and expertise of children into decision making and management of local places within the context of their everyday lives, to ensure that children feel a sense of ownership, belonging and inclusion within their communities." (p.1)

Percy-Smith and Malone (2001) go on to suggest that for young people to fully participate, they need to be able to challenge and change existing adult structures. Drawing a distinction between inclusion and integration; inclusion being a way in which young people can change existing systems in order to participate, integration being the way young people are expected to get involved in pre-existing systems, they suggest that inclusion is the preferable way through which this should be done.

Young people are often asked to participate in the design or on-going development of new communities. As I will discuss in chapter 4, this was the case at my fieldwork site. And this process is often bound up in notions of community. If young people refuse or are reluctant to take part they are considered to be disengaged from this process but at the same time, in real terms, they are offered little say and little opportunity to change existing plans for development. Instead, planners, developers and decision makers often consult young people because this is seen as the right thing to do. Yet new communities, like Romsworth, are in a unique position to consult with and take up the ideas of young people and therefore avoid some of the tensions existing in other developments.

2.5.3 Sustainable communities: the policy context

Development at Romsworth has been on-going for the last ten years and Romsworth in its infancy was subsumed into the *Sustainable Communities Plan*. The 2003 *Sustainable Communities Plan* was an initiative started by the UK Labour government and aimed to tackle housing shortages *and* housing abandonment in the UK alongside aiming to improve public and outdoor spaces and improve the experience of living in communities (Raco, 2007). The plan focused on four key growth areas; Thames Gateway, London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor, Ashford, and Milton Keynes-South Midlands.

Different initiatives and aims were attached to each of the different growth areas, because of the limits of space available here I will concentrate on an overview of the Milton Keynes-South Midlands (MKSM) growth area because it is here that my fieldwork site is situated. Development here focused on economic growth and the building of affordable housing and also aimed to improve skill levels and regenerate abandoned areas. The plan predicted that the potential for growth by 2031 was for up to 300,000 new jobs to be created and 370,000 homes to be built or redeveloped.

Raco (2009) claims that the Sustainable Communities Plan

> "outlined one of the most significant spatial development visions in England since the New Town programmes of the 1940s." (p.154)

Raco (2007) examines the Sustainable Communities Plan against the wider background of sustainable communities policy in the UK, suggesting that this particular plan differs from previous initiatives because of its focus on "the relationship between employment, labour-market building and (sustainable) spatial communities." (p.167). (See also Lees, 2003)

> "The Deputy Prime Minister launched the Sustainable Communities Plan (Sustainable Communities: Building for the future) on 5

February 2003. The Plan sets out a long-term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. It aims to tackle housing supply issues in the South East, low demand in other parts of the country, and the quality of our public spaces.

The Plan includes not just a significant increase in resources and major reforms of housing and planning, but a new approach to how we build and what we build.

The programme of action aims to focus the attention and co-ordinate the efforts of all levels of Government and stakeholders in bringing about development that meets the economic, social and environmental needs of future generations as well as succeeding now."

(Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future, 2003)

However, since this plan was devised, the UK has experienced a period of economic instability and recession. Raco (2009) goes on to discuss the way in which this economic downturn in the UK has led to a slowdown in the development of many of the new developments of the Sustainable Communities Plan. Raco suggests that

"English spatial policy is now represented by a growth agenda without growth. In policy discourses London and the South East have rapidly gone from being opportunity spaces to problem places, in need of new forms of state intervention in order to sustain their reproduction and future development." (p.154)

Therefore, many of the developments of the Sustainable Communities Plan have become problematic because they are incomplete, in some cases obviously so with partially built facilities abandoned mid-way through. Unlike many of these developments, development on Romsworth was almost completed by the time the economic downturn hit. Therefore, although arguably the final stages of the development were slowed, the development

was completed to plan. A strong resident's association also meant that pressure was permanently put on developers and the local council to provide and complete promised services and facilities.

Raco (2009) discusses the way in which assumptions about 'community' pervade government policy. He looks at the government's Sustainable Communities Plan which does not just attempt to build more houses but instead to develop communities. Underlying this is, once again, the assumption that community is a good thing and something to aim for (Young, 1990). This raises questions about how community can actually be built. In many older places that are described as communities, community is something that has grown organically rather than being forced. Further to this, how does this building of community impact on those who either choose to abstain or are not accepted into the community?

Bennett (2005) compares the Sustainable Communities Plan to the post Second World War New Towns Programme suggesting where the former could learn lessons from the latter in terms of planning and design. Bennett comments on the way that both of these initiatives put community at the centre of what they are trying to achieve. Bennett acknowledges that policy makers are not always clear on what they mean by community but suggests that lessons to be learnt from the past include "The need for a vision for the new communities in the Growth Areas" (p.9)

This focus of the Sustainable Communities Plan on factors such as employment and housing does not address the way that young people will interact with living in these places. Another of the key targets that the Sustainable Communities Plan set out to achieve was to build provision for children and young people into new developments and this research has looked at how far this has been taken into consideration in the planning and design of new spaces. In order to be 'active' community members, young people need to be considered in the planning and design of new spaces. The focus in my research on 16-25 year olds is because, while there may be provision for younger

children built into new space (pocket parks, playing fields, etc.) many older children and young people are still left with little to do and few spaces that they can use as their own. Further to this, there is a wider issue here, with children and young people rarely mentioned in policy documents (e.g. ODPM, 2003 – the *Sustainable Communities Plan*).

2.3.4 Community/public/civic/open space?

My project aimed to explore young people's relationships with community and in order to do this it was important to look at the ways in which young people used spaces that were not private, in other words, did not belong to individuals or businesses in the area. These spaces are, at least in theory, open for anybody to use (see Cresswell, 1996 on perceived rights and wrongs in the use of spaces). Woolley (2006) discusses the difficulties of terminology pointing to different understandings of the term public space. She uses 'public *open* space' (p.47) in discussing the outdoor spaces where young people play.

My fieldwork site was designed and built as a community (see 3.2 Fieldwork Site) and I considered using the term community space. However, Watson (2006) addresses funding for community facilities but uses the term public space in arguing that young people who have access to well resourced areas perform better academically than those from less well resourced areas. While the relationship between academic performance and space is likely to be more complex, this is still something that planners, policy and decision makers need to consider when planning and designing new spaces. This is also significant with reference to Matthews and Limb's (1999) assertion that community spaces are designed mainly for adult use.

Further to this there are some key differences between the terms 'community' and 'public' spaces. There are some important assumptions surrounding the notion of community space. Public space suggests an area that is open to everybody, for example a public park, a street etc. *The Sustainable Communities Plan* makes reference to 'public spaces' seemingly as outdoor spaces that are

not 'green' spaces. But something else is being suggested in the notion of community space. In other words, it is a space that is designed for a group of people living in a particular area. More than this, it is an area where people can come together and experience something of the shared living that Silk (1999) uses in his definition of community, or an area that facilitates community members coming together for specific events as in the community spaces that Liepins (2000a & b) looks at.

Mitchell (1995) discusses tensions over public spaces, highlighting this with two opposing views over a public park. The park was used by homeless people and activists and, he argues, that they saw this space as promoting

> "a vision of a space marked by free interaction and the absence of coercion by powerful institution" (p.115).

But there was a drive by officials and planners to take over this space and they saw it as a place

> "for recreation and entertainment subject to usage by an appropriate public that is allowed in" (p.115)

Mitchell goes on to trace the development of public space arguing that it is important because it allows people to be seen and to be represented. However, he also points out that historically, public space has always marginalized and excluded certain groups and included others. In this sense, spaces like the park can be compared to the way community can be inclusive but can also work to exclude and marginalize. See also Cresswell (1996) who discusses the way that certain behaviours are deemed acceptable or unacceptable in certain spaces. Mitchell (1995) and Cresswell (1996) both highlight their arguments with examples of homeless people, with Mitchell arguing that the homeless are always visible and therefore seen as problematic. This notion of visibility is also why children and young people are often problematized in their use of public, community and outdoor spaces.

As discussed (2.3 Children's geographies) the notion of children's use of space as contested is also raised by a number of other children's geographers. Matthews and Limb (1999), Matthews et al (2000a) and Karsten (2003) all discuss the idea of outdoor space as belonging to or being designed for adult use. Arguably, children use these sorts of spaces in different ways to adults so their use of the space will always be contested or viewed as problematic. My project focuses on young people's experiences of living in a new development, specifically their engagement and experiences of community and part of this is their engagement with the spaces around them and the way they are viewed by others when they are out and visible in these spaces.

After conducting fieldwork, I decided that it would be more appropriate to use a range of terms to describe these spaces, depending on the particular space I was talking about. The *Sustainable Communities Plan* also makes specific reference to 'public' rather than 'community' space and also refers to 'amenity' spaces. I would, however, still like to draw the distinction between community spaces, which suggest a place where people come together to experience community and public spaces, which suggest a space that anybody can use. The reason I feel it important to make this distinction is that I came across both of these types of space but I would argue that community spaces are not always non-private space. In the course of my research, it became clear that local businesses, such as the café, were community spaces.

2.6 Friendship

Bunnell et al (2012) argue that the notion of friendship is a neglected area within human geography and in disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. They draw on Bowlby (2011), who examines the role of friendship in caring relationships, and who defines friendship as

> "a voluntary relationship between two or more people, which can
> be severed at will by any party. Friendships can range from
> relationships that are close and emotionally intense to those that

might be described as fleeting and emotionally limited, as in someone we describe as an 'acquaintance'" (p.607).

Bowlby (2011) goes on to highlight some of the characteristics of friendship suggesting that firstly, friends tend to have the same social status, secondly that friendships are sometimes closer interpersonal relationships than relationships with kin and thirdly that friendship requires some degree of co-presence in order to be effectively maintained (although she also points to the value of virtual communications to the maintenance of friendships). Bowlby concludes by suggesting that there is a wide scope for further research on friendship, particularly with reference to the impact of virtual media and the way that different age groups use these in their friendships.

Bunnell et al (2012) also suggest ways forwards for the study of friendship. They suggest three ways in which social researchers can bring friendship into the foreground of research both in human geography and further afield; the first being through work on geographies of affect and emotion, the second through work on children and young people and the third through work on geographies of mobility. Children and young people's friendships, they suggest, are

"experienced, articulated and presumed to be an extremely important element in children and young people's lives" (Bunnell et al , 2012, p.500)

They go on to indicate that young people's friendships are linked to issues like self-esteem and life chances and that there are also fears surrounding young people's friendships around having the right sort of friends and avoiding bullying. Further to this, there is a suggestion that young people from lower income families have more difficulty maintaining friendships, part of this being due to them feeling the need to keep up with more affluent friends.

Bunnell et al also draw on Sutton (2009) who addresses differences in perception to a range of social factors in young people living on an estate and going to a comprehensive school and young people from a more privileged background going to public school. Sutton discovered that while both groups put an emphasis on friendship, those living on an estate saw this as something that was important to them and that they were more able to do than children from more affluent backgrounds. They cited reasons such as more affluent children being perceived as posh or snobby and that going to public school meant that they had to spend more time doing homework. As a result of this, children from the estate saw themselves as more likely to be able to 'make friends and to have fun' (p.288)

Bunnell et al (2012) argue

> "Sutton showed that the desire to belong to a friendship group was powerful enough to establish senses of intensely segregated, separate groups who felt they had nothing in common with each other's norms, values and customs" (p.12)

Brooks (2003) looks at the way some young people try to maintain friendships during times of transition, concentrating specifically on students making choices over which higher education establishments to attend. Brooks suggests that among the young people taking part in her study, most were aware that they were going to achieve different exam results to their friends and as a result of this would be going to different universities. Further to this, she suggests that this difference in academic ability and attainment meant that these young people didn't discuss this amongst their friendship groups.

The young people in Brooks' (2003) study saw themselves as having strong friendships groups but not necessarily friendship groups that would last forever. Brooks points to a number of reasons for the young people deciding to keep their friendship groups and not make an issue of the fact that they would all be attending different institutions in the next few years suggesting that

firstly, these young people had enough in common in other areas to make the educational differences among them of little consequence. Secondly, she suggests that friendship of all types, whether amongst young people or adults, requires some degree of negotiation and that in ignoring these differences, young people were negotiating their friendships with others who were not exactly the same as them. Finally, Brooks suggests that the most likely reason for the relationships of this particular group of young people was that they knew that these friendships were transitional and that rather than making new friends when they went to college, they decided that they would stick with the same group of people that they had been friends at school with. These young people knew that they would make different friends once they went to university and it was easier to maintain the same friendship group for the final two years before this happened.

The age group my research addressed, 16-25 year olds, is often viewed as being in a state of transition, but transition was not the only factor affecting the friendships of the young people in my study. The young people I researched were also, crucially, in a significant place both in time and space, that of living in a newly constructed settlement, only several years into development. Therefore my work brings together literatures on childhood, youth, intergenerational relationships and friendship in addressing the friendships of these young people.

2.7 Summary

My research has been informed by and has built on a wide range of literatures. Contrary to literatures on subculture and post-subcultures, I explore the ways in which young people's experiences of friendship and relationships with others are based more often in the banal and the everyday (Horton and Kraftl, 2006 a&b) rather than in the spectacular (Hebdige, 1979).

While work in children's geographies focuses specifically on children, many of the issues raised are also pertinent to my study and of particular relevance is

the way that young people's use of space is contested (Matthews et al 2000a; Skelton 2009), in a variety of different ways, by adults. For the young people living in my case study site, this contestation was also closely tied to notions of community. However, while I address the way that community tensions between young people and adult residents do exist, there are other important and much more positive relationships outside of these tensions.

Current research on intergenerational relationship and geographies of age, while covering a wide range of different areas, tends to overlook friendships between adults and young people. Hopkins and Pain (2007) argue that research into children and young people should focus more on their intergenerational relationships. Therefore in addressing young people's intergenerational friendships, this research both moves away from simply concentrating on the way that young people interact with each other and also addresses a gap in the way that relationships between young people and adults are theorised.

While a number of studies address young people's experiences of community (Matthews and Limb 1999; Dwyer 1999; Panelli et al 2002; Gaskell, 2008) few address how young people actually define community and whether community is important to them in their everyday lives. Young people's experiences of living in a new community are also largely overlooked and therefore, in exploring young people's relationships to community in a new development, this research addresses a gap in both policy and academic literature.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, thus far, studies of young people both from geography and beyond have tended to overlook the importance of young people's friendships (Bunnell et al, 2012). Therefore, my study begins to build on the little work that currently exists (Sutton 2009; Brookes 2003) in exploring and examining young people's friendships with specific reference to the context of a newly constructed settlement.

Over the course of the analysis chapters (chapters 4, 5 and 6), I explore how my findings fit with, build on and challenge existing research on young people, community, intergenerational relationships and friendship.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the methodology used within this project, evaluating methods, recruitment of participants, data collection, and the process of transcription and analysis. Throughout this chapter, I also address the ethical issues that were raised and overcome at each stage of the fieldwork process.

The project aimed:

1. To explore the intergenerational relationships of young people aged fifteen to twenty-six in a new settlement
2. To explore young people's relationships with community in a new settlement
3. To explore young people's friendship networks in a new settlement

In addressing these aims, I used in-depth interviews and ethnography to collect data. I began fieldwork in the summer of 2010 and completed my final interview in December 2011. Over the course of approximately sixteen months, I completed up to three interviews with a total of eighteen young people who were aged between sixteen and twenty-five. In addition to this, a selection of these participants took part in three guided walks. I also interviewed eight adults who lived and/or worked in the area. Interviews with young people ranged from being 30 minutes long to almost two hours and guided walks were in excess of an hour. Therefore, over the course of the interview process I spent a significant amount of time with young people and got to know them well. Interviews with adults also tended to be an hour or longer so by the end of the interview process I had a wide variety of detailed interview data.

In addition to the above methods, during the sixteen months of fieldwork, I spent approximately two days per week in Romsworth undertaking

ethnographic observations. Time there was initially spent attending key community events, which took place throughout the course of the year. At these events I talked to as many people as possible, introduced my project to potential research participants and generally spent time 'being there' (Geertz, 1988) getting a feel for the place and making my face known.

The next stage of data collection involved spending time in the settlement. Using contacts I had gained from attending events, I went along to a number of clubs and groups. I spent time in local businesses and community spaces such as the café and the community centre, where I talked to people and observed interactions. I also approached potential participant young people as and when I saw them and, if they agreed to take part, I arranged interviews in accordance with their availability.

Once interviews with young people were underway, I began interviews with a number of adults who were living and/or working in the community, Table 1 provides an indication of the different fieldwork stages.

Summer 2010	Preliminary observation visits to events
September 2010	Preliminary observations and recruitment attempts
October 2010	Preliminary observations and recruitment attempts
November 2010	Visit to bonfire night and recruitment of initial participants
December 2010	Observations Initial interviews with young people
January 2011	Observations Interviews with adults Continuation of interviews with young people

February 2011	Observations
	Initial and second interviews with young people
	Continuation of adult interviews
March 2011	Observations
	Initial and second interviews with young people
	Continuation of adult interviews
April 2011	Observations
	Interviews with young people
	Adult interviews
May 2011	Observations
	Interviews with young people
	Adult interviews
June 2011	Observations
	Interviews and guided walks with young people
July 2011	Observations
	Visit to the fun day and recruitment of final participants
	Interviews with young people
August 2011	Interviews with young people
September 2011	Interviews with young people
October 2011	Interviews with young people
November 2011	Visit to the bonfire night and recruitment of final participants
	Interviews with young people
December 2011	Interviews with young people

Table 1 Approximate timetable for fieldwork

3.1.1 Relationship to wider project

My PhD is a project-linked studentship with the research project, New Urbanisms, New Citizens (NUNC), taking place between Leicester, Warwick and Northampton universities. The project looked at the lives of children and young people in four developments in Northamptonshire, investigating the impact of the 1997-2010 Labour government's 2001 *Sustainable Communities Plan* on children and young people. My research focused on one of these developments, Romsworth Village. I made the decision to focus on one settlement, specifically Romsworth, after considering a number of other new developments both in and outside of the Northamptonshire area. I also considered some older, more established communities that were not part of this specific plan but were part of a wider history of planned communities in Britain. The main reason for eventually choosing Romsworth as a fieldwork site was that it comes with a significant history (see section Site for more information) in that the land that was originally sold to developers was sold with the provision that community would be built there. This notion of developing and building community is important to many of the adults living there and as I aimed to explore young people's relationships with community, it made sense to choose a site with a significant relationship to community.

My project was distinct from the *New Urbanisms, New Citizens* project,

> "The overall aim of the *New Urbanisms, New Citizens* project is to investigate the relationship between sustainable community regeneration, children's experience and mobility in new urban environments, and their participation and citizenship in planning and design. The significant societal question underlying the project is: if children and young people participate as citizens in the development of their communities will this contribute to achieving sustainable 'livable' communities for all? The proposed project will contribute to answering this question through its five aims:
> a) to provide theoretically informed and empirically rich

understanding and analysis of children's lived experiences in new sustainable urban environments.

b) to investigate children and young people's use of public and private space through the study of their mobility patterns.

c) to explore children's sense of belonging to their community and the implications of this for their participation and citizenship.

d) to inform the planning and design of sustainable communities for all with children and young people's needs, participation and citizenship in mind.

e) to develop systematic mixed methods designs for the study of children, sustainability and mobility including ethical standards for the use of mobile and GPS technologies in participatory work with children."

(*New Urbanisms, New Citizens* project aims)

In the first instance, in terms of the target age groups for both projects; children (aged 9-16) for the NUNC project and sixteen to twenty-five year olds for my project. The aims of the two projects are also very different, the only exception being the crossover of exploring experiences of new communities (aim two in my project, aim c in the NUNC project). Even here, however, there are differences; my project aims to explore the various ways that young people experience community specifically in relation to Romsworth as a new development, whereas the NUNC project explores young people's engagement with community and how this impacts on their citizenship.

3.2 Fieldwork Site

Romsworth is a new settlement in Northamptonshire, part of the 1997-2010 labour government's 2003 *Sustainable Communities Plan* (section 2.5.3 Sustainable communities: the policy context). Romsworth is now in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands growth area but development originally began there in 2001. *The Sustainable Communities Plan*, eventually *The Sustainable Communities Act* (2007) was "a series of large-scale housing policies" (Kraftl, et

al, 2013, p.191) aimed at solving housing shortages, addressing abandoned housing and which Kraftl, et al argue aimed to "reinvigorate urban places and enhance their economic competitiveness" (p.191). *The Plan* aimed to solve a variety of social and economic issues in four key growth areas in the South East and was an attempt to create a change in planning and development "that would both enhance economic development and promote new forms of sustainability" (Raco, 2005, p.325).

As *The Plan* was not a single initiative, but instead a major change in the way the planning and development of new settlements happened. It aimed to give greater control to local people, groups and businesses over the planning and design of their communities (Raco, 2005) This, coupled with different private sector companies operating to deliver housing meant that growth areas experienced different levels of change, development and autonomy in the process of new communities being delivered. As a result of these fundamental changes in the way planning and development was carried out, as Raco (2009) argues "supply-side constraints could be loosened to enable expansion to take place" (p. 154), existing developments in the four growth areas, which were at different stages of planning, and development, were also subsumed into *the Plan,* further development in these places being guided by the overarching principles of the plan. As one of these existing developments, Romsworth became part of *the Plan.*

Further to this, Romsworth comes with a significant history and connection to notions of community in that the land on which it is built was originally sold to developers with the stipulation that 'community' was built there. The idea behind this was that the landowner, a local farmer who used the space as farmland, would only sell the land if what was developed there became more than what he saw as a standard housing estate. The majority of adults and a significant proportion of the young people I interviewed told this story of the origins of the place to me, therefore, this notion of community and more importantly, debates over what constitutes community lie at the heart of the settlement.

Romsworth Village

1. The Centre and playing field

2. The shops including the convenience store, indian take-away, café, beauty salon, hairdresser and nursery

3. The duck pond

4. The primary school

5. The medical centre, dental clinic and pharmacy

6. Entrances/exits to the settlement

★ Areas most used by young people
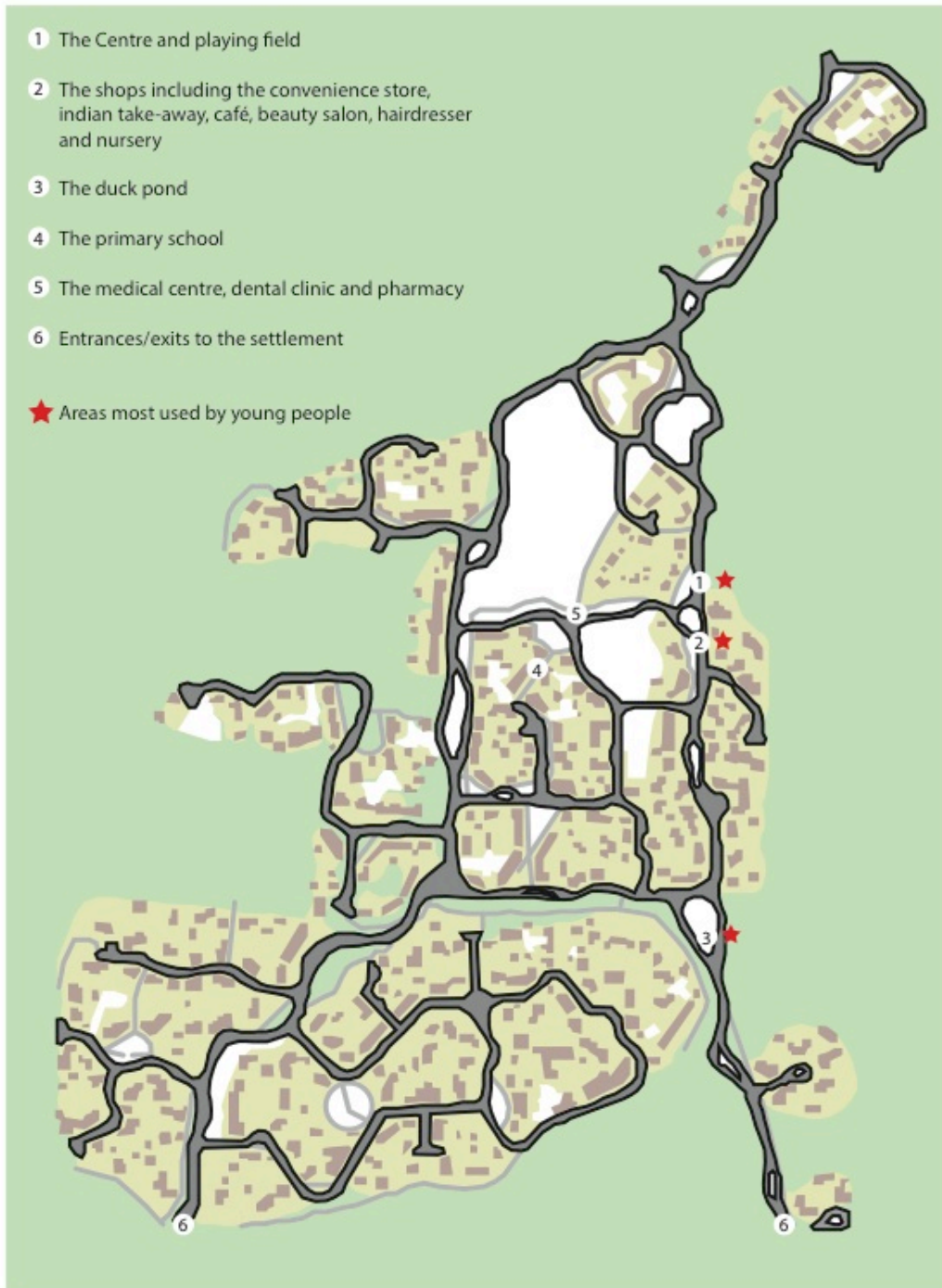
Figure 1 Map of Romsworth Village

The first developers to build in Romsworth were compelled to integrate this idea of community, but capitalised therein by using the marketing tagline 'come and create your own community'. The developers also branded the settlement as a 'village' (see Figure 2) and from informal conversations with some of the first people to buy houses in the development, this idea of 'creating community' and living in a village was a significant factor in their decision to move there.

Figure 2 Sign at the entrance to the 'village'

Interviews with village decision makers revealed that originally there were plans for a wide range of services and facilities but as the economic downturn began, in the late 2000s, a chasm of difference between what developers were obliged to provide, compared to what village decision makers wanted to see, began to grow. A key facility that was promised in the early days was a community centre, and although Romsworth now boasts a multi-purpose function room/sports hall and bar (1 on the map), this was not opened until 2007. Furthermore, this was only built as quickly as this because of pressure from the village association and the parish council. However, Romsworth fared

better than other developments in London and the South East, which Raco (2009) argues

> "have rapidly gone from being opportunity spaces to problem places, in need of new forms of state intervention in order to sustain their reproduction and future development."
> (p.154).

I witnessed this myself in looking for a fieldwork site, I visited other settlements in the area where planned development at been stalled or even halted, leaving large areas of part-buildings, undeveloped space or facilities that had been promised but never delivered.

By comparison to other developments of a similar size in the area, Romsworth is now well served for facilities. Whilst looking at other potential fieldwork sites in both the MKSM growth area and elsewhere and this development contained a far greater range of facilities than others I considered. Alongside the community centre (or the Centre as it is branded and know to local residents) there are a number of other services and facilities. The shops (2 on the map) are a key area of the settlement, shown also in figure 3. As can be see in figure 3, the buildings directly ahead and to the right of the photograph are shops and there is a car park in the middle ground. This area features a number of different shops and services including a beauty salon and hairdresser, a convenience store, and Indian-take-away and a coffee shop. The first shop, a

Figure 3 The Shops and car park by Adam

convenience store, opened in 2008 and the area has grown since then. This area was popular with young people and adults alike but while the different shops were often busy, the outside was usually quiet.

The development also features doctors and dentist surgeries and a pharmacy (5 on the map). This facility arrived in 2006, earlier than the shops and the Centre, some of the young people I talked to told me that in the early days of the development, the vending machine in the pharmacy was the only place in the settlement where they could buy sweets, crisps and drinks. In addition to this, there is also a primary school (4 on the map), which has been expanding, according to the growing number of young children living there, since it's opening in September 2004.

Several people told me these shops and services made Romsworth feel like a village, that the availability of these facilities meant a degree of self-sufficiency. As the map of Romsworth demonstrates, these facilities are all congregated in the same place, creating a hub to the settlement. Aside from the Duck Pond, a small pond located on a traffic island close one to the development's entrances, the rest of the space there is residential or cordoned off by developers in anticipation of further residential properties being built. As a result of this facilities for children and particularly for young people are limited.

Data from the 2011 Census reveals that there are now almost 1700 people living in approximately 600 households within the settlement. Of these, approximately 100 of these were young people aged between sixteen and twenty-four, roughly five per cent of this figure (this contrasts with figures of thirty per cent in the zero to fourteen age group and forty per cent of residents in the twenty-five to forty-four age group). I interviewed eighteen young people and talked informally to five more, therefore my sample accounts for roughly twenty per cent of the young people living there.

Census data, and informal discussions with residents also suggests that Romsworth is a predominantly middle class area with almost fifty-five per cent

of the working population classified as working in professional or managerial roles. There is also low unemployment in Romsworth with only one per cent of residents claiming jobseekers allowance. This is a third of the average for the surrounding area and a quarter of the national average. Romsworth residents are also predominantly white with those identifying as white British, white Irish or white other accounting for ninety-eight per cent of the population

Figure 4 Stile

In terms of location, Romsworth is surrounded by green spaces such as fields and farmland (Figure 4 and Figure 5 show views from the edge of the development and Figure 6 shows a new part of the development, the name of which seems to be influenced by the farmland that lies just beyond). Romsworth can only be reached via a national speed limit single carriageway road with no pavements and no street lighting (a road that is rather dangerous at night and in fog!) Romsworth also features a range of different housing designs, most based on different 'period' housing styles. Discussions between the NUNC project team, advisory board and the North Northamptonshire Joint

Planning Unit have revealed that opinions from local planners and politicians are split on whether Romsworth should be used as an example of how new communities should be built.

Figure 5 View from houses at the edge of the development

Figure 6 New area in development with fields and farmland beyond

Some of the first residents developed and set up the Romsworth Villagers Association (RVA), a residents association, registered as a charity, that in the early days liaised with developers in order to attempt to get certain provisions and services built. They also began to plan events and members began to set up clubs such as the youth group. The RVA organises annual bonfires, fun days, the main events encompassing the whole village that take place in Romsworth during the course of the year. The RVA charges an entrance fee to these events and any profits are then gifted to different groups and causes around the village.

In addition to this, the RVA run a sister organisation, TEECAR or The Centre At Romsworth. As discussed (above) The Centre is Romsworth's multi-purpose community building and something the RVA, alongside other residents, fought to have built. Alongside the bar and function room that is available to hire (Figure 7 shows a banner advertising the function room facilities), the Center also has a small kitchen and during the course of the fieldwork I was told that plans were underway to upgrade this as the Centre planned to start serving meals.

Figure 7 Banner advertising the function room in the Centre

The Centre features sports changing rooms and was the base for the local football and cricket teams. There were a number of clubs which took place in the multi-purpose function room throughout the day and evening from parents and tots, to ballet, scouts and guides, youth group, yoga and martial arts to name a few.

Evening events also take place in the Centre, such as a quiz night, which took place once a month and various evening events, which often featured a meal and dancing (casino evening and cruise night being some that were mentioned to me during the course of fieldwork). The local drama group staged their productions in the function room there and The Centre was instrumental in the organisation and implementation of the fun day and the bonfire, running a bar both inside and outside. In addition to this, events for one off occasions were held there, for example an all day barbecue and bar for the Royal Wedding in the spring of 2011. While Romsworth has a vicar (and a vicarage) there is currently no actual church building and no plans to build one, therefore Church of England services also take place in the Centre on a Sunday morning.

As with the RVA, TEECAR has charity status and is run in order to generate profits from the Centre, ensuring its continued running. TEECAR run the Centre bar and charge for the use of the function rooms there. Romsworth residents also pay a precept on their council tax, which goes towards the upkeep of the Centre. But this causes some tension within Romsworth with some residents feeling resentful over paying for a service that they did not use. There were also accusations of cliques through both the RVA and the Centre and several people I spoke to who worked either for the Centre or as part of the RVA and TEECAR felt that the community facilities were not as well used as they felt they could be.

3.3 Ethnography

This project was guided by an ethnographic approach. Hammersely and Atkinson (2007) define ethnography as

"the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry"

(Hammersely and Atkinson, 2007, p.3)

Taylor (2002) argues that ethnography is characterised by

"empirical work, especially observation in order to study people's lives" (p.1).

Whereas Yates (2004) suggests a number of methods that categorise ethnography including

"participant and non-participant observation…semi-structured and unstructured in-depth interviews…group discussions…collecting documentary material" (p.140).

From these definitions it is clear that ethnography is not one discrete method but that it encompasses a number of different methods in order to study social situations and interactions. These examples also point to the difficulty in defining specifically what is ethnography and what is not.

In order to achieve my aims and objectives, I used ethnography and in depth interviews to collect data. While it could be argued that in depth interviews are part of the ethnographic process, I saw these two methods as separate, viewing ethnography as a way of getting to know my fieldwork site, beginning to meet people and recruiting initial participants. In other words, ethnography acted as a way of gaining access to the fieldwork site and provided background information to the place and the people living there. I saw interviews as the

main way through which I collected data about what young people actually thought about the place they lived. I felt that the best way to understand young people's relationships with community (aim two) and other people around them (aims one and three) was to attempt to get to know these young people, the community in which they lived and some of the other people who lived there. I did this by spending time in Romsworth, attending events, clubs and groups, visiting local businesses like the café, the Centre and the shop, walking around the village, observing and talking to people and generally trying to get to know as many people as I could. I observed people and situations and held informal conversations with people I met.

Fieldwork took approximately twelve months to complete, during which time I usually spent two days per week in Romsworth and I attempted to schedule all interviews into these two (these varied between different weekdays, Saturdays and also occasionally Sundays). Between interviews, I spent time observing or talking to people living there. Conducting fieldwork over a long period of time afforded me the opportunity to get to know a number of people, with many of these happy to informally chat to me about the village, notions of community and what they liked and disliked about living there (see informal conversations – below). This gave me a good overview of people's opinions and feelings about the village and life there.

The initial stage of fieldwork was conducted by attending two key events taking place in the village; the summer fun day and the bonfire, which took place in the autumn. I went along to the first of these events before I had completed my PhD upgrade at the end of my first year of study, and the second before I had full ethical clearance to interview participants. The reason that I felt it was important to attend these events was because they were the two main events that were organised for the whole village that took place during the course of the year. They also tended to be the best-attended events and organisers believed that the majority of people living there would come along to support. Therefore, these events gave me the opportunity to meet a wider variety of people than simply spending time in the village or attending other

events would have done. This also allowed me to meet a number of people at once and therefore introduce my project to a wider variety of people. This then made later visits to the village easier because I had begun to get to know people living there.

While some time spent in Romsworth was spent doing interviews with participants I also spent much of my time there both observing community life and also taking part in community events. I spent significant time in both the cafe and the community centre. They are the only two places in the village where people are able to sit down and have a drink or a meal and they tend to be busy at certain times of the day. These were good places to meet new people and also to chat to people I had already met. I also spent time walking around the village, but I often discovered that there were very few people out and about during most of the day. The occasional person would be out walking a dog, waiting at the bus stop or popping to the shops but, in the main, the only busy time in the village was during school drop off and pick up time.

Having never 'done' ethnography before, I was unsure of the best way to go about observing and meeting people and this threw up a number of initial ethical challenges, which I address in the next section.

3.3.1 Ethical challenges in ethnography

I found it difficult to know when to tell people that I was a researcher, Hammersely and Atkinson (2007) discuss some of the ethical problems with ethnography, they argue that even when a researcher has told participants about a study, they often forget that they are being researched once a rapport between the two has been built up and that researchers "rarely tell *all* the people they are studying *everything* about the research" (p.210). Despite this, I had intended that my research would be as overt as possible but I found that it was not always appropriate to tell everybody that I was conducting research. This was, of course, much easier during conversations but I found that, much of the time, I was observing community life in a covert manner because it would

have been inappropriate to tell everyone I was observing that I was a researcher.

As a result of this, and also as a result of the specific place in which fieldwork took place, I often felt conspicuous whilst first conducting my research. Initially, I felt that I was an obvious outsider to the village and that I would be challenged on my presence there, particularly in approaching young people to take part in the study. Henry (2003) discusses the identity of the researcher, arguing that all researchers have to make decisions about how to present themselves to participants because this impacts on the outcomes of the research. While this presenting of identity was not necessarily a conscious process for me, on reflection I did tend to be enthusiastic and upbeat when approaching potential participants and at the beginning of interviews. I hoped that this would get potential participants interested in taking part in my project (see section 3.9 Positionality). Once I got to know a few people, and some young people had agreed to be interviewed, I began to feel more comfortable with being there. Despite this, throughout the data collection process there were still times when I felt less comfortable than others – for example in approaching teenage boys for the first time (Leyshon, 2002).

3.3.2 Ethnographic observations

I began fieldwork in Romsworth at the same time Dr Sophie Hadfield-Hill, a researcher for the NUNC project team, was also gathering data there. As Sophie and I were conducting fieldwork at the same time, we also attended a number of community events together. This, to some extent, made the process of making initial contacts in the village easier. As Sophie and I began to develop contacts through attending events alone and talking to different people in the village, we sometimes discovered that a particular contact would also be useful either for joint interviews or for the other person. Therefore, Sophie and I introduced each other to various people we met along the course of our individual research.

Attending community events with somebody else also made me feel less conspicuous. In the early days of fieldwork in Romsworth, I frequently felt like I obviously did not belong there. But attending community events with somebody else made me feel more relaxed, as though I appeared to other people that I was attending for fun rather than in a work based capacity. Knowing somebody who was also conducting research made me feel more credible when I was approaching potential participants.

3.3.2.1 Overt or covert observation?

The process of observing overtly or covertly is complicated. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) discuss issues around being discovered when conducting covert research focusing on the implications for the research project when this happens. McKenzie (2009) suggests overt observation is considered to be ethically preferable to covert observation, but draws on Calvey (2008) who suggests that covert research takes place more frequently than researchers admit to and largely goes unreported. McKenzie goes on to argue that

> "Any ethnographic research will contain a degree of covertness, because of the difficulties of revealing your status to all subjects at all times" (5.15)

Concluding that covert and overt research is always in a process of balance and that even in overt observation, the researcher rarely reveals everything.

I attempted to make the observations I conducted as overt as I was able to. At community events I talked to people and introduced myself as a researcher with the University of Leicester. I talked to the people I met about my project and wherever possible I asked whether anybody knew any young people who might be interested in taking part. I also spent time in the café and the Centre bar. The café owner and some of the staff behind the bar knew that I was a researcher but others in there did not necessarily know this unless I ended up talking to them directly, so in this sense some of this observation was done in a

covert manner. Covert observation, however, was done to give a context to my project and to develop another layer of understanding about the place in which my research was conducted. I have not used anybody's words, arising from covert observations, in the course of this thesis and in this sense I would describe my overall approach as semi-covert, telling people wherever appropriate that I was a researcher. This was the only way I was able to observe without approaching each individual or group of people and telling them about my research. I also used this same semi-covert observation when walking around the village or sitting in the car observing the comings and goings of people living in the village.

3.3.3 Informal conversations

Informal conversations played a larger part in the process of data collection than I had initially anticipated. Hammersley and Atkinson (2003) discuss issues that can arise as a result of informal conversations and the difficulty of starting these sorts of conversation but I found that the opposite of this was the case, that informal conversations (or 'conversations with a purpose' Burgess, 1988) became useful and informative. People were happy to chat to me, particularly at community events and also in places like the café and the Centre and when I explained that I was conducting a research project, most were keen to give me an overview of their thoughts and feelings of living in Romsworth. These informal chats were part of me discovering the importance of community to the people living there (at least the people I spoke to) with people keen to talk about this before I told them a great deal about my project.

Informal conversations with young people were also an important part of the data I gathered. Again, these conversations took place at events and in places such as the café and the Centre but some also took place on the street and on the playing field. These tended to come about as a result of young people I already knew having friends with them.

Overall, these informal conversations provided me with a background to the village, to the way people felt about living there and to the relationships people had formed with other residents. While I did not always immediately record what both adults and young people had told me, I often recalled specific conversations in relation to things that young people later told me. Therefore, in much the same way as observations, conversations also highlighted or illustrated some of the points that young people made.

3.3.4 Problems in ethnography and recording data

I was also unsure, when observing, what to record and how to go about recording it. I found that observations were more useful in retrospect when interviewees told me something that I realised I had either seen first hand or seen something to the contrary. I recorded some of what I had seen in a variety of ways, firstly by writing notes once I got home, I found this a useful way of recording how long I had spent in Romsworth and what I had taken away as being significant but was unsure what I *really* needed and how much of it I should record. As fieldwork progressed, I found it much more useful to make notes using my mobile phone, firstly by writing a note or sending texts to myself and secondly by using the Evernote mobile phone application. Evernote is a website on which users can record notes, lists, photographs, sounds, etc. (Murthy, 2008). By downloading the mobile phone app, anything recorded and saved to a phone can be accessed via the website later on. I found this to be a discreet way of recording information because I looked to an observer like I was simply looking at my phone. The only issue being that mobile phone coverage and Internet access was patchy in my fieldwork site so therefore I was not always able to access Evernote. Using these methods had the advantage of allowing me to record things I felt were useful or interesting, as and when they occurred, without feeling strange that I was writing notes. As a result of these different ways of recording what I observed I did feel that I ended up with an incomplete fieldwork diary and in future research projects I would possibly attempt clearer, more detailed, developed notes. Having said that, I always intended that the main data would come from interviews with

young people and that the ethnographic side of the research would help me to engage with participants and understand a little more about the community in the first instance, and to back up or contrast with what participants were telling me in the second instance.

3.3.5 Recruiting young people

The recruitment of young people for interviews was the most challenging part of fieldwork and this was mainly because there were very few young people in my target age group living in the village (2011 Census data suggests that I interviewed somewhere in the region of twenty per cent of the young people in my target age group living there). I had initially aimed to recruit twenty participants aged between 16 and 25. I chose this number of participants because I wanted to conduct repeat, in-depth interviews with young people. Therefore I felt that up to three interviews and a guided walk, with twenty young people would be a realistic number to complete within the timescale available for the fieldwork. I attempted to recruit participants in a number of ways. Firstly after making initial contacts in the village I contacted leaders of some of the local clubs and groups. While group leaders were welcoming, I quickly discovered that young people in the demographic I was looking for did not tend to attend. For example, the youth group stopped at age thirteen and members of the guides and scouts tended to be younger than the age group I was attempting to recruit. I did, however, recruit two young people who were leaders of the youth group and the guides respectively.

I also contacted local secondary schools. The NUNC project team had already used several of the local secondary schools to recruit participants for their study. Therefore, in attempting to recruit participants for my project, I contacted some of those that had not been used. I initially made contact by email, outlining the details of my project and followed up with 'phone calls. I was never put through to the person I needed to speak to and these people did not return my calls so in the end I accepted that none of these schools was

going to allow me access to their learners. One of the issues here was also the time of the year that I was trying to gain access, the springtime. Many of the young people in my target age group would have been busy with exams at this time so if I was to attempt to recruit young people via schools in future projects, I would try a different time of the academic year. When I actually talked to young people I discovered from most of them that they were the only person from their school who lived in Romsworth. Therefore, it is quite likely that I spoke to many of the young people who attended the local schools and having access to these schools would not have yielded many more participants. I therefore chose not to pursue this method of recruiting participants feeling that my time would be better spent exploring other methods such as talking to young people as and when I saw them in Romsworth.

By far the most successful method of recruitment was on a face-to-face basis, through simply being out and visible in the community, thus, my ethnographic approach was key to the recruitment of participants. I attended events and spent as much time as I could there. Whenever I saw a young person who looked like they might be in my target age group I approached them and asked them whether they would take part in my project. The main breakthrough in recruitment came when I interviewed Adam, a seventeen-year-old male who worked in the local café. He told me that he had a group of friends who might be interested in taking part; several weeks later I saw a group of young people on the field one evening. I went over to talk to them and he was part of the group. Knowing him seemed to legitimise my presence and I gained a number of participants from this group (see also section 3.4.1 Gatekeepers)

Another method for recruiting participants I attempted was to use online community spaces. One of the ways I attempted this was through a Facebook group. I decided to use Facebook because, as part of the interviews with young people, I focused on their use of technology and social media; therefore it made sense to use social media as part of the data collection process. I hoped that this would firstly help me to recruit participants, that by setting up a Facebook group I could engage with potential participants thorough a medium that they

frequently used. Secondly, I hoped that using Facebook would allow me to reach more participants that I would be able to interview and that, thirdly, using Facebook would allow me to conduct research at a distance, I would be able to engage with participants without necessarily being physically there in the community (Murthy, 2008). Murthy argues that new technologies are an important part of the collection of ethnographic data and that

> "social researchers cannot afford to continue this overall trend of sidestepping digital methods in the future" (p.838).

However, using Facebook also came with its own set of problems and issues including difficulties in recruiting young people. In the first few interviews I did with young people, I told them about the group and most said that they would be unlikely to join. When I eventually met the friendship group of 15, 16 and 17 year olds, they initially sounded excited about the prospect of the group and all suggested that they would join, but in the end none of them did. In second and third interviews I asked some of them whether they still planned on joining and most of them said that they would but they had not done so yet. In the end, nobody joined the group.

On the suggestion of several participants, I also used another virtual community space to recruit participants in that I tried posting messages on the village forum. The village forum is a website for people living in the community to buy and sell goods, advertise events and to generally interact with each other. I posted several messages giving a background to my project, asking for potential participants. I was aware that young people themselves may not actively participate in the forum (and this became apparent when I talked to young people about this later in the research, see 4.4 Rules, regulations and being moved on) so I also asked whether people had children or grandchildren that they thought may be interested in taking part. Each time I posted a message, several hundred people read this but nobody actually got in touch with me. I also put up posters in the Centre and left leaflets behind the bar and in the café. Although these methods were unsuccessful in terms of directly

recruiting participants, they still got the message of my project out into the wider community and may have indirectly played a part in recruiting participants later on.

3.4 Interviews With Young People

3.4.1 Gatekeepers

Heath et al (2009) suggest that gatekeepers are often a key aspect of research with young people, particularly that which focuses on young people in specific institutions. They argue that this is problematic because it reinforces the powerlessness of young people by taking away their ability to make the decision as to whether or not they will take part. In the course of my research, there were very few gatekeepers that I needed to negotiate with because I approached young people as and when I encountered them rather than contacting them through specific institutions or organisations.

During the course of my project, there was no outside pressure from an institution on either the young people to take part in the research or on me to disclose what the young people had said in the course of interviews or informal conversations. Young people were free to take part in the aspects of the research that they wanted to and in fact, while none of these young people withdrew, some decided that they could no longer spare the time to take part and I only conducted one or two interviews with them as a result. Thus I would assert that whilst research may never be totally 'symmetrical', my methodology approached Christensen and Prout's (2002) definition of ethical symmetry to a degree.

In the first instance, gatekeepers were crucial in gaining access to clubs and groups such as the guides and the youth group but it turned out that I did not recruit young people in the way I anticipated from these places. Instead, a leader from each of the groups expressed an interest in taking part in the

project so I recruited them. Access to these groups allowed me the opportunity to meet these leaders and therefore gatekeepers were an important part of this.

Campbell et al (2006) define gatekeepers as

> "those who provide - directly or indirectly - access to key resources needed to do research, be those resources logistical, human, institutional, or informal" (p.98)

They suggest that little attention is paid to the role of gatekeepers within fieldwork literature. Through a number of different case studies of fieldwork in Costa Rica, they discuss the way that gatekeepers 'come in a variety of forms' (p.114) and offer access to different resources and facilities. They go on to suggest that gatekeepers rarely provide a researcher with all the resources they need and that relationships with gatekeepers develop, change and sometimes dissolve throughout the course of fieldwork. Campbell et al also discuss the way that the researcher themselves, through the process of conducting research, can become a 'keymaster', one who holds varying levels of power or leverage depending on the responsibilities they are given.

For the purposes of my research, the gatekeepers I negotiated with were much more informal, and while their assistance was not necessarily essential in securing access to resources that I needed in order to complete the research, they made my life much easier by helping and accommodating me and also legitimising my presence within the community.

The first of these informal gatekeepers was the café owner. I spent a substantial amount of my time in Romsworth in the café so I got to know the owner and told him about my project quite early on. The café owner initially told me about Adam who worked there and suggested that he might be interested in taking part. He told me when Adam would be working next and also said that we could conduct the interviews in Adam's work time if

necessary. Eventually we conducted interviews when Adam was off duty because I felt that if we did this in work breaks we would be restricted by time. I conducted several interviews with Adam and with other young people in the café and each time the café owner was accommodating.

Significantly, contrary to Heath et al's assertion, some of the gatekeepers I did negotiate with were actually young people themselves. Hey (1997) also discusses negotiating with young people as gatekeepers in a study on girl's friendships in a comprehensive school. This research was conducted both inside and outside school and therefore it was as important for Hey to keep in favour with certain girls as it was to effectively negotiate with teachers and other adult gatekeepers. For the purposes of my research, all recruitment of participants and data collection was done outside of institutions such as schools and clubs and instead was done within the fieldwork site. As a result of this, power relations between participants and me were, arguably, more equal. Christensen and Prout (2002) discuss the concept of 'ethical symmetry' in research with children. This means that as well as the researcher addressing the interests of participants when considering ethical issues; children also need to be able to protect their own interests. Christensen and Prout call for researchers to think about ethics in two ways, as both 'tactics' and 'strategy' (p.492): to ensure that ethical guidelines are set up and adhered to, but also to revisit and reflect on these frequently and to accept that research sometimes throws up previously unconsidered or contradictory ethical problems and issues and that this is particularly apparent in research with children and young people.

Therefore, the second gatekeeper was Adam who introduced me to the rest of his group of friends. Adam also rounded up some of the other group members when I was struggling to arrange interviews times with them. Adam was a year older than the rest of his friends and was sometimes looked up to by members of the group and seen, to some extent, as being the leader. Unfortunately, for most of the process of fieldwork, Adam did not have a mobile phone so tracking him down was sometimes tricky and therefore my relationship with him was quite organic, relying on seeing him either at work in the café or out

and about in the village in order to arrange interviews. This raises some interesting questions for the role of young people as gatekeepers. As identified by Campbell et al (2006), for the most part, the role of the gatekeeper is downplayed in literature on fieldwork and, more importantly, the on-going role of the gatekeeper is rarely mentioned after issues of access are addressed. My experiences are closer to those that Campbell et al discuss and, further to this, address the role of young people as potential gatekeepers. If we acknowledge the role that young people can play in helping to negotiate access to and with other young people then this can also have implications for other aspects of the ethical process such as those issues raised by Christensen and Prout (2002). In these instances, young people helping the researcher gain access to other participants can help with empowering young people to have an awareness of their own ethical interests within the research process.

3.4.2 Sample

The sample consisted of eighteen young people, ranging in age from fifteen to twenty-six (Table 2 shows the age range, gender and number of interviews each participant took part in). Six of these were male and twelve were female. I had hoped for a more even gender split but given the difficulties I had in recruiting any participants, I interviewed all the young people who agreed to take part in the project. I also informally chatted to approximately five young people who were unable to commit to taking part in interviews but were still happy to give me an overview of how they felt about living in Romsworth.

Participant	Age	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Guided Walk
1 – Female	21	X	X	X	X
2 – Female	26	X	X	X	
3 – Female	20	X	X	X	
4 – Female	18	X	X		
5 – Female	21	X			
6 – Female	17	X			
7 – Male	17	X	X	X	X
8 – Male	18	X	X		
9 – Male	16	X	X	X	
10 – Male	16	X	X	X	X
11 – Male	15	X			
12 – Female	16	X	X	X	
13 – Male	18	X	X	X	
14 – Female	18				X
15 – Female	17				X
16 – Female	18	X	X	X	
17 – Female	15	X	X	X	
18 – Female	16	X	X	X	

Table 2 Sample

Giving a voice to young people's experiences was something that was very important to me in the course of this project but at the same time I also wanted to know about specific aspects of their lives, such as their relationships with community, with other people living there and about their friendships. I was therefore keen to balance these two sides, both asking about these specific

areas of interest but at the same time leaving room within the interview schedules for them to talk about other things that were important to them in their lives. Semi-structured interviews therefore afforded me the opportunity to ask questions around my aims of community, intergenerational relationships and friendships but also left room in the course of the interview for young people to talk about aspects of these themes that were significant, important or interesting to them. The semi-structured nature of these interviews also meant that I was able to follow up specific comments or points of interest that I had not initially considered.

I interviewed a total of eighteen young people (see Table 2 for sample) and talked informally to several more. These young people ranged in age from fifteen to twenty-six. I had initially chosen to research sixteen to twenty-five year olds but because of the difficulties I had in finding research participants (see section 3.3.5 Recruiting young people) I expanded this age group out to include some young people who were fifteen and twenty-six. I chose this age group because, as Valentine (2003) claims, this is the age group that is traditionally understood as 'youth'. This age group gave me clear differences between my project and the work of the NUNC project (see section 3.1.1 Relationship to wider project) as the focus of their research was on children and young people, aged between nine and sixteen. Finally, I also chose this age group because of my previous experiences of working with young people in this age group, having been a teacher and a community worker (see section 3.9 Positionality), so felt that this experience would be beneficial in recruiting and engaging with potential participants.

Throughout the thesis, names of participants have been changed. I also introduce participants in order for the reader to better get to know them. I do this by providing some quotations and background information throughout the analysis chapters.

3.4.3 Informed consent

My informed consent process followed the ESRC and RCUK Research Ethics Frameworks. And I obtained full ethical approval from the Geography Department at the University of Leicester. Horton (2008) outlines what is considered to be 'good practice' in research ethics discussing issues of consent and confidentiality. I began the first interview with each participant by telling them a little bit about myself and my project and explained to them that I might use their words in my thesis or in presentations and papers but that I would not be using their names so their words would not be attributable to them. I also told them that they were free to withdraw from the research process at any time and that anything they told me would be confidential. I also asked them whether they had any questions for me and asked them to sign a consent slip. I then gave them the details of what they had signed and contact details for me if they wanted to withdraw. (I am pleased to say that while I did not complete all of the interviews I wanted to from the research, nobody withdrew). I also asked participants whether it was okay to record the interview and that I could turn the Dictaphone off at any time. Again, all of the participants were happy to be recorded and none asked for the tape to be turned off. At the beginning of any further interviews I did with each of these participants, I reminded them again of issues of confidentiality and of their right to withdraw. I also found that during interviews (and particularly during guided walks) participants asked more about me and my research but I feel that I answered all their questions and felt that they understood what the research was about. Having thought through issues of informed consent I feel that on a face-to-face basis, it is easier to ensure that participants understand what they are agreeing to; this is not to say that this is impossible electronically but asking and answering questions to ensure this is the case is more straightforward in a face-to-face setting.

3.4.4 Parental consent

Parental consent was sometimes a more difficult issue. When I approached potential participants, I asked them how old they were and, if they were under 18, told them that they would need parental consent in order to take part in the research. Most of the time they were not actually with their parents so I gave them a consent form for a parent/guardian to sign. Invariably some of them lost these and I had to give them a new one. Some of these also lost the second copy but for the majority of other participants I gained consent from a parent on either a written or verbal basis. I was unable to gain parental consent either verbally or in written form from one fifteen-year-old participant so took the decision to not directly use his words within this thesis. I was also unable to gain parental consent for two sixteen year olds and a seventeen year old. However, I bore in mind The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that young people should be able to give their consent to participation in varying degrees that come with age (Skelton, 2007). Other literature suggests that, ethically, young people should be able to give their consent to taking part in research as long as they are sixteen or over (Heath et al, 2009). Skelton (2008) discusses tensions between institutional ethics and the rights of children and young people to take part in research. One sixteen year old participant came along to an interview without a parental consent form and gave an impassioned speech on why he thought that he should be 'allowed' to take part. As I went through the process of interviews with him I discovered that his mother is often away with work and his father runs his own business and therefore works very long hours. This participant told me that he often takes responsibility for the running of the family home, washing, ironing and cooking meals. Skelton (2007) discusses the limitations of the term 'child', and instances such as these highlight the difficulty of using the term. She argues that many young people do not see themselves as children and therefore do not see that the same rights apply to them. Skelton suggests that these young people are often stuck in a 'limbo between childhood and adulthood' (p166). Skelton (2008) also discusses her own experiences (and the subsequent benefits) of taking part in research as a child. Thus I took the

decision for this young person, and the other two participants aged between 16 and 18, that I did not need to pursue parental consent further than I already had done.

Parents I spoke to directly were more than happy for their children to take part and most of the young people who brought back parental consent forms told me that their parents were keen for them to take part in the research. One participant in particular, who had a keen interest in the social sciences, told me that she really wanted to take part to learn more about research and that when she told her parents, they were keen for her to take part for the same reasons and also because in the future she might need people to take part in a project of her own.

3.4.5 Location of interviews

Interviews were conducted in a variety of places. Heath et al (2009) and Scott (2000) discuss the importance of choosing appropriate locations for interviews to take place. Heath et al suggest that the researcher is often not in control of where interviews take place due to research being conducted through institutions like schools and colleges. While my position of not accessing young people through specific institutions may have been problematic for recruitment, it was beneficial for the location of the interviews because I was able to ask interviewees to choose where they would prefer to be interviewed. Heath et al talk through a number of different places where interviews can and have been conducted pointing out that 'physical space is rarely neutral' (p.93) They then go on to focus on the researcher choosing where the interview will take place, but Leyshon (2002) argues that in order to put young people at the centre of research, the researcher must have

> "a willingness to engage with young people on their own terms and
> in their own spaces, be they the bowling alley or the village green."
> (p.180)

I hoped that if young people chose a place where they felt comfortable they would be more likely to fully interact in interviews. Most participants chose to be interviewed in either the Centre bar or the café but I also did interviews at participants' houses, on the playing field and even on the floor during youth group. Leyshon (2002) discusses the pragmatism necessary to conducting research, having conducted interviews and questionnaires in mini-buses, on the street and in changing rooms to name a few places.

Interviews that were more difficult or pressured tended to take place in participants' houses although this was mainly due to the timing of these interviews, which were undertaken pre-dinner. An interview that was conducted on the floor during the youth group was also quite difficult; both to conduct and to record because it was interrupted by youth group children talking to the participant, and various activities that were taking place in the room such as football.

Interviews that took place on the playing field worked really well but were difficult to record because of cross winds. The interviews that I did outside tended to be with younger participants and were all conducted in the summer months. Leyshon (2002) discusses the difference the seasons can make to the research process, highlighting the difference between relaxed interviews done on a sports field on summer evenings compared to others done on the street on cold winter evenings. With interviews I did outside, young people seemed to feel that they had a freedom to talk, something they may not have had if the interviews were conducted inside. These young people also spent quite a lot of their spare time on the playing field so the scenery often provided them with visual stimuli and gave them the opportunity to illustrate the points they were making.

Interviews that took place in the café and the Centre bar were also successful. The Centre bar was open for longer hours than the café and, as interviews were conducted at different times of the day in order to suit the availability of participants, I did interviews in both of these places. I also enjoyed conducting

interviews in these places, as I was also able to buy interviewees a drink as a token of appreciation for taking part in my project.

3.4.6 Structure of interviews

Interviews were semi-structured, in that I had a list of questions to ask participants each time. Hammersley and Atkinson (2003) argue that all interviews are structured to some extent by both the interviewer and the interviewee, suggesting that interviews conducted as part of ethnographic methods should be referred to as 'reflexive interviews' (p.117) with researchers responding to what participants say rather than focusing on questions to ask next. Heath et al (2009) define semi-structured interviews as having specific themes but not necessarily specific questions relating to these themes and suggest that they are used "where the researcher has identified a relatively clear focus to their research" (p.80). I conducted up to three interviews with each of my participants and each interview was based around specific themes (appendices for interview schedules). While I had specific questions to ask in relation to my aims there was also time and space in these interviews to ask follow-up questions and to pursue areas of interest that young people told me about.

The interviews broadly covered a number of different themes with the first concentrating on getting to know young people and focusing on their experiences of living in Romsworth, their likes, dislikes and how the development has changed over the time they have lived there. The second interview focused on young people's relationships with friends including their use of technologies in the maintenance of these friendships. The final interviews focused on young people's relationships with community, culture and with other people living there.

In the final interview I also used ten images (Rose, 2011) of youth and youth cultures (Appendix 4 – Images) and I found that they worked particularly well at generating conversation and discussion with participants. There were

specific images that I wanted to feature in there of more traditional youth cultures such as mod, punk and rave and I also chose to include images of mobile phones and social media. I also chose some of these images by typing 'youth' and 'youth cultures' into Google images and selecting several of the photographs that the search brought back. I showed these images to young people and asked them whether they thought any of the pictures represented them or represented things they were interested in, I also had a few prompt questions lined up but I mostly did not require these because young people really engaged with these images. At this point the interviews turned into much more of a conversation and this gave young people the opportunity to talk about things that mattered to them. One participant actually told me that he had really enjoyed talking though the photos. See also section 3.8 Analysis for further information on the analysis of interviews.

I transcribed interviews as soon as possible after conducting them so that I was able to see emerging themes and was able to pick up on points of interest that I had not initially considered. I then added some of these themes to the interview schedules – see below. Questions and themes that emerged from these early interviews with young people also helped to inform the questions I asked to adult stakeholders as I wanted to discover how adults felt about these issues that affected young people.

Most of the interviews I conducted were on a one-to-one basis but I also completed some interviews (and guided walks, see section 3.6 Guided Walks) in pairs. Hammersley and Atkinson (2003) discuss the pros and cons of research with individuals versus research with groups suggesting that different data emerges from each type of interview, participants may not necessarily feel comfortable talking in front of other people. Scott (2000) discusses the way that in research specifically with children, focus groups or joint interviews should be done with the same age groups because older children tend to dominate. And Heath et al (2009) discuss the way that the joint interview or focus group is considered by some researchers to be

preferable to individual interviews because young people feel more comfortable with groups of their peers.

While I had taken these issues into consideration when deciding on whether individual or group interviews would be the best way to collect data, I eventually decided that the young people themselves would choose whether they wanted to be interviewed alone or with friends. Heath et al (2009) note that joint interviews or focus groups do not have to be carried out with people who already know each other but go on to suggest that while in research with adults, participants are often strangers, working with groups who already know each other is seen as the preferable option in research with young people.

As I began to recruit participants, it became apparent among older young people that they had very few friends living in Romsworth; therefore joint interviews and focus groups were not an option with these particular young people. Some of the interviews with young people from a friendship group were done in pairs. I found that there were benefits to doing interviews both in pairs and with individuals, and those benefits varied from participant to participant. Therefore in future research projects, wherever possible, I would give young people the option of deciding how they want to be interviewed.

I found that the interviews done with the last participants I interviewed were much longer than those done earlier in the project. However this is down to a number of different factors; firstly because these interviews were conducted with two participants this helped conversation to flow as they helped each other to illustrate the points they were making. These two participants were also very talkative, more so than some of my other interviewees, so even if I had interviewed them separately they would have talked at length. And finally, as the interviews progressed, I became more experienced at the process of conducting an interview and therefore felt more comfortable asking follow up questions and getting more information from the participants.

3.4.6.1 Reflexivity and changes to the interview schedules

Throughout the interview process I frequently reflected on what was and was not working within the interviews and how participants were responding to me as an interviewer. Christensen and James (2008) argue that reflexivity is key to research with children and young people because 'it is also a stance adopted by children who take part in the research" (p.6). As a result of this reflection, I added questions to the interview schedule when it became apparent that young people were frequently talking about themes that I had not initially considered. The main change I made was around the theme of transport, with young people talking in the first few interviews about their difficulties with public transport and the importance of driving to them. This also informed my decision to collect data in another way by taking public transport to both nearby towns in order to experience this for myself. I also frequently reflected on what was and was not working within the interview schedule and the interview process as a whole, although I found that I rarely removed questions from the interview schedule and only did this in specific instances where it was apparent that a question was not relevant to a particular participant. For example, one participant only lived in Romsworth for part of the week whilst staying with her boyfriend, therefore questions such as 'how long have you lived in Romsworth?' were irrelevant because she had already told me how long she had been visiting him.

I also frequently asked different follow-up questions depending on what participants talked about. As participants fell into a wide age range, I deliberately asked questions that were broad ranging and open ended and then asked follow up questions accordingly, depending on the answers they gave. There were a few themes or ideas that young people talked about in the early interviews – such as the importance of transport to young people living in the village – and I added these into the interview schedules in order to ask young people about this is later interviews.

I had initially intended to conduct three interviews with each participant. O'Reilly (2005) suggests that the number of interviews conducted with each participant depends on the project and the subject matter of the interviews. I decided on three interviews because I wanted to spend time getting to know young people, building a rapport and getting to know what was important to them. When I compare the relationships I built with young people who I interviewed multiple times to those adults and young people I only interviewed once, I feel that participants became much more candid in later interviews and I also found that I enjoyed later interviews much more because I felt more comfortable with these participants.

However, I sometimes discovered that it was difficult to arrange final interviews. Participants were keen to take part for two interviews but seemed to lose interest by the third. Part of the way thorough fieldwork, I decided to combine these three interviews into two, asking the same questions but with the questions moved around. From the participants I did this with, all finished the interviews and some were keen to do more!

3.5 Interviews with Adults

Both Sophie (the NUNC project researcher) and I wanted to interview a number of adults living in the village and some who were not necessarily residents but worked in key roles in the village. Therefore, we took the decision that these interviews would be done jointly. The main reason for this was ethical: Sophie and I wanted to talk to many of the same people and we were concerned about these people suffering from research fatigue. Benyon (1983) gives the example of research participants feeling as though they are contributing to multiple pieces of research and getting nothing in return. We wanted to avoid this wherever possible so decided that interviews with these adults would be done together.

Sophie and I were both responsible for developing the schedules for these interviews. Sophie's research interest was in children aged from 9-15 and my

interest lay in 16-25 year olds, therefore we had some crossover in the questions we wanted to ask but we also both had questions that were not relevant to each other's project. Therefore, Sophie and I developed these interview schedules by initially working separately on the questions we wanted to ask. We then came together to discuss the order the interview schedule should take ensuring that there was no repetition of questions (see Appendix 5 – Adult Interviews - my questions are highlighted).

During the interviews themselves, Sophie and I took turns in asking questions in sections; these sections were based around specific themes, with the questions I asked focusing on young people in my target age group of sixteen to twenty-five and those asked by Sophie focusing on children aged nine to fifteen. We had also decided beforehand that either of us could ask follow up questions wherever necessary. As a result of this, these adult stakeholder interviews became conversational in nature and were also long and detailed.

We completed a total of seven interviews with the following adults

- Vicar (Church of England)
- Chair of Resident's Association
- Youth Group Leader
- Centre Manager
- Police Community Support Officer (PCSO)
- Local Councillor
- Community Development Manager

Participants were selected on the basis of prior contacts by Sophie and myself, and through their roles as either local club or group leaders, decision makers or otherwise working somehow with or for young people in Romsworth. These interviews were conducted in places chosen by the interviewee and took place in either their homes or at their place of work. The recordings of these interviews were then transcribed alongside other material for the wider project team, meaning that I did not have to transcribe these myself (in

contrast to interviews that I did with young people which I did transcribe myself – see below). I analysed these interviews myself and this analysis of these interviews was done alongside the analysis of the interviews with young people. These interviews provided contrast or back up to what young people talked about and the themes that I chose when analysing these interviews were the same themes that I used from the interviews with young people. Therefore, the interviews with young people provided the main focus for analysis and the interviews with adults simply highlighted what young people told me. As with the interviews with young people, I used Nvivo in order to analyse these interviews and this analysis was done separately from Sophie and the rest of the NUNC project team (see 3.8 Analysis)

The process of conducting these interviews was different to that of interviewing young people. Firstly, the presence of another researcher changed the dynamic of the interviews. Secondly, the age of participants made a difference to the way I interacted with them. And finally, there was only one interview with adults whereas I did up to three interviews with each of the young people I interviewed. Therefore, I developed more of a rapport with these young people that I did with the adults I interviewed.

3.6 Guided Walks

In addition to the three interviews, I also did three guided walks with five of the young people I interviewed. Guided walks are a frequently used method by researchers working with children. Prout (2002) outlines a large research project which attempted to develop new and innovative methods for data collection with children and used guided walks as a result and Christensen and Mikkelson (2008) discuss this method in relation to research looking at the way children negotiate. Most of these examples use guided walks as a method to collect data from younger children so I was interested in how these walks would work with young people. From the interviews with young people in my sample age category, I discovered that some of the older participants spent less time outdoors than they had when they were younger and therefore did not

take part in the guided walks. I was also aware that young people would probably have different places that were important to them to those that were important to children. But I also felt that walking around the settlement was a good opportunity and would provide prompts to talk further about community and issues for young people living there.

The guided walks were done, where possible, after the first three interviews had taken place. I decided that these would be the final part of the process for a number of reasons. Firstly, I felt that I would gain more from the guided walks if I got to know participants a little through the process of interviews first. Secondly, I did not have a particular set of questions or an interview schedule to use during the walks, rather I had left it to where young people would take me so I wanted to conduct other interviews first, in order that the interview data I gathered would meet my aims and objectives. Thirdly, Christensen and Mikkelson (2008) also leave their guided tours to their last interviews, both in order for the researcher to get to know the children and because earlier interviews informed the focus of the walks. I met participants at a location in the village chosen by them and initially asked them to show me what they liked to do, where they liked to go, etc. but each of these walks was organic in where young people actually took me. Sometimes they changed or deviated from their intended route in order to show me something we had talked about earlier in the walk or something they had just remembered. One of these walks was done on a one-to-one basis and the other two were done with two participants each. These walks were, in the main, much longer than a standard interview and I found them to be even more effective as a data collection method than interviews were. Conversations within the guided walks were much more spontaneous than within interviews. I did not have a particular set of questions that I wanted to ask young people but, instead, started the walk by asking them to show me places that they frequently used. As a result of this, conversation flowed much more than in an interview setting. On the walks, young people were also much more free to talk about what was important to them rather than being restricted by the questions on an interview schedule. On some of these walks, we also took the opportunity to sit down in some of the places that

young people liked to spend their time and that gave me the opportunity to actually see the places they liked from their perspective.

I recorded the audio of the guided walks using a digital Dictaphone (in the same way that I recorded interviews) and I mapped the walk itself using Trip Journal for the iPhone, although I did not use these maps for analysis. Had I conducted more guided walks I may have compared different places young people spent their time but I discovered that the audio of the interviews provided me with enough material to analyse. Therefore, these maps do not appear in the thesis. However, Trip Journal also allowed me/or participants to take photographs, which were then geotagged into the map. I also sent copies of these maps to participants so they could have a record of the route. Several of the photographs taken by participants appear throughout the course of this thesis and they helped to give me visual cues to the things that young people talked about in the course of these walks, as well as a sense of the key places and features of the community that mattered to them. During the walks I asked young people whether they wanted to take charge of this equipment. Some of the older participants were happy for me to keep hold of the equipment but younger participants enjoyed giving a commentary via the Dictaphone and also taking photographs as we walked along. From a practical perspective, it was much easier for me when young people took charge of the equipment because it was sometimes difficult to carry the Dictaphone, check that Trip Journal was working and take photographs all at the same time. This also meant that the commentary and the photographs that I gained came from the perspective of a young person to a greater degree than if I had chosen what to record and photograph, and have captured the essence of the village in some interesting ways (see photographs from young people throughout the thesis).

As with the interviews, the audio of the guided walks was also fully transcribed. This sometimes proved challenging because, as with some of the interviews, the guided walks were done outside. Therefore, I had the same problems with wind affecting the recordings. This was heightened by the recordings being done as we walked, which meant that sometimes the recorder

didn't pick up everything that was said. Also, because some of these walks were done with more than one person, it was very difficult to ensure that the recorder picked up everything that everyone said all the time.

Where indicated, photographs that appear throughout the thesis were taken by participants as part of guided walks.

3.7 Transcription

I recorded all of the interviews using a digital Dictaphone (with consent from participants). This meant that I had a full audio recording of all the interviews. I then fully transcribed each of the interviews. I found this to be a useful process in actually remembering what happened in each of the interviews and beginning to think about themes that were emerging. I transcribed interviews as I went along which gave me the opportunity to add new questions to my interview schedule (see 3.4.6 Structure of interviews) as new and emerging themes began to appear. Transcription also afforded me the opportunity to begin thinking about themes I would use once I began the process of analysis. Recording interviews was, in the main, successful but there were some instances where interviews were done with noise in the background, or in the instance of those done outside, wind caused the recorder to intermittently not pick up the voices. In these cases, there was a certain amount of guesswork in transcribing and I attempted to gather the gist of what the person was saying rather than concentrate on what the exact missing words had been. There is little that could have been done about these problems and the benefits of participants choosing the location for the interview (feeling at ease and being more willing to talk) meant that I would still do this in the same way the next time. None of the interviews were inaudible; it just took me a little longer to transcribe these than some of the others where I had been in a quiet room.

I also discovered that, when an interview was done with more than one person, it often took some time to work out who was actually speaking when transcribing the interview. Once again, this is not something that I would

change in the future because there were a number of benefits to talking to more than one person at a time. It sometimes just took a little more time to transcribe these than some of the other interviews.

3.8 Analysis

Basit (2003) compares manual and electronic methods for coding data using case study examples from her own research, one of which was done manually and the other using NVivo software. Basit concludes that electronic coding methods can save the researcher time but this is dependent on the amount of material that needs to be coded. But even when electronic methods are used, the researcher still needs to think through the process of coding data, developing initial codes, selecting appropriate pieces of data to match these and exploring other themes that begin to emerge. I decided that I would begin the process of analysis by using NVivo.

The main data analysed came from the forty interviews I conducted with young people and I analysed these according to themes. Basit points out that

> "the analysis of qualitative data continues throughout the research
> and is not a separate self-contained phase" (Basit, p.144)

This was something that became clear to me as the research progressed. Analysis of interviews began at the time the interviews were conducted, with mental notes made on emerging themes and points of interest. I sometimes made a note of these after the interview (particularly if I was conducting more than one interview in a day) in order to remind myself to concentrate on specific areas when transcribing the interviews.

Transcription helped me to develop another layer of analysis, and also to reflect on what young people were telling me. As mentioned above, I added questions around the theme of transport into the interview schedule as a result of these reflections. I also began to write around some of the basic themes that

were beginning to emerge – friendships, transport and community relationships were among these.

Once I had completed approximately thirty interviews I used Microsoft Nvivo software in order to analyse these. I initially chose approximately twenty themes that had begun to emerge through these initial stages of analysis and coded interviews according to these themes.

Once I had coded all of the interviews with young people according to the themes I had chosen, I began to write around these themes, tying together ideas and, as I began to write, new themes began to emerge, sometimes themes that I had not initially considered as being significant. I then went back to the interview data and recoded according to these new themes. I went backwards and forwards with this process until I eventually had clear themes with which to begin structuring the chapters of the thesis with. By this point I found that using an electronic method of analysis was less useful because I knew the interviews well and I knew where particular pieces of text were when I needed to locate them. If I had had a larger quantity of participants or interviews then this may not have necessarily been possible but using both electronic and manual methods for analysis worked well for a project of my size.

Observations, photographs and other data I collected, such as from informal conversations, acted as either background to the project or highlighted some of the points that young people made. I did not analyse these in the same way as the interview data with young people. Instead, the process of writing often made me recall a particular photograph or an observation that I had made. Sometimes these observations were not something I had written down, rather the words of young people reminded me that I had seen first hand what they were describing.

3.9 Positionality

I am not a resident of the place where I conducted my research. This made a difference to how I felt when being visible within the village, attending events, walking around or going into the bar or the café. As I have already discussed (see background to Romsworth) people do not tend to frequent street or public spaces very much in Romsworth (this applies equally to young people and adults). During the day, the main times when people are visibly out and about are primary school drop off and pick up times and when the secondary school buses pick up and drop off. The rest of the time, the village looks very quiet both during the day and at night. Therefore, when I was there at other times of the day, I often felt conspicuous. I usually parked my car either in the car park of the Centre or in the main car park by the shops. There were often other cars parked there but very rarely did I see people get in and out of these cars. I often assumed that the people who were parked there worked at the various businesses and shops surrounded by the car park. I often felt that because I was alone in the street, I was 'obviously' not part of the community. The design of Romsworth is such that houses overlook many of the public and community spaces and there are also patches of ambiguous spaces where it is unclear whether they belong to specific houses or whether they are public spaces. Young people often found these spaces problematic because they felt like they were being watched (see section 4.4 Rules, regulations and being moved on) and I also felt this too as a stranger in the village. As discussed (see 3.3 Ethnography) one of the ways I dealt with this feeling of being an outsider was through the technologies I used in order to record information. My phone became a valuable tool, both for making notes and recording observations I had made, but also for making me feel less conspicuous when I was sitting and observing or when I was waiting for young people to arrive for interviews.

During a presentation at the end of the first year of my PhD, I was asked a question in relation to my positionality which threw me:

"I know that you were previously a teacher, how do you think this will affect the way to work with these young people?"

Throughout the course of this project, I have come back to this question time and time again. Before beginning my PhD I had indeed worked as a teacher both within the more formalised setting of an FE college and in my local community via different projects. Part of the reason that I choose this age group to research was that I was comfortable working and engaging with young people in this demographic. Moser (2008) discusses the importance of acknowledging personality as well positionality within the research process. She argues that a focus on just positionality assumes that

> "one's positions vis à vis various power structures are necessarily
>
> the only or most relevant aspects of one's self to reveal." (p.385)

In relation to feeling comfortable with young people in my research demographic age group, I feel that my personality was as important, if not more so, than my positionality. Previously working with this age group was part of the reason I felt comfortable engaging with these young people, but my personality, or at least some of the things I enjoy and the way I communicate these, were another important factor. The process of conducting interviews helped me to build this rapport with young people, and I feel that the subject matter of the research was an important part of this. I was asking young people about topics such as their likes and dislikes about where they lived, how they spent their spare time, their friends, etc. so I was able to get to know these young people and to get to know what was important to them. During the first interviews I tried to find some common ground with participants, whether this was through musical interests, TV programmes or other popular cultural references. One particular participant was initially quiet until I told him about my lack of musical ability. He then went on to suggest that I learnt to play the ukulele instead of the guitar (telling me that it was easier) and this broke the ice.

In terms of recruiting participants, I felt that having previously worked with this age group also stood in my favour. I am comfortable in talking to young people and in certain cases I felt that I easily built a rapport before interviews took place. This was not just down to me though, as I found all of the young people I approached were prepared to hear me out and to listen to what my project was about before deciding whether they were able to or wanted to take part and this helped to build my confidence in approaching further young people.

I found that I built the best relationships with those with whom I did most interviews, simply because we had usually spent more time together and they had told me more about themselves. Before, during or after later interviews I asked young people about things that they had told me was important to them or linked what they were telling me to what they had previously told me. For example, one participant told me that she was looking for a part time job. In the next interview she began to tell me about where she worked and I made a point of congratulating her on having found a job. I hoped that young people would feel that they were being listened to as a result of links like this being made. I cannot say for sure whether young people themselves found this to be the case but they responded well to these sorts of prompts and they frequently asked me about myself and about things I had told them.

Gender made a difference to how I initially felt about engaging with participants. The first few participants I recruited were girls because I was unable to find out where boys spent their spare time. Leyshon (2002) discusses one of the issues of not recruiting young people through institutions such as schools and colleges

> "a lone male in his 30s driving into a village and asking people as young as 14 if they want to participate in research would cause justifiable disquiet." (p.182)

I felt a similar discomfort as a woman in her mid-30s hanging around on the street in an attempt to get boys to participate in research. This is where gatekeepers were helpful in that the café owner introduced me to Adam (my first male participant) and Adam then introduced me to some of his friends.

Having said that, I also feel my personal appearance made a difference to how I was received by young people. At 5'1" I am not particularly tall and despite being in my mid-30s, I am often mistaken for being at least ten years younger. I usually dressed in a casual manner in jeans, sneakers and a leather jacket, again possibly adding to the perception of being younger than I actually am. I felt that this, to a certain extent, helped me to develop an initial rapport with young people as I was seen as being somebody closer in age and appearance to them.

I found that in the earlier stages of interviews I often felt nervous before an interview, worrying about whether participants would turn up (sometimes they did not), thinking through what I was going to ask them and how I was going to do it and worrying that they would think my questions trivial. But as I graduated to the later stages of the interview process, I found that I actively looked forward to seeing these young people and hearing about their lives. To come back to the question of how having been a teacher affected my positionality, I would like to finish this section with a note I scribbled to myself during the course of fieldwork. It simply read 'research with young people is much more fun than teaching them'.

3.10 Summary

In order to address the aims of my project, I felt that I needed a flexible approach to gathering data. Using ethnography gave me the opportunity to spend time in the settlement and to get to know the area and its residents and this also helped me to recruit participants. I had always intended that the ethnography side of the project would act as a background, giving me an understanding of what was important to people (particularly young people)

living in the development and helping me to access participants by becoming a familiar face in the community. But I found that ethnography played a larger part in the project than I had initially anticipated. Informal conversations with both adults and young people sometimes raised significant issues and observations often allowed me to illustrate what young people were telling me.

Despite this, in-depth interviews with young people still provided the main body of data that I analysed. I chose, if possible, to conduct multiple interviews with each participant because I wanted to get to know the young people and get to know what was important to them. I feel that this, as a strategy, while at times difficult due to problems of arranging interviews with young people with busy lives, paid off and was effective. The young people with whom I conducted the most interviews were the ones I gathered the richest data from, these interviews tended to be longer and these young people were often more candid than those I conducted fewer interviews with. Overall, in future research with young people, I would actively choose to interview each participant multiple times if possible and appropriate to the project.

Guided walks were also an enjoyable part of the research process. I felt that leaving these to the final stage of the interview process meant that there was no pressure to ask specific questions, but they gave me the opportunity to clarify or follow up what had been said in previous interviews. While much of the literature on guided walks discusses them in relation to research with children, I found them to be an effective method for research with young people, allowing conversation to flow more easily than in conventional interviews and giving participants the opportunity to illustrate places and spaces to the researcher. As with multiple interviews, if possible and appropriate to future research, I would welcome the opportunity to use this as a method.

I had also hoped to use social media, conducting a sort of virtual ethnography in order to both engage young people and to gather data. The decision to do this came from questions that I asked young people in relation to their

friendships and spare time being about technology and social media. I had hoped that my methods might mirror the themes the research was addressing but I discovered that, by far, the most effective way of engaging with young people was through face-to-face methods. That is not to say that I do not see a place for methods like these in future research, rather that if I were to attempt to use these methods again, I would approach them in a different way, engaging young people on a face-to-face basis and asking them to help me find the most appropriate way of using social media within a research project.

The overarching approach of this project allowed for the flexibility I needed and as a result I gathered a range of rich data, which helped me to develop a deep and multi-layered understanding of the experiences of young people living in a new settlement.

4. Intergenerational Relationships

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first aim of the thesis in exploring the intergenerational relationships of young people living in Romsworth. In my study, young people tended not to talk in detail about relationships with parents and other family members, so I do not pursue these relationships in any detail in this chapter. There is in any case a wealth of research about these relationships: see, for example, Holloway (1998) on motherhood; Aitken (2000) on fatherhood; Vanderbeck (2007) on grand parenting; Morgan (1999 & 2011) on the practices that make up family life and Pain (2006) on children, parenting, fear and risk. This chapter focuses instead on young people's relationships with *other* adults living in the settlement, exploring the way new developments are designed for adult usage and the impact of this on young people's relationships with adults. This chapter also addresses the construction of intergenerational relationships, exploring the ways that young people saw their age group as represented in local and national media and how these perceptions affected their relationships with adults in the community, specifically exploring the rules and regulations young people saw themselves subject to. The chapter ends by exploring young people's intergenerational friendships, a theme which anticipates a more detailed treatment of friendship in the final chapter of the thesis.

Several participants told me that the context of Romsworth as a new development was significant to the way in which they saw their relationships with adults. For young people who had moved to the settlement in the early days, the lack of others in their age group meant that they had a different relationship to older people than they perceived young people living elsewhere might. Conversations revealed that during early village events, this lack of other young people meant that if they wanted to socialise they had to do this

with people who were not in their immediate age group. Therefore, most of these young people saw themselves as being more comfortable with adults than they perceived others living elsewhere might be. Throughout this chapter, I come back to the ways that living in a new settlement affected young people's relationships with those outside of their immediate age group and discuss some of the ways that this might be different for young people living there in the future.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the relationship between young people and adult decision makers, suggesting that there was often a disconnect or a misunderstanding between the two. This made it much more difficult for young people to approach decision makers with problems, issues or ideas for facilities they would like to see. Throughout this chapter, I begin to introduce some of the young people I met and in order for the reader to better get to know them, I have included some background information in blue text boxes.

4.2 Young people and adult decision makers

This section addresses intergenerational relationships taking place in Romsworth with reference to consultation and participation. There is already a large body of existing work relating to relationships between young people and adult decision makers (see, for instance, Valentine et al 2001 who address ethical issues in research with vulnerable young people; Matthews 2001 who looks at youth councils; Matthews 2003 on ways in which community decision makers can involve young people and Pain 2004 on participatory research). Nevertheless, it was important to include this section here because of the frequency that both young people and adult decision makers talked about their relationships to each other. It consistently struck me that both adults and young people were keen to engage with each other in order to discuss the sort of facilities that would work for young people, but neither party seemed to know quite how to go about this. While this is a common problem, the newness of this development meant that, there should have been, in theory at least, the

opportunity for adults to move past the previous models of participation and consultation and engage young people more effectively in decisions affecting them. Therefore, to a large extent, young people and adult decision makers, in attempting to engage with each other, faced old problems within the setting of a new development.

4.2.1 Adult decision makers and their attempts to engage young people

Adult stakeholders involved with the Romsworth Villagers Association (RVA), the parish council responsible for some of the decision making within Romsworth, saw the organisation as being an integral part of village life and a significant factor 'creating community' within Romsworth (see 3.2 Fieldwork Site). In 2005, the chair of the RVA was interviewed for the village newsletter and stated that one of the key targets for the RVA was to provide facilities for young people but, when I interviewed him, he talked about the difficulties the organisation had experienced in attempting to engage people in the village, particularly young people

> "I think, yeah, you know, we've put a lot of effort into communicating with the village, I'm sure we can do it better the kind of stuff that we do but we communicate as adults to adults."
> (Geoff).

In this example, Geoff talked about the RVA communicating 'as adults to adults' therefore, in order for young people to negotiate, discuss or raise issues pertinent to them, they were expected to communicate in the same way. In order to do this, they also need to attend RVA meetings. But there were certain procedures and protocols that the RVA followed in the way they communicated and organised themselves and this was alien to many young people and, from informal conversations with adults living in the village, alien to many adults too.

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Mick, another member of the RVA and also the leader of the local youth group, gave an example of a nineteen-year-old student coming to one of the RVA's meetings in order to bid for funds for a project he was working on. Mick told me

> "he just came in and he said, and stood up, introduced himself and, adult like, you know, but obviously very intelligent and just came in and said right I want this, this and this and I want to do this, this and this and we went yeah, fine, we'll give you whatever you want because he, he'd done it in such a professional manner"
> (Mick)

Faulkner (2009) gives examples of young people participating and being expected to 'act appropriately' (p.96). She goes on to discuss the way this impacted on young people in her study, with several of them trying to impress and feeling that they had to be careful about how they spoke in meetings. Therefore, as in the (above) example young people were expected to act in an 'adult-like' manner. But Faulkner found that this was problematic if their behaviour was seen as *too* adult-like, then they were not taken seriously with adults seeing their behaviour as funny or amusing. Tholander (2007) also gives examples of children mimicking adult behaviour in participation sessions over democracy. But Tholander's study also goes on to demonstrate that these young people were only allowed to exercise democracy within certain boundaries, being expected, once again, to act appropriately, as their teacher stepped in perceiving their behaviour to be undemocratic. It is worth noting that in the (above) example the young person who went along to the meeting was nineteen and therefore an adult, but the RVA were still surprised by the manner in which he presented his case. This highlights the difficulty that other young people have in making their voices heard. On one hand, they need to communicate in the same way as adults but, on the other hand, adults are surprised when they do so and, as Faulkner suggests, their manner must not be too adult-like because they will not be taken seriously.

Geoff, the chair of the RVA went on to tell me

> "one of the key things is to get the young people involved…And we
> haven't been able to do that, now that might be our fault, I'm not
> going to say it is their fault, I'm not for one second going to say that,
> if it is our fault then, you know, somebody, you, whatever, tell us
> how to do it, how to, you know, not a question of not wanting to do
> it"
> (Geoff)

> "The sort of older children, we have nothing to offer them, they're
> not interested in us as far as we can see, we have nothing to offer
> them, we haven't got people who want to take that responsibility on
> and try to do something for them"
> (Geoff)

As a result of these experiences, attempts to engage young people were often
inconsistent. Geoff told me that from a community fun day, the RVA had raised
money, some of which they decided to spend on young people in the village. A
representative from the RVA

> "went along to the youth group and said right, you know, we want
> to make the beneficiaries or young people the beneficiaries of the
> money we get, what do you want to spend it on? And she got a rude
> response really, yeah, and disinterested response. And no, no
> involvement from them whatsoever, so we were raising money for
> them but no one took, no…we set up, did a lot of work on their
> behalf and they couldn't even be bothered to turn up to take an
> interest in it, as a result of which the following year we said well
> we're not going to give out money to the youth."
> (Geoff)

Hill (2006) suggests that one off consultations like this can be problematic. They are often unsuccessful, time consuming and sometimes expensive to organise. More importantly, Hill argues that often, young people's ideas are not taken into consideration after the event, with decision makers paying lip service to the idea of young people's participation rather than genuinely canvassing opinion. Hill concludes by arguing that as with adults and consultations, some young people get involved and "exercise choice or agency by declining to take part in research or consultation." (p.84). But in the above example, this choosing not to get involved was seen as a 'rude' and 'disinterested response' and therefore it was decided that money would not be spent on young people anymore.

Adult decision makers felt that it was important to engage young people in decisions made about Romsworth but there was often an inconsistent approach to doing this. Young people were expected to 'behave appropriately' in their engagement with adults, whether this was going along to RVA meetings or giving their opinion about what they would like to see in the village and how they would like money to be spent. Aside from these discussions over participation and engagement, these adults rarely spoke about other interactions with young people, seeing them as a problem to be solved more than as co-community members. Conversely, young people frequently talked about their relationships with these adults. Over the course of the rest of this chapter, I explore some of the ways that young people interacted, beginning with, in the next section, the way young people felt about the RVA.

4.2.2 Young people's perceptions of adult decision makers

Despite the above attempts by the RVA to engage with young people living in Romsworth, when I asked young people who made decisions or whether they knew what the RVA did, most of them were either unaware of their existence or unclear about what they did.

"I don't, no. I know Mick from youth club, he's involved with 'em. And my next door neighbour. But I think it's like neighbourhood watch and like that isn't it?"

(Joanne)

"I didn't even know they existed"

(Ben)

"I haven't really got a clue, no…I think there's one lady and she's blonde, and she, like, is in charge of everything but that's as far as I know."

(Tamar)

Most young people had heard of the RVA and were aware that they did 'something' in the village but most were not sure exactly what this was. This confusion was, at least in part, due to the newness of the community, with the role of the RVA changing and evolving according to the need and the design of the development.

Joanne was twenty and I met her through attending the youth group, where she was a volunteer. Joanne also worked full time for the local nursery, had a part time weekend job at Next in Northamptonshire and regularly babysat for people living in Romsworth on Saturday evenings. When I first interviewed Joanne she was living with her mum and two younger sisters and planning to move in with her boyfriend to a house in Romsworth. Joanne saw herself as being actively involved in the community and mostly spent the small amount of free time she had in Romsworth, rather than leaving the village to visit friends who lived in nearby towns.

Significantly, Joanne saw herself as being actively involved with the community and knew various members of the RVA through these different positions. But even Joanne was unaware of what the RVA did.

Only one of the young people I spoke to, Charlotte, had a vague understanding of what the RVA did:

Charlotte, at twenty-six, was the oldest of the young people I talked to. At the time of the first interview, she had been living in Romsworth for approximately eight months and had moved there with her boyfriend. Just before the first interview she had split up with her boyfriend and was living on her own away from family and friends who lived in Oxfordshire. Charlotte had previously run her own business, which had failed during the UK economic recession, and she had taken a job working behind the Centre bar in order to make ends meet. She worked full time behind the bar, across a number of different shifts, which meant that alongside being able to give a perspective on what life was like for somebody in their mid-twenties living in Romsworth, she also had a 'behind the scenes' knowledge of the running of the Centre and was able to offer a slightly different perspective on notions of community from this position.

Her knowledge of the RVA came mainly from working in the bar, their regular meetings were held in the function room of the Centre so she knew most members through working there. She was also the only young person who expressed any interest in somehow getting involved in what the RVA did.

"I was thinking, I don't think I'd be able to do it though because I work here, I'm not sure, like getting involved in the RVA and all that sort of thing because I think it's a lot of in their forties, thirties, forties type of thing. And I don't know whether a younger view would either be a good thing or whether I'd just get pushed to the side all the time."
(Charlotte)

Charlotte felt that the RVA was dominated by older people and felt that they needed a younger perspective in the decisions they made but feared that she wouldn't be taken seriously if she did decide to join. Charlotte also told me that the RVA was made up mainly of men, and that she also thought that a female

perspective would be beneficial to their thinking and decision-making. While this is a common problem with the demographics of parish council organisations like this, this again demonstrates the problems involved with decision makers in new developments following old models of making these decisions. Those not represented often feel excluded and are therefore less likely to get involved. Mick echoed this

"I'm the youngest on it, right, now you might think okay, and I'm in my fifties, so most of them are in their sixties, so they hate kids." (Mick)

Mick felt that the age of the RVA meant that young people were not always fairly represented within there. As the youth group leader, he was the spokesperson for young people at these meetings. But young people (even those who knew him well) were often unaware or unsure of the work that he and the RVA did and did not necessarily know that these were the people they needed to talk to in order to get things done.

4.2.3 Communication breakdown?

As a result of young people being unclear on the role of the RVA, and adults believing that young people were not interested in getting involved, there was an apparent disconnect or a miscommunication between young people and these adult decision makers. Geoff acknowledged this but seemed unable to find a way forwards

"there is a disconnect I think and as I was careful to say a couple of minutes ago, I'm not saying it's their fault, not for a second" (Geoff)

But this disconnect was also, at times, due to the way that the RVA communicated with young people. Often issues of communication were connected to a fear of raising expectations among young people. Mick

demonstrated a clear desire and need to talk to young people about what they wanted but seemed to have a great deal of difficulty in engaging young people to do this

Extract from fieldwork diary:

In the interview with Mick today he talked a lot about wanting to engage young people in what he was trying to do but also said that he really struggled to do this. He seemed to think that we might be able to help him and asked on a number of occasions whether we could give him a list of points for things that young people wanted to see. I find this difficult because the focus of my research is not the same as what he wants to get from young people and the way I see it he needs to talk to young people themselves because the answers aren't as simple as a list of five things young people would like to see.

His concerns were, in part, down to engaging young people and promising something that would not be delivered and he suggested that councils work on different timescales to the expectations of young people.

"And say look they want xxxx and they want it now because I'm the same, I work in the same dinosaur timescales and you want with, working with councils and committees and that's always been my frustration with it, why can't we just say okay do we agree on that?...They'll expect and, well they expect a lot of the fifteen year olds that you're talking to or sixteen, what they want will have changed and the sixteen year olds they'll, seventeen, they might not even be here they might be at university but that, you know, you can imagine yourselves maybe two or three years ago what you were like, what you were doing, and that's the problem you've got but inherently as a village we need to put something in place"
(Mick)

Therefore, Mick was fearful that asking young people what they would like to see would raise expectations and therefore make them more disappointed when facilities either took time or were not delivered at all. Issues of communication were also highlighted by comments made by both young people and Mick when talking about what they would like to see for young people in the village (see also Hill 2006; Tholander 2007; and Faulkner 2009 on issues of communication). Mick told me

> "I said was, and I think I've told you this before is that I said I would get a mobile home, which was twenty five feet by twelve foot and basically put that on the area where the play area was going to go, right... what I'll do is I'll get electricity in there and it can be put over to them, they can do what they want and I got absolutely no response from the youth"
> (Mick)

> "I could probably get second hand TVs, I could probably have got a couple of music players with, anything they wanted in that but again it's not good enough, they want fifty inch TVs, they want, yeah, and they've all got that at home, they've all got that in their bedrooms"
> (Mick)

Mick wanted an area for older young people to go and thought that a mobile home on the field could provide this, but he went on to say that he had had no interest from young people when he had put this to them as an idea. He suggested that this lack of interest was due to young people having everything they wanted at home.

Contrary to this, among the young people that I spoke to, a space of their own was something that many were keen to see in Romsworth. Some talked of the difficulties of hosting a large group of friends at their house (Lieberg 1995; Matthews et al 2000a) and suggested a place where they could all meet was important to them.

"Like I'd say sports would be a good one or like a little shed with a pool table. Somewhere we can all just go. We wouldn't trash it because we'd be grateful that they've actually done something for us. Like, you look in there (the Centre) and they've got a youth club going there now, which I used to go to, but which got closed down. It's all for the younger generation, it's never for us, never, ever."
(Ben).

"Julie: More things for young people to do, like, maybe their own building or something.

Jane: Like a youth centre or something.

Julie: But not as in a youth centre for twelve year olds…

Jane: For older…

Julie: Like for fifteen, sixteen and up.

Jane: Just somewhere we can go."

(Julie and Jane)

Ben was 16 and part of the friendship group of young people I interviewed. Ben and his family did not actually live in Romsworth, having moved to a farm in the area twelve years earlier, before development on Romsworth had begun. Ben's parents had sold some of their farmland to Romsworth's developers and the family continued to live on the farm on the outskirts of Romsworth. When I first met Ben he was on study leave from school and completing his GCSEs. He had also set up his own business, which was in its infancy and he was in the process of deciding whether to go to college or concentrate his efforts into his business. Ben was, to some extent, seen as one of the group leaders and organisers but as I went through the process of interviews with this group, fractures began to show and Ben drifted away from the group.

Ben, Julie and Jane, when asked what they would like to see in the village, all made reference to a space of their own. With these examples, it is difficult to know who Mick actually spoke to, it may not have been the same young people

I spoke to. Even if we both spoke to the same young people, my position as a researcher, asking young people what they would like to see in the village, is very different to that of an established adult suggesting facilities to them. Even so, this still highlights the difficulties in communication between young people and adult decision makers. Essentially, both would have liked to see the same facilities but had difficulty communicating this to each other.

Whilst these communication issues were based on the more formalised process of participation and consultation, young people also spoke in positive terms about their, more informal, relationships with village decision makers. Most respondents told me that they knew various members of the RVA either through hobbies, clubs that they were part of, or through their parents. Julie and Jane talked about knowing Geoff really well because they had moved to the village in its infancy in the same way that he had. They told me that for several years after moving to the village, Geoff had held New Year's Eve parties and they had gone along to these. Their parents still knew Geoff well and they saw him regularly. When I asked them whether they knew about the RVA they told me

> "Julie: What's that…Romsworth Village Association!
> Jane: Is that what Geoff's in?
> Julie: Yeah Geoff's the chair. We love Geoff, Geoff's lovely.
> Jane: My dad used to be on the RVA."
> (Julie & Jane)

I met Julie and Jane at the second Romsworth bonfire I attended. They defined themselves as being 'best friends' and told me that they had both lived in the village for over ten years, their parents having moved to the village in its infancy when Julie and Jane were young children. Julie and Jane had met at the first village bonfire and had been friends ever since.

Both said that their parents still got involved with the RVA and they volunteered at community events such as the fun day and the bonfire.

Therefore, not only do young people in the village know RVA members socially but, also, some of the people involved with the RVA have children themselves.

Others, such as James, told me that they knew Vic through the drama club and that they got along with him well.

> "I, you know, get on really well with Vic and he's in the council, the borough council or whatever it is. And I've never really talked to him about this but I will talk to him if I walk past him in the street, coz I don't do the dramatics thing anymore, so I don't really talk to them. We haven't really been asked to kind of give our opinion."
> (James)

Therefore young people and adult RVA members knew each other and spent time together more frequently than they seemed to acknowledge. The difference lay in their relationships being outside of the boundaries of these attempts at participation and consultation. These relationships suggested a more informal way of looking to the future and attempting to involve and engage young people in the decision making process. See also 4.5 Intergenerational friendships for further information on these more positive relationships.

4.2.4 The skate park

Despite fears from members of the RVA that consultation with young people would lead to expectations being raised, many of the young people I talked to recognised that what they wanted to see would not be delivered quickly (if at all) and this came from their personal experiences of trying to get facilities built. A group of young people from the same friendship group told me about their attempts to get a Skate park built in the village. These attempts had so far been unsuccessful but they had persevered. This highlighted the resignation among these young people that facilities would not be built overnight but also

demonstrated both their continued engagement and creativity in attempting to get a space of their own.

Adam told me how this had started

"I mean, a few years ago, me and a few of my friends used to be really into skating and we petitioned, we got a petition out for a skate park and we got loads of people to sign it and it's always been on the Romsworth council agenda as the top thing they've got to do, get a skate park in or something. It's just never happened and it would just, I think it'd be nice to have it around but erm…I know it's very costly. So…but there is nothing for people my age to do, other than go out of the village but if you're like me and you've got a lot of friends here you can just hang out."
(Adam)

Adam was seventeen and working part time in the café when I first met him. He had begun a college course as a tree surgeon at the start of that academic year but had decided that this was the wrong choice of career and was therefore taking a year out from education before starting college to study A-levels the following September. He took the job in the café and worked there several days a week depending on when he was needed. Adam described his ethnicity as 'mixed white/afro-Caribbean' and out of the eighteen young people I spoke to, he was the only one who didn't define as 'white-British'.

Adam and his friends had gone through a detailed and methodical process in attempting to get facilities for their age group. In a later interview he talked about the way that the group had continued in their efforts to get the skate park built but that it was difficult to maintain enthusiasm and focus over the course of several years.

"I petitioned it…I still need to go to these meetings at the Centre, I just haven't had time really, it's been very hectic. Erm…and my

mates, they're even less organised than me, it's nearly impossible but so they can't really help me out."

(Adam)

It is worth noting here that at the time of the interview, this particular participant was at college full time and also had a part time job in the café leaving him with little time to work on this as a project. But the fact that he was still trying to move forwards with this several years after conceiving the idea meant that these young people still believed that there was a chance of them eventually getting the skate park. But their efforts in this were not recognised by adults who perceived that young people wanted spectacular facilities but were not prepared to do anything to get them.

"via the youth group when it was focussed more on slightly older children than the current youth club is we asked endlessly and it wasn't, it wasn't particularly well structured, I mean badly organised, it was, was much more loose, the current youth club is very, you know, these are the rules, da de da de da, this was much more loose if you like, but you know, we took forever to get a list of what kind of things they want, like we want a skateboard, a swimming pool, a heliport and on and on. But what are you prepared to do to help? Well nothing really it appeared to us."

(Geoff)

However, young people's continued engagement in the skate park contradicted these comments from Geoff. And more significantly, informal conversations with some young people revealed that although they were behind the campaign for the skate park, they were not necessarily fans of skateboarding themselves. Instead, they saw that a skate park would be a space of their own

Extract from fieldwork diary

Today I had an informal conversation with a couple of young people who told me that while they are behind Adam's campaign for the

skate park, they don't like skateboarding themselves. They said that they want to see this because it will be somewhere they're allowed to go. They told me that whenever they are out, they end up getting moved on.

Matthews et al (2000a) argue that young people use outdoor spaces because these are the only spaces available to them outside of the adult gaze. Woolley (2006) argues that as young people get older, they develop a greater desire to spend time away from the adults in their lives. But she points to the way that policy on public space leaves teenagers largely 'under catered for' (p.55). Woolley uses the example of the way that skateboarders are problematized suggesting that their use of space is subject to legal, social and physical controls (see also Tucker 2003; Thomson and Philo 2004; and Karsten 2005 on conflict and control over young people's use of outdoor public spaces).

In the example of these young people, they felt that their physical and, more importantly, visible presence was seen as problematic with adults complaining about them or moving them on. For most of these young people, it did not matter what this space was because, as argued by Matthews et al, young people have no access to 'backstage space' (p. 71) (see also Lieberg, 1995) or space that they could gather together to experiment with their identity and assert their independence. Therefore, these young people took a tactical approach to attempting to get a space of their own, even though most of them were no longer fans of skateboarding they saw a skate park as a space that they were likely to get as opposed to other types of spaces they could have petitioned for.

The planning and design of Romsworth is also significant here, in that despite this development (and others like it) being aimed at families, there is simply no formal provision for young people in this age group (Matthews and Limb, 1999). Further to this, even in spaces which were designed for everybody to use, such as the park, (mentioned above) and also the street, young people's presence was seen as being problematic (see 4.4 Rules, regulations and being moved on)

This section has dealt with the intergenerational relationships of young people and adults in terms of decision-making and facilities in Romsworth. Young people's relationships with adult decision makers were not always easy, there was a clear disconnect between adults who wanted to engage young people in the decision making process and young people who often wanted to be involved in this process too. Problems were often due to issues of communication, misunderstandings and an inconsistent approach in eliciting opinions from young people. Often, the ideas of young people and adults were very similar and on the less formal platform of social events, young people and adults often spent time together. While, to some extent, these examples highlight the lack of communication and the disconnect between young people and the RVA. They also demonstrate that, on an individual level, young people and adults living in Romsworth knew and communicated with each other on a more frequent basis than they often acknowledged. From both the perspective of RVA members struggling to engage with young people and from the perspective of young people not knowing who to talk to in order to get the things they would like to see in the village, the picture that was painted to me was sometimes a bleak one. But these relationships happened on a less formal level with most of these young people knowing at least one RVA member and while the RVA saw that they struggled to communicate with young people on a formal basis, young people were often keen to help out and volunteer with community events. In the next section I explore the way that young people felt they were represented in local and national media and the impact this had on their relationships with the wider community of adult residents in Romsworth.

4.3 Young people's perceptions of representations of their age group

Young people's perceptions of the way they were represented also had an impact on their intergenerational relationships. Studies of young people, particularly those focusing on youth cultures and subcultures, have often

explored links between young people and representation (Cohen 1972; Hebdige 1979; Thornton 1996,) but have not addressed the way young people themselves perceived and felt about these representations. During interviews, I asked young people about how they felt that their age group was represented in local and national media and whether this had any impact on the way they felt they were perceived in their relationships with other age groups within the village. Young people had differing views about these representations but suggested that media representations, to a certain extent, played a part in the way they were perceived by adults both inside and outside the village.

Most of the older young people (those aged eighteen and older) did not see themselves as fitting into the bracket of 'young people', considering themselves simply as 'adults'. Instead, they talked more in terms of younger young people (those aged under eighteen) and how these younger young people must feel about representations of their age group. This aside, most of the young people I spoke to (whether they were older or younger) felt that this age group was not represented in a particularly positive light in either local or national media.

> "I think in any news, you only hear the negativity of things really. Like in the local papers it's like, local youth stabbed, local youth jailed. But I really think it's quite negative in the papers. You hear, I think it's quite rare that they put the positive things about youths in the newspaper nowadays, I really think that."
> (Kayleigh)

> "Easily to blame, I think. I think if something happens, oh well they're just kids, oh it's because the kids did it, do you see what I mean and I think, I think...if you don't really know who it was, if someone graffitied something, you'd just automatically...I do it, everybody does it. You just automatically think, oh it must be like, those kids. See what I mean? But I could have gone and done it the night before, do you see what I mean?"
> (Charlotte)

"Probably like yobs, like they're going to get up to trouble and a lot of older people, they'd think they're up to no good, but yeah, most places I think. Especially if you're in a gang, they probably think you're up to no good."
(Joanne)

"I think, well we're only mentioned in them like I sort of…I don't know really, like if something bad happens I guess. There's never anything good about us in there and I think that's where the stereotypical comes in. Stuff comes in…yeah, like a teen burglar or something like that."
(Tamar)

In these examples, whether the individuals considered themselves to be young people or not, they saw that young people were not represented particularly well within local and national media. Several of these examples make reference to negative, stereotypical views of young people as being part of gang culture, being associated with violence or crime, or committing acts of anti-social behaviour. There were also more specific references to the way that these representations fed into the way that young people were viewed within the village. Charlotte (above) discussed the way that young people were automatically blamed for things they may or may not have done, pointing out that an adult could also have committed these acts but that the finger is never pointed in the direction of adults.

However, not all respondents thought that all young people were *always* represented in a bad light. Several drew distinctions between the way in which local and national media represented young people and also drew a distinction between rural and urban young people. In these cases, young people very much saw themselves as being part of rural young people and sometimes referred to the stereotypes that the media used in order to describe what being an urban young person might be like.

"I don't think they depict us as like angry youths who just wanna stab everyone up but just a bit annoyed a bit fed up. I think that's really it. I think the press is…the press kinda supports youths okay, they never really put us in a bad light unless like riots and protests but then, course the media's going to make that look like a huge thing, they ain't gonna sell papers otherwise, know what I mean? So unless it's in the cities, because for rural youths like us depicted, we don't kind of have any media…we're not really a focus, we're a bit crap, we're not, we don't do much. Whereas in the cities and stuff it's like, youths in the city…erm…angry, not to be…erm…socialised with or to cast out more or less from the rest of everybody else. Whereas most people from the cities, youths that I know, just like everyone else. In fact they're better because they're a lot more charismatic and coz living in a city they're a bit more switched on generally."
(Adam)

"It's weird like normally, it's like, we'll be perceived like the pain in your back if like…but then you get like…there's a few newspapers that'll post like a picture of a football team saying that all these kids have done so much with their lives and all that, and like promoting them as amazing. But then the majority of the people, the normal people are just like twats, so I don't know…It's weird like, media are like, blame everything on youths and stuff which like…ASBOs and fires and stuff like arson, they'll probably blame it on some youths who were seen running from the scene and all this and all that. But then you get a few times where they'll just make some other kids look like absolute bloody angels."
(Ben)

Adam felt that rural youths were depicted as not knowing as much as their urban counterparts. He suggested that he also perceived this to be the case

telling me that that urban young people are 'more charismatic' and 'a bit more switched on'. Leyshon (2002) aims for his research to further "our limited understanding of how rural youth come to situate themselves within discourses of the countryside and articulate their hybrid identities" (p.179) and examines rural young people's relationships with identity and place. Leyshon (2008) goes on to explore this relationship suggesting that research into rural young people has marginalized them by separating them from urban young people. Further to this, Vanderbeck and Dunkley (2003) explore the way that groups of urban and rural young people view the differences between urban and rural and Jones (2002) suggests that the rural is constructed as a perfect place for children whereas the urban is seen as unsuitable and dangerous. Matthews and Tucker (2007) explore the ways in which young people perceive and experience their rurality. For Adam, there was a clear distinction in the way that urban and rural young people were represented suggesting that urban youths are those who were surrounded with the stereotype of violence, criminality and anti-social behaviour.

Ben echoed Valentine's (1996) (see also Holloway and Valentine, 2000) assertion that mass media representations depict young people as either an angel or devil figure. Ben gave examples of young people being either praised or criticised for their behaviour suggesting that young people only make the news when they have done something spectacularly good or spectacularly bad.

4.3.1 Representation and intergenerational perceptions

Young people also had a range of different ideas about how they thought these representations impacted on the way that they were perceived by different age groups in Romsworth. Julie and Jane told me that adults who knew them knew that they were from Romsworth so therefore did not perceive that they would cause trouble or be a problem. They compared this to how they would be viewed if they lived in Northampton or Kettering or how they felt they were viewed when they were out in these towns.

"Jane: If I'm going into town and I really can't be bothered, I'll shove my trackies on, put a hoody on and people are like, oh, she's a bit chav. No, not everyone's like that, I just can't be bothered to make the effort. Whereas in Romsworth, I think it's a bit different…

Julie: I don't think I've ever seen the lads in anything but their trackies. Even when they went to the cinema, they were still wearing their trackies, not even their jeans, it's like, what are you doing.

Jane: In Romsworth, people look at you and they think, oh they live in Romsworth, they're not going to cause any trouble. If you're walking through Kettering and it's like, oh, they've got a hoody on, they're going to…"

(Julie and Jane)

Jane and Julie felt the clothes they wore (see Hebdige, 1979) were an important factor in the way that adults viewed them. In the first example, Jane suggested that she would usually go into town in different, smarter clothes, but on the occasions when she 'really can't be bothered' she felt that adults viewed her differently to the way they would if she was wearing different clothes. Julie and Jane went on to say that in Romsworth they were much more comfortable wearing clothes like tracksuits and hoodies because people in Romsworth knew who they were and did not see the clothes they were wearing as being important. This is because of the relationships that Julie and Jane had built with adults living there and Romsworth as a new development was also significant, as they told me that a lack of young people in the village had meant that they had grown up interacting with adults much more than people of their age living elsewhere might. In relation to my first aim, this highlights the difference in the way that these young people experienced their intergenerational relationships to the ways that such relationships are experienced elsewhere. The newness of the development meant that their relationships with older (and sometimes younger people) were closer than other young people living in areas with a larger number of others in their age group. Not all young people saw the clothes they wore in Romsworth as

unproblematic with some telling me that their clothes and the lack of young people living there meant that they were more easily recognisable than they might be if they lived in a bigger place (see 4.4 Rules, regulations and being moved on).

Julie and Jane also felt their age group was perceived (both in Romsworth and in nearby towns) and represented differently depending on what was happening in the rest of the country. Julie pointed to the way she thought she was viewed when she went to a nearby town during the UK riots in the summer of 2011.

> "During that time span when the riots were happening, I walked
> through Kettering and all the elderly people glare at you because
> they think, you're another one like them. Every youth got glared at
> and I'm nothing like that."
> (Julie)

In this example, Julie perceived that she was seen as more of a threat during and closely following the UK riots, than she had previously perceived (see Benyon 2012 for an overview of the riots; Treadwell et al 2013 and Valluvan et al 2013 for a focus on discussions of consumerism in Birmingham and London, and Manchester respectively during the riots; Smith 2013 who compares the 2011 riots to those that took place in 1981; and Bhattacharyya 2013 who addresses representations of regionalism). She put this down to the way other young people were behaving in other parts of the country. In this example, she felt that she has been set apart from older people living in a similar locality and that adults were stereotyping all young people based on the behaviour of a few that had made the news.

Young people recognised that there was a relationship between the way that their age group was represented in both local and national media and the way that they were perceived both within Romsworth and in nearby towns. But most were clear to point out that they did not see this relationship as being

clear-cut, suggesting that young people were presented in a variety of ways –
often as polar opposites such as the angel/devil figure (Valentine, 1996) – and
that these representations varied according to different types of media and in
accordance with specific events that were taking place in the country at the
time.

Following on from these perceptions of young people in the wider context of
local and national media, the next section deals with young people's
perceptions of how they were viewed in Romsworth, specifically addressing
the rules they saw themselves as subject to.

4.4 Rules, regulations and being moved on

Matthews and Limb (1999) argue that 'most places are designed to reflect only
adult values and usages' (p.65) and this was a clear issue for young people
living in Romsworth. Young people told me that there was nothing for their age
group to do and therefore, for those who were unable to drive (see 6.4.1
Transport), entertainment during their spare time was limited to staying at
home or being out and about, with friends, in the street. But young people also
saw themselves as subject to rules and regulations when they were out and
visible in the village. This section focuses specifically on the experiences of a
friendship group of fifteen, sixteen and seventeen year olds. Older young
people were less likely to be out and about in the same way, instead, most of
them were able to drive and therefore able to leave the village in order to seek
entertainment elsewhere. If they did spend time out in the village this was
doing an activity like walking their dogs, running or bike riding whereas
younger young people were out, seemingly, without a sense of purpose.
Further to this, older young people *looked* older and were therefore not viewed
as a problem even if they were out and visible. Matthews et al (2000b) argue

> "it is when they are out and about that young people are frequently
> defined as a problem. Their visibility in public spaces is often seen
> as discrepant and undesirable. Young people, here, are a polluting

presence, because by congregating together they are seen to be challenging the hegemony of adult ownership of public space" (p.281)

Young people frequently talked about rules in relation to their interactions with adults in Romsworth. Sometimes these rules were explicit with young people being directly told that certain behaviours were unacceptable, but more often than not they were implicit and came about through a variety of interconnected ways. Young people talked about how these rules developed over time through specific incidents, which took place in specific physical spaces and were reported and communicated to the rest of the village through virtual spaces.

4.4.1 Establishing the rules

When I started fieldwork in Romsworth, one of the first things I noticed was that young people were not a visible presence there. I was looking for young people to interview and I thought that public spaces would be a good place to find potential research participants but young people did not congregate around the shops or the Centre, which in terms of the way that development in structured, acts as the hub of the community.

> *Extract from fieldwork diary*
> *Something I noticed today when I went back to my car, which was parked by the shops, was that I very rarely see young people. In other developments, the shops would be a key place for young people to hang out (and for me to talk to young people) but here, no matter what time of the day (or evening) it is, I very rarely see individual young people and never see groups hanging around.*

In interviews with young people, I asked why they thought people their age were less present in Romsworth than in other places. Tamar told me,

"Tamar: I don't know, it's really strange, I don't know. It's just got different rules I guess and people have just adapted to them rules while you're in the village. Like, when, if I go into [a nearby village] then yeah, I would hang around the shop and stuff, it's just different ways, I dunno.

Sarah: And are those rules, has anyone ever said those things to you?

Tamar: No, it's just expected.

Sarah: So there's just a feeling?

Tamar: It's an understanding, innit? You kind of expect it. And it's like, people wouldn't want to see us hang around the shop. That's why we go on the field. Coz they, they like, I guess they think we're trying to cause trouble and stuff that we're not. Stereotypical really."

(Tamar)

Tamar was sixteen and had lived in the village for two years (which compared to other participants was a relatively short space of time). Her family had moved from a nearby town and a deciding factor in her parents' decision to move to Romsworth was problems that Tamar had been having with bullying both inside and outside of school. Since moving to Romsworth, Tamar had started a new school and joined the friendship group of young people that I met.

Tamar saw Romsworth as having different 'rules' to other places that she might spend her time and, in an indirect way, these rules are also related to original notions of Romsworth as a community where behaviours are regulated. In a nearby village she 'would hang around the shop and stuff' but in Romsworth she felt that adult community members would not tolerate this behaviour because they did not want to see young people hanging around the shop. Tamar went on to tell me that when friends came to visit they also found this strange and needed (with help from Tamar) to moderate their behaviour in response to these perceived rules. Valentine (2008) suggests that people

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would rather avoid than experience difference but goes on to suggest that in encounters between people who are different most people are civil and respectful despite the beliefs they hold in private. Young people living in Romsworth found that this was not always the case with older people frequently behaving aggressively towards them when their behaviour was seen to transgress these rules. Valentine also suggests that the term tolerance is problematic because it implies an inherent power hierarchy with those being tolerant as powerful and those being tolerated as weak. This is demonstrated by the way that young people, like Tamar, saw their behaviours as subject to rules. There was an implicit power hierarchy in the need to regulate young people's behaviours and in the suggestion of some of these behaviours not being tolerated. For Tamar, it went unquestioned that 'people wouldn't want to see us hanging around the shop'.

Young people talked about moderating their behaviour in response to perceived rules or in response to adults complaining about them

> "Even if we just come and sit outside like in the summer we'd get told to move from like the parents and stuff because they've got their little ones playing on the climbing frame and stuff like that and we just get told to move. And like stuff like that and the boys will be playing with their football, which is fair enough, then parents will come over and be like, oh I don't want you coming near my kids with that ball. And like, we've got nowhere else to go."
> (Tamar)

> "No, we're away from everything, like usually we're either inside someone's house or over there [on the playing field]. I don't think people usually bother if we're over there. Or we're just walking around."
> (Ben)

"I think, we'd kind of get in trouble if we hung around the shop really. I don't think they'd like it, they've got cameras up and everything. I don't think they'd like us hanging round it."

(Tamar)

In the first example Tamar talked about being out on the playing field and park. This area was perceived as belonging to younger children and young people felt that adults (particularly those who were parents of younger children) saw their presence there as a threat. Valentine (1996) discusses the way that mass media representations portray children and young people in an angel/devil role. Holloway and Valentine (2000) reiterate this and talk about parents seeing their own children in the role of the innocent and other people's children as being dangerous. And Valentine (2003) argues that underlying these sorts of fears about dangerous children is the assumption that spaces, such as the playing field, belong to adults. As a result of these kinds of perceptions, many of the young people I spoke to felt that they were not welcome in community spaces such as, in this example, the playing field and the park because they were either seen as being too old or not old enough.

In the second example, Ben talked about either staying inside or being on the other side of the playing field where the group would be less visible. As discussed by Matthew et al (2000b) at the beginning of this section young people are not perceived to be a problem if they are out of the way or if they are walking around because they are not a constant presence. Meanwhile, Tamar talked about the way the group moderated their behaviour in response to the surveillance of the security cameras. What she says suggests that they have never even tried hanging around the shop, that this surveillance puts them off from the start.

Matthews et al (2000a) (see also the example of the skate park) talk about 'the street', which they define as

'a metaphor for all public outdoor places in which children are found, such as roads, cul-de-sacs, alleyways, walkways, shopping areas, car parks, vacant plots and derelict sites'(p.63)

And this definition is essentially what the young people in the examples above were talking about in terms of the places they use. Matthews et al suggest that 'the street' acts as a thirdspace through which young people can gather to assert their independence and identity but that this space has to be won from adults and is always in danger of being lost again to adult cultures. Furthermore, most of these young people felt that adult community members saw their presence in physical community spaces as problematic. James told me that his age group was not positively perceived by adults

> "James: (Laughs) everyone hates us.
> Sarah: Everyone hates you?
> James: It sucks.
> Sarah: Explain hating you?
> James: Everyone looks at us like, oh all these bad things. It's like, have you seen Hot Fuzz?
> Sarah: Yeah.
> James: It's like that, we're like they're gonna pick us off one by one. Coz we threaten the pride of the place. It's like, any problem here, they'll just put it down…because they see us, because we're visible, coz were out, coz we've got nowhere to go. It's like, oh I can see them, something else has gone wrong elsewhere, put the two together, oh wow, they did it. No we didn't, we didn't steal your garden gnome." (James)

James felt that it was not only the group's presence, but also their visibility that was problematic to adult residents of Romsworth. This is significant in terms of the newness of the development. Despite only being in existence for the last ten years, and despite developers and residents striving for the ideal of community, lack of planning for facilities for young people meant that young

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people's presence was frequently considered to be particularly problematic (hence James' reference above to threatening the 'pride of [Romsworth]'). While this is a common problem in more established developments, the newness and importance of a sense of developing community at Romsworth seemed to heighten issues that exist in older communities (see 4.4.2 Ambiguous spaces, particularly with reference to lack of history).

This was something that I experienced myself during a guided walk with James and Adam. We sat for some time in the village pond, an area that used to be filled with water but had drained and never been refilled. Figure 8 shows the pond as I saw it in the early stages of fieldwork. Figure 9 shows the pond towards the end of fieldwork when the water had drained away. The pond is at an intersection of roads but dips down so offers some degree of privacy and protection from traffic noise and the wind.

Figure 8 The Pond – January 2011

Extract from fieldwork diary

James, Adam and I had been sitting in the pond for some time when two elderly ladies came along. They were on the outer edge, looking in and although they didn't speak to us, I felt a tangible sense that they were going to tell us off for being there and I noticed that none of us looked directly at them, preferring instead to keep our heads down. I have since listened back to the recording of the walk and realised that at that point, we all lowered our voices to almost a whisper as though we were trying not to be noticed.

Figure 9 The Pond - October 2011 by James

As part of *the Sustainable Communities Plan* the report *Living Places: Safer, Greener, Cleaner* suggests that many public spaces are in poor or unusable conditions. In fact, James and Adam told me that they were unsure who was responsible for this pond and that a group of volunteers living in Romsworth had cleared it on more than one occasion. Despite the erratic upkeep of the pond as a space, James and Adam told me that this is one of their favourite places and they visit it both as a group and sometimes when they are on their own. In this sense, spaces that are seen as unusable to the majority of people become an attractive option for young people who feel that their use of other public spaces is regulated or controlled.

Young people perceived that they were subject to certain rules that had been established by both direct regulation of their behaviour and by surveillance mechanisms in place – for example security cameras outside the shops. Several young people felt that they behaved differently in Romsworth to the way that they would behave elsewhere so, contrary to the ideal of new development with a commitment to creating community having inclusive spaces for all,

many of the young people I spoke to felt that their behaviour was more regulated here than in other places they might go. This was something that I also experienced myself, both noting that young people were rarely visible in public spaces but also feeling this sense of not belonging or not being welcome when out in public with young people.

Young people rarely told me about fighting back and using spaces that they perceived adults did not want them to use, instead they challenged and subverted these rules in much more subtle ways. Firstly, because they perceived that their visibility was seen as the problem they often used spaces that were out of the way of the adult gaze (Valentine 1996; Matthews et al 2000a; Skelton 2000). Spaces like the other side of the playing field and the pond were favourites for the group to congregate. Secondly (see 4.2.4 The skate park) a group of young people used direct action in petitioning for a skate park. Significantly, they told me that none of the group was particularly fond of skateboarding, but they saw this as something that adults were likely to 'give' to them and therefore it would be a space that belonged to them. In this sense, young people were balancing what they would like to get against what they were likely to get carefully thinking through and negotiating what they saw adults would give them.

The rules were under a constant process of development and change, with young people often unclear about what was and was not appropriate. New rules often came about as a response to incidents that happened when they were out and about in the village. Several of the young people used the same example of an incident that had occurred when they were wandering around the village with a football one evening.

> "as we walked from my house the other night, here's a clear example, we walked past and it's dark and erm...Freddy was just dribbling this ball on the field because we were coming to here [the playing field], like half nine I think, and we walked past this house and erm...nice Mercedes parked outside the house and this man got

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out of it, was just about to close his front door and he opened it again and he shouted at us. He was like, you come anywhere near my car with that ball and I'll have to kill you. And I was like, thanks. I was just like, we weren't even near your car, the thought that you would even say that or think we'd do anything like that to your precious car. We weren't even bothered, we wouldn't do anything like that. They stereotype us really to what other people are like outside the village and they haven't realised that we're not like that."

(Tamar)

"a lot of people are aggressive around this village. Really, I don't know whether they're just, whether they're aggressive people because they're just arseholes or the fact that they feel really protective, like…my mates had a football. Err…we're just walking about, someone's got a football, they're just kicking it about, some guy's coming out of his Mercedes, walks into his house, if this ball touches my fucking car, you're going to fucking pay. And it's just like, what are you doing that for, you don't have to be…and then that makes us angry."

(Adam)

"I think that's kind of why the rules are set in place, that we know do you know what I mean? They haven't been said but we know that's what will happen. And we weren't even expecting him to say that but he did. At the back of our minds, it's like, oh god, don't do that again then."

(Tamar)

The young people talked about how incidents like this developed and reinforced new rules and they suggested that this made them think again about their physical presence in the village. Tamar had previously talked about 'feeling' as though the group should not be present in certain places and went

on to say that incidents like this also made the group realise that there were new rules that they had to abide by.

4.4.2 Ambiguous spaces

Through incidents like the one above, new rules emerged that young people saw themselves as having to comply with. I asked whether they ever argued back in situations like these and some respondents told me that certain group members were likely to argue back. Adam told me

> "my mate Ben, if someone says something to him, he's got to say something back and then that spirals out of control"
> (Adam)

Ben told me about such an incident that had spiralled out of control.

> "You know where there's the roundabout and you go down that hill? There's a house down there and we walked across this guy's lawn and he had a massive go at me and erm... I had a go back because I wasn't going to be spoken to like that. And then he came down in his car, took a picture of us...err...and we said he was a paedophile because there was two fourteen year old girls and erm... Then the police got called, my dad came out, Dave's dad came out and a massive right argument about it because we did nothing wrong. All we did, we didn't know it was his grass..."
> (Ben)

This incident occurred in part, due to the ambiguity of some of the spaces in Romsworth. As has been found in other *Sustainable Communities*, the design of Romsworth is such that there are a number of patches of grass for which the usage is unclear, it looks like they might be public spaces, they could be patches of undeveloped land or they might belong to houses (see also Christensen et al, 2013 who discusses similar tensions over patches of land in other new

developments). In this instance, one of these patches of land belonged to a house.

On first glance this looks like an example of an incident that turned into much more than it actually was but this is much more about young people subverting the rules in place here. It is not clear, from this quotation, who actually called the police but the young people told me that they did. In this example, young people are fighting back, not just verbally but by playing on adult fears of being called a paedophile. In a small community like this, it is not a label that anybody wants to get. The parents getting involved suggest that they are telling their parents before anybody else can – something I will come on to later. I actually went to have a look at the patch of grass that they told me about and it was not clear at all that this belonged to any of the houses so this is another example of the design of the space being ambiguous and problems arising from this.

A local councillor talked about the newness of this development making the ambiguity of these spaces problematic for young people living there

> "if your parents grew up there and your peer group is there, you'll go and kick the football about on the High Street or the playing field because your parents did it in previous years. There is no, my parents did this or did any of that, there are no places where we always used to go, so maybe it's something to do with history."
> (Jim)

Therefore, in older places, young people could always argue that other young people have always played football on a patch of grass or always congregated around the shops but in a new development that does not have this history, young people's use of and visibility in these spaces is seen as problematic.

However, Leyshon and Bull (2011) discuss, with reference to rural youth, the part that memory plays in developing the identity of both villages and the

people who live there as well as the relationship between the two. They argue that identity formation is based around narratives and suggests that "narrative is both a story of the self and a tool kit for understanding the world" (p.164). The young people interviewed by Leyshon and Bull echoed what was said by the young people in this study, that their presence was viewed as problematic by adults living in the village. Leyshon and Bull argue that, in much the same way as young people in my study saw themselves as subject to rules, the young people in his study saw outdoor spaces as governed by adult codes of conduct. In this sense, memory and history can also serve to exclude and enforce rules and does not necessarily make spaces less ambiguous.

4.4.3 Virtual surveillance

Virtual community spaces such as the village forum, village Facebook groups and the village newsletter were also a key way through which rules were defined. Young people often talked about these various forms of community media interchangeably and saw these various forms of media as another way through which their behaviour was regulated and the rules were enforced. Significantly, young people viewed these spaces as being by adults, for adults. When I asked Adam who these spaces were aimed at, he told me:

> "Adam: Sixty plus.
> Sarah: Really?
> Adam: Summat like that. Yeah, people, old people ain't got nothing better to do. No more time left."
> (Adam)

These spaces were also used as a surveillance tool, both by their parents and by adult community members more generally.

> "Yeah, there's village forum my mum uses that. Like, there'll be something happening in the village and my mum will be like, was that you causing all that trouble? And I'm like, no."

(James)

"It's people posting things, like I think one I've recently looked at is that someone was having an argument or something and erm…they'd posted, silly boys kicking the football around on there. And it's like people posting things on there to stop people doing it. And it's like when I used to work at erm, the fish and chip van and people used to post on there what they didn't like about it. Just a community thing really"
(Tamar)

"There's a village site I think. It just err…lets you know about all the trouble makers. We've been on it a few times."
(Ben)

Adult community members often used these spaces as a way to 'report' or publicise young people's behaviour that was deemed to be unacceptable. Community members needed to be at least thirteen years old to sign up for an account on the forum so anybody younger than that was unable to engage in debate about the village. Some of the adult stakeholders that I spoke to suggested that they would like to see 'youth' sections of the forum and newsletter rather than specifically encouraging young people to participate alongside adults. But by the time I completed fieldwork, there were still no 'youth' sections of either of these.

On a guided walk with Adam and James, they gave me an example of some of their friends appearing on the village forum and in the newsletter, and this exemplified the way that the rules were developed through physical spaces, incidents and virtual spaces. Adam and James told me that some of their group of friends had been playing football in the car park of the GP's surgery. This happened one evening after the surgery was closed but people in houses overlooking the surgery complained to them and then reported this in village media.

"James: It appeared on the forum. There was some miscreants kicking balls at walls.

Adam: For old people, that's a huge deal.

James: They had a really accurate description of everyone as well.

Adam: Yeah, and we didn't know it was going to be on the newsletter.

James: My mum was reading it out to me and she was like, do you know these people: dark hair, tanned white t-shirt, grey tracksuit bottoms – Freddy.

James: Blonde with a chain around his neck – Dave. It was pretty obvious who it was."

(James and Adam)

James and Adam found this example amusing and throughout interviews several other young people used humour in describing their experiences and feelings in relation to their use of space and the lack of facilities for their age group. Jeffrey (2012) talks about the way that young people often use humour, both as a way of dealing with feelings of powerlessness, and to subverting rules and regulations surrounding them and this example suggests that this is exactly what James and Adam were doing by talking humorously about the way that their groups behaviour is watched and regulated.

Participants also told me about using these virtual spaces as a way of subverting the rules. Adam and his brother took to the forum to complain about the lack of litterbins in the village. Juris and Pleyers (2009) make reference to young people using virtual spaces in a playful and humorous manner as part of activist movements and for the young people I spoke to this was about joining in with what they see as the banality of adult conversations that happen on this website and also trying to challenge adult domination of these spaces by pointing to failings in these spaces. As a result of these young people being frequently out and about, they were in more of a position than many adults to notice a lack of facilities like litterbins. Taking to adult

dominated space, such as the forum, to point out things that adults have missed presents a challenge to adult's domination of both these outdoor and online spaces.

Young people also subverted the surveillance they were subject to, telling me that while they mostly did not get actively involved in what was happening on the village forum and Facebook group, they checked these spaces regularly to see whether people were talking about them, being fully aware that any perceived transgressions would appear on here. James told me

> "Yeah, I'll have a look on it sometimes, if there's anything about us like, erm...or anything about me or something like that, or see if my mum's posted"
> (James)

Others echoed this suggesting that when incidents occurred they would check to see whether they had been reported in community media. Livingstone (2008) points to media panics over young people and their use of social media, which often argues that young people have no sense of privacy. But in this example, young people were turning the tables on adults, because they were not posting messages themselves, nobody knew that they were there, so they were unseen, watching what was being said about them. In this particular instance, James was also checking on what his mum was doing in the same way that she checked on him. Livingstone goes on to argue that

> "for teenagers, the online realm may be adopted enthusiastically because it represents 'their' space, visible to the peer group more than to adult surveillance, an exciting yet relatively safe opportunity to conduct the social psychological task of adolescence" (p.396)

In the above examples, the community online realm had been developed and inhabited by adults living in the village and had become part of the same surveillance that young people felt they were subject to offline. Therefore,

young people had to be more creative in how they went about using these spaces.

'The rules' came about and were reinforced through a complex interplay of physical spaces, incidents and online spaces. Young people's presence in physical spaces was seen as problematic by adult community members and often led to incidents where young people were challenged or told not to do certain things. The lack of history to Romsworth meant that there was no existing precedent for the spaces young people used so these rules were always under a process of negotiation. Incidents that occurred were often reported to the rest of the community via online spaces such as the village forum and the village Facebook group and also through other community media such as the newsletter.

Young people often discovered that fighting back often led to incidents becoming more spectacular so rather than do this young people often subverted these rules in some subtle but effective ways, sometimes using the online spaces they saw as being by adults, for adults either unseen to monitor what their parents (and other adults) were doing or by directly engaging with adults in these spaces, complaining about facilities that were lacking in the village. In terms of physical spaces, young people tended to stay out of the way using spaces that adults did not, such as the side of the playing field furthest away from the houses in the village or the pond (see also 4.2.4 The skate park for ways in which young people tried to balance what they wanted in the village against what they were likely to be able to negotiate from adults). But, as I discovered myself, these places were not always conflict free with adults able to reclaim these spaces at any times.

4.5 Intergenerational friendships

As previous sections and scholarly research have demonstrated, young people and adults did not always have positive relationships, through issues of participation and communication (see Hill 2006; Faulkner 2009; and

Tholander 2009), representation and self perception (see Valentine 1996; Holloway and Valentine 2000; Leyshon 2002 and 2008; and Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2003) and conflict over outdoor spaces (see Matthews et al 2000a; Woolley 2006; Tucker 2003; Thomson and Philo 2004; and Karsten 2005). However, despite this, several young people spoke fondly about intergenerational friendships with adults. In the following section I present four case studies outlining different intergenerational friendships. While the final chapter of this thesis deals with young people's friendships (Bowlby 2011; Bunnell et a 2012), it deals specifically with young people's friendships with other young people. I have included this section within this chapter rather than within the chapter on friendship because it is important to highlight that young people's *intergenerational* relationships with adults living in Romsworth were sometimes much more positive than those I have previously discussed.

4.5.1 Case study one: The Indian take-a-way owners

A significant friendship had developed between the group of fifteen to seventeen year olds and the owners of the local Indian take-a-way. Several participants from this group told me how they had helped to deliver leaflets within Romsworth and to the surrounding villages when the take-a-way first opened.

> "Apart from, well community events, we don't do anything but we
> will help out at the Indian shop, we'll take leaflets and stuff for
> them. Coz we're quite close friends with them. And like we'll go in
> there and we'll probably have an hour conversation with them. We
> get on really well with the Indian owners. That's a nice like another
> bit of a sense of community. We can go in there and like they give us
> huge discount."
> (Ben)

In this example, Ben connected the notions of friendship and community (see following chapters) to the group's relationship with the restaurant owners and

differentiated this relationship from the owner's relationship with other customers that came into the restaurant. For Ben, this relationship was a friendship because the group went into the shop and spent significantly longer in there than people who were simply purchasing meals. Ben also explained that this friendship came about as a result of the group doing something in the spirit of community for the shop owners and receiving benefits in return, the group had initially helped out by delivering leaflets and in return received a discount with the shop. This relationship had developed into a friendship as young people had continued to help out and the owners had continued to give discounts.

Other members of the same group also talked about this relationship and this was often in response to questions I asked them about the notion of community. There were specific places that adults saw as being where community took place, and while young people talked about these too, they also talked at length about their relationships to other people such as the café owner and the owners of the take-a-way.

> "Erm…yeah, this place is pretty cool. And you've got the Indian, it's not really community as such but the blokes in there are pretty cool." (James)

Once again, James ties their friendship with the take-a-way owners to the notion of community suggesting that he sees these people as being part of the group's community. Ben went on to say

> "Yeah, whenever we go in there we'll have a chat and they'll like…we talk to them as if they're our mates and whenever we see them out we're just like, you alright, and just have a chat. It's generally like, we're just, it's a really nice atmosphere when you're like that with a lot of the people."
> (Ben)

Ben was marginally surprised by the relationship the group had with the restaurant owners. His comment that 'we talk to them as if they're our mates' suggested that he did not expect to have friendships like these although whether this was due to the intergenerational nature of the friendship or because the take-a-away owners were at work when the group go in is not quite clear.

This friendship was multi-layered and could also be read in a number of ways, firstly as being one of difference. As discussed (above) many new developments, such as Romsworth, are designed with only adult usage in mind and young people's presence and use of these spaces is often perceived as problematic. Further to this, while I did not discover that ethnicity was problematic in Romsworth, the majority of people living there are white. The owners of the take-a-way, however, were of Asian descent, and the take-a-way had only been open for a short amount of time compared to some of the other shops and services in the area. Therefore, this relationship could be perceived as one of finding common ground as the outsider.

Secondly, this friendship, to some extent, depended on an economic balance in that young people had done a favour for the take-a-way owners and had received something in return in the form of discounts or free meals. This meant that they were likely to help out again in the future, not necessarily for direct payment, but for the same sort of rewards. Therefore, this friendship was also bound together by both parties helping each other out economically.

4.5.2 Case study two: 'Thorpy'

This group of young people also talked about their relationship with a police officer living in the village. These young people affectionately referred to him as 'Thorpy'.

> "Like we get along with, have you heard of Thorpy? He's a police officer here. We're really good friends with him. We can all say hello, have a laugh with him, which is really nice."
> (Ben)

So, as with the take-a-way owners who, unlike some adults in the village, had taken their time to get to know the group, they felt that Thorpy saw them as being an integral part of the village. While Thorpy did not actually work in the village, these young people still talked about the way that he asked them for their opinion of the village, suggesting to them that they had a wider understanding of what actually happened there than people who were out at work all day long. They were so fond of him that they had named a favourite hangout of theirs (a shed on the field where the equipment for Romsworth sports teams was kept) 'Thorpe Lodge' after him. When I asked them why they called it this they said that they didn't really know but that they felt that he deserved to have his own landmark in the village because he was such a 'legend'. This relationship was contrary to Hendry et al (1992) who suggest that while young people have positive relationships with parents and authority figures like youth group leaders, relationships with other people in positions of power, such as police officers and teachers, tend to be less positive

Several young people from this group suggested that Thorpy always had time for them and that he recognised that they spent much more time out and about in the village than adults did. They told me he would frequently tell them that it was their village and ask them if they knew what was happening and whether they had news to report. His recognition that the village belonged as much to them as it did to adults living there was important to the group. Several members of the group had told me in previous interviews how they had a much better understanding of what was happening in the village because they were frequently out and about, whereas adults were frequently away from the village at work or were at home and therefore did not see what was happening.

4.5.3 Case study three: Charlotte's friendship group

Charlotte, a twenty-six year old participant, also told me about her intergenerational friendships within the village. For Charlotte, a lack of young people in her age group meant that her friends were significantly older than her.

> "I've got friends that are in their forties here, do you see what I mean? I'll sit with them all night, do you see what I mean? So it's not so much kind of like the youngsters sit in their group and all that sort of thing, you all just come up here and chat but it's usually, usually the older family type."
> (Charlotte)

This was an issue that was echoed by a number of participants throughout the study. Young people had a variety of ways of dealing with this, from spending very little time in Romsworth because their friendship groups lived elsewhere to forging friendship groups based on the shared experience of living in Romsworth (see 6.3 Friendships of convenience)

For Charlotte, her intergenerational friendships were in part as a result of there being very few people of her age group living in the village and as a result of this she perceived younger and older people stepping outside of the boundaries of their age group in Romsworth. Charlotte suggested that this was due to a variety of factors, firstly because Romsworth was a small place. She reflected on the village in which she had grown up and told me that it was the same there, that she had grown up being friends with young people in a broad age range. Secondly, Charlotte also thought that this lack of young people was down to how expensive the houses in Romsworth were, she suggested that people in her age group couldn't afford to buy a house there so therefore, once young people left the family home, they had to leave the village and were not replaced by other young people moving in. Charlotte also thought that her

intergenerational friendships were in part down to working behind the bar in the Centre, where she worked full-time. She also spent some of her spare time there too and, as a result of this, the people she socialised with also tended to be people who frequented the Centre regularly. In this sense, Charlotte's intergenerational friendships were also specific to Romsworth as a new settlement (see aim one) with the design and the buildings there enhancing her relationships with other people.

As with the young people in the first case study, Charlotte ties her friendships to notions of community suggesting that, unlike bigger places, people mix and are friends with each other out of the boundaries of age groups. But Charlotte also points to the role her own individual circumstances of working behind the bar played in developing and maintaining her friendships.

4.5.4 Case study four: Pat and Pat

Adam and James told me about a friendship they and some of the other members of their group had with a couple they referred to as Pat and Pat. They were only mentioned in the guided walk, prompted by walking past their house, but when I asked Adam and James to tell me more about them it became clear that Adam and James were very fond on them. Pat and Pat were neighbours of Adam and both Adam and James saw them as being strongly involved with community events.

> "Adam: Pat and Pat, the legend, Pat and Pat the best neighbours.
>
> James: There's Adam's house there.
>
> Sarah: You were telling me about Pat and Pat, so…
>
> Adam: They are…
>
> James: A myth…
>
> Adam: No, they are great, they are absolutely the best neighbours ever. They erm…they organise nearly all the community events, along with Vic, and they organise all the panto things.
>
> James: On our first day of college Pat drove us there.

Adam: She helps out my family as well as other families in the village, she's just...

James: She's awesome. She's so cool, for an elderly lady, she's so cool."

(James and Adam)

I went on to ask Adam and James how old Pat and Pat were and they were not entirely sure but guess that they were in their sixties. They told me that Pat and Pat were retired and therefore spent much of their time helping out both with village events but also helping people in the local community. In the (above) example, James and Adam talked about Pat and Pat helping to organise specific community events, again, connecting the notion of friendship to that of community. But further to this, they were also fulfilling a caring role in taking them to college on their first day. This is something that may not have been necessary to James and Adam but they saw this as an act of kindness on the part of Pat and Pat, their parents having been unable to fulfil this role because they were working at the time.

4.6 Summary

While tensions and disconnects between young people and local decision makers over participation and consultation is not uncommon, it is significant that in a new development, these problems continue to exist. It is also significant that young people often spoke of interacting with some of these village decision makers on a more informal basis through different social events. But in a more formalised setting there was still a disconnect between these adults and young people with young people not knowing which organisations or individuals to talk to about problems, issues or facilities they would like to see in the village and decision makers struggling to engage young people in their procedures and processes. However, on an individual level, young people viewed their relationships with these village decision makers much more positively with most young people knowing members of the parish

council either through their parents, through clubs and activities or through work and volunteering.

The young people in my study were involved in and talked about a wide variety of intergenerational relationships. Some of these relationships were viewed in a more negative light with young people feeling that community tensions came about as a result of residents not taking the time to get to know them and stereotyping them as troublemakers. To some extent, young people saw that media representations of their age group fed into perceptions about them in the village, but young people also cited examples from both the newness and the physical design of Romsworth, which meant that seemingly public spaces were ambiguous in terms of their ownership and use. Local decision makers echoed this suggesting that the newness of Romsworth meant that there was no precedent set for how these spaces should be used.

Young people also connected these intergenerational relationships to notions of friendship and community talking about the ways they had developed friendships with older people through either they themselves getting involved and helping others or through others helping them. These friendships also sometimes came about specifically as a result of living in a new development with young people suggesting that a lack of young people living there meant that they had to make friends outside of their age group.

The following chapters further explore these notions of friendship and community exploring young people's experiences and definitions of community specifically in relation to living in a new development like Romsworth and the friendships young people experience both inside and outside the village.

5. Community

5.1 Introduction

This chapter address young people's relationships with community. Community was important to many of the people living in Romsworth and was a term I heard used a great deal over the course of fieldwork. However, many adults used the term uncritically, assuming that creating and building community was positive and something to aim for. Notwithstanding the extent to which people talked about community, the term was often used in the vaguest sense, with people rarely qualifying what they actually meant. This sometimes led to confusion or to misunderstandings, particularly between adults and young people, about what was important in living together in this place. Building on themes and developing issues raised in the previous chapter, specifically perceptions of young people developed by adults, relationships between adults and young people and notions of creating community, this chapter will explore young people's understandings of and relationships to community. Throughout this chapter, I will specifically explore wider notions of community addressing how specific definitions of community encompass what many adults refer to when talking about community. I will then go on to explore young people's notions of community and the way they shape the experiences of young people living in this particular development, at this particular time. Throughout this chapter, I also address the way that these adult notions of community, while not always at odds with young people's understandings of community have a different focus. As discussed in the previous chapter, this can often result in negative perceptions of young people as not wanting to get involved but, often, young people either feel that they are unwelcome in community and perceived as having nothing to offer, or young people are actively involved but in different ways to adults. Some young people also talked about community being less important than other areas of their life. This chapter begins by exploring some of the ways in which adults talked about the notion of community.

5.2 Definitions of community

Adults and young people often had different understandings of community and considered the creation and development of community to be important to varying different degrees. While these understandings, in the main, were not contradictory, there was often a different focus on what was actually important in relation to living in a community. Silk's (1999) definition of community focuses on sharing and commonalities and is suitably broad as to encompass many of the factors that adults (and some young people) talked about and understood to be community. Adults also tended to talk in terms of community as an ideal (Young, 1990) something that they saw as positive and something that they are aiming towards building in Romsworth. And as Liepins (2000a) argues, adults and young people also talked about community in terms of a set of shared meanings and practices. From observations and informal conversations I began to understand that for many of the adults living in Romsworth, community was important and was often a factor for moving to the village (see 3.2 Fieldwork Site).

Several adults and young people talked about the way that specific aspects of community were important to them. Among these, senses of sharing and commonality were important factors and were demonstrated through the ways in which the parish council had come together in order to organise events and develop a vision or an image of what they wanted the village to be like. Within this, adults, both in informal conversations and as part of interviews, talked about having a sense of right and wrong and this was clearly communicated to young people (see 4.4 Rules, regulations and being moved on) but this was also referenced in terms of the sorts of people who were seen as fitting in and those who did not. Mick, the youth group leader and RVA member told me

> "in a community like this, whether it's right or wrong, the social aspect is here and you, it's not for us I don't think to discuss but I think in a village like this that if we don't fit in and that can be for many a reason let alone the social, then it's quite cliquey and you

will find that you probably won't have any friends and you find it difficult and your children will find it difficult and I think that just mainly comes from the, all the other parents that want a middle class area and that to me is quite sad and I feel quite sorry about that and often I've thought is that really what I want for my children but the, the positives of you want, the safety and all that kind of, outweighs the peer pressure part of it."

(Mick)

Romsworth is a predominantly white, middle class area (see 3.2 Fieldwork Site) and some residents had spoken of tensions between homeowners and those in social housing. This was something that was also communicated to young people with several participants telling me about 'incidents' that had occurred with people in social housing. Joanne gave me an example of an 'incident' that she had heard about

"Like there was a lot of just, erm...anti social behaviour and things, like they'd get really drunk and...but then I don't think they're allowed in here [the Centre]...not like discriminating them but like they got chucked out coz they caused a riot or something so they're not allowed in here [the Centre]."

(Joanne)

When I asked her whether she had actually seen any trouble herself she told me

"Yeah, not at here but at the shop there was an argument between a man from down there and a man who had his children with him. And they had a massive argument and he'd actually run the man over in his car. And he lived down the bottom. There's literally like a little cul-de-sac with like ten houses. But they have to build, like a certain percentage of them and but...they were people that were

homeless basically and from drugs and things like that. But as soon as they cause trouble, they are out. So that's like, that is good."

(Joanne)

But when I questioned her further on this, it transpired that she had heard about this incident from a work colleague who had heard about it from somebody else. It seemed that these incidents had been overblown and become village myths, as each time I heard about them they were more dramatic. People in social housing were blamed (in much the same way that young people were blamed) for ills that occurred in the village, one example of this was that several adults and young people told me a family had been evicted for being linked to a spate of burglaries, when I talked to a local police officer about this, she told me that it was actually people from outside the village who had done this and that the family in question had just left at around the same time. Therefore, there was a certain type of person that many people saw as being a Romsworth resident and there was a desire for sameness rather than difference amongst residents (see Liepins, 2000b for similar associations to residents who were seen living in a place for the cheap housing rather than to be part of the community).

It is worth noting that most of the adults I spoke to had lived in the village for a number of years, often since the beginning of the development. Significantly, I did not speak to any adults who had moved to the village later and were involved with organisations like the RVA or local clubs and societies. Therefore, most of the adults I spoke to viewed community as something positive, that they should be collectively aiming for. They were proud of what they saw that they had achieved so far and perceived that they had, so far, been successful in creating a community.

5.3 Young people's notions of community

While adults I spoke to had chosen to live in Romsworth, of the eighteen young people who took part in the study, only two of these lived independently of parents, with one moving out of the parental home (a home that was also in Romsworth) to rent a house with her boyfriend and another who had moved to the village from outside, with her boyfriend. Therefore, the vast majority of these young people had not actively chosen to live in Romsworth. Further to this, young people often had either different understandings of community to adults, placed emphasis on different aspects of community or had other factors of their life (such as friendships) that they viewed as more significant. As a result, young people often had a much more complex relationship to the notion of community than many of the adults I spoke to. When I asked these young people what community meant to them, their definitions often rested on people coming together and being a part of the place they lived.

> "Yeah, just nice people and all getting together and wanting to be part of our community. If you don't want to be part of it then…There are various people in the village that you don't ever see because they don't obviously want to mix with everyone…"
> (Julie)

> "I'd say, a sense of togetherness, an awareness of everyone else around you and what they feel about the place and the people and everything. Just the general togetherness of a group, a larger group of people."
> (Nigel)

> "just like different people all different groups of people coming together and having a variation of interests and races and genders and all those different types of variables I suppose."
> (James)

Julie gave me some examples of what 'all getting together' meant to her, telling me how people living in the village had come together to organise fund raising events for the treatment of a young boy with a lung condition. Julie saw community, in part, being about coming together and getting involved in order to help others living in the same place. She saw this as a benefit to living in a place like Romsworth and, to some extent; she was critical of those who did not get involved.

Nigel was 19 and in a long-term relationships with Kayleigh, 18. Kayleigh lived in Luton and she and Nigel had been childhood friends before he moved with his family to Romsworth. They had since re-connected through social media and begun a relationship together. Kayleigh spent four nights a week with Nigel in Romsworth and the rest of her week at home in Luton. I initially interviewed Nigel alone and he then helped me to set up interviews with Kayleigh. Nigel was present during the interviews with Kayleigh and occasionally contributed to these elaborating on some of the points he had previously made. When I asked directly, Kayleigh and Nigel both told me that community was not something that was particularly important to them, but they both felt that Romsworth was a community and one they definitely felt a part of. They both gave examples of how they saw community taking place and the sort of events they went along to such as the fun day, the bonfire and quiz nights. As with Ben and James, the Centre featured in their notions of community. Kayleigh was able to offer comparisons between the way she saw community taking place in Romsworth and in Luton.

Nigel's definition rested on 'a sense of togetherness' or a 'throwntogetherness' (Massey, 2005) through which Massey argues that

> "what is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity" (p.140)

but instead rests on the accidental nature of human interactions. Nigel illustrated this pointing to a number of different events that he perceived to be community events. He told me that, yearly, he attended events such as the fun day and the bonfire and that he frequently went to the Centre bar. He saw these as places where he could meet and talk to other people living in Romsworth.

While Julie and Nigel's definitions of community were about sharing and commonality, James's definition rested on difference rather than on similarities. But, James still highlighted the importance of 'coming together' and went on to tell me that he did not see Romsworth as a community.

> "we've got all these different people but it's not really united. They're just people. You get people that know each other, like neighbours and stuff but it's not really a whole community. It's more sub communities than a community. I suppose."
> (James)

While James perceived that there were a variety of different people living in Romsworth, he did not see these people interacting with each other. James went on to make specific reference to the divide he saw between adults and young people living in Romsworth. Dwyer (1999) discusses the way a group of Muslim girls' experienced a split relationship to community. At certain times, community was seen as a safe place and a haven from problems such as racism whereas, at other times, it was seen as a mechanism of surveillance where they were unable to escape the parental gaze.

While young people's definitions of community shared some common ground with adult notions of community, for young people the focus was on people coming together and sharing, despite differences. The next section looks at young people and their involvement in different aspects of community.

5.3.1 Getting involved?

Despite the RVA's perception that it was difficult to engage young people in community and community events (see 4.2 Young people and adult decision makers) some young people were actively involved and were themselves critical of other Romsworth residents (both adults and young people) for not getting involved with community events.

> "I think that…erm…a lot of people should be aware of like volunta…of like voluntary to do youth club and things like that because there's not a lot of people out there that would actually like come and volunteer and do things. And like what we say at youth club, there's four of us erm but sometimes it's nice to have a week off and have someone else there but on one's…we've advertised it everywhere but no one's actually…bothered so in that way I think that no one's actually interested in what we do…in some parts."
> (Joanne)

Joanne was critical of Romsworth residents for not volunteering within the community. In this example, Joanne was specifically referring to adults whose children went to the youth group. In an informal conversation with Joanne and Mick (the youth group leader) they told me of their frustrations that people were more than happy to take their children along to the youth group but were not prepared to occasionally volunteer or help out there. This meant that the task of running the youth group fell to a small group of volunteers who had to do this every week. Joanne and Mick felt that some people viewed the youth group as a babysitting service and when their children attended would use this as an opportunity to go out. They suggested that both adults and children would be sorry to see the youth group go but that parents were not prepared to help out from time to time.

Other young people were also critical of residents not supporting their local businesses and services.

> "Considering the amount of people in the village there should be a lot more people that come up here. Considering that it's the only communal place really."
> (Charlotte)

Charlotte considered the Centre to be an important physical space in Romsworth, saying here that 'it's the only communal place'. While there are other communal places in Romsworth, most are congregated together in the same area where the Centre is and, with the exception of the café, they are places such as the shop, the take-a-way and the hairdressers where interactions between people are transitory. The Centre was also built for the specific purpose of being a community building, whereas the other places are all businesses.

The chair of the RVA had previously told me that the Centre was incredibly costly to run. While people living in Romsworth paid a precept on their council tax towards the running of the Centre (approximately £50 per annum), there was still a shortfall. Therefore, the Centre needed business both from people hiring the function rooms for parties and events but also from the bar, the profits from which went to the upkeep of the Centre. Charlotte felt that this caused tensions in the village with people who did not use the Centre feeling resentful that they had to pay for a facility they did not use.

> "I think it's, I know it sounds horrible but it's tough. Do you see what I mean? You come to the village and that's the council tax. If you're not going to use the facilities it doesn't make any difference, it's still the council tax. But it's only like pence, it's not like they're taking hundreds of pounds out of your council tax from it. But you'd think it would be a bit more of an incentive for people to come up really."
> (Charlotte)

Even some residents who regularly used the Centre felt that because they paid council tax precept, they should not have to pay to use facilities such as function and meeting rooms. Tensions such as these were exacerbated by issues of communication, with residents not having a clear idea of the costs of running the Centre and, also, being unaware of the facilities available in the Centre.

Charlotte was one of the people who had previously been unaware of the Centre and its facilities, only learning more about what was on offer when she applied for her job there.

> "See had I not worked here. I don't know whether I would have come to them or not, do you see what I mean? I don't know because, but there's always leaflet drops, it's always advertised that there's things on so."
> (Charlotte)

And, while Charlotte was critical of people not using the Centre, she also had a good understanding of what some of the reasons behind this might be.

> "I think it's either because they're getting a nice country pile and they work in the city and do all that sort of thing and have their own lives somewhere else. This is just their base. Whereas a lot of people in here or around here, like my friends in here, this is what they do. They come here to see all their mates, type of thing. But there's a lot of people in the village that are just not interested in it or live separate lives. This is just a house where they live. I think that's mainly it."
> (Charlotte)

Charlotte felt that there was division between those who bought into the notion of community and those who did not. It was suggested in interviews

with adults and from informal conversations with residents that community tended to be important to those who moved to the village first and became less important to those moving in later. Charlotte suggested that there were some residents who had little interest in community and in getting involved with community events because they saw Romsworth simply as a place to live. Romsworth's history as part of the *Sustainable Communities Plan* is also significant here with the *Sustainable Communities Plan's* focus on developing affordable housing that is also within commuting distance of London.

For some of the older young people I spoke to, like Charlotte, adult notions of community (for example, getting involved in activities and supporting events) began to become more important and the tensions that existed for younger young people either began to disappear or were replaced by different tensions (choosing to get involved or not get involved in existing notions of community). However, it is also worth noting here that Charlotte had actively chosen to live in the village and lived independently of parents so her view of getting involved in community was different to that of other older young people who still lived with parents and were seeking to leave and live elsewhere.

Further to this, Charlotte also suggested that perceptions of community put people off from getting involved in events and going along to the Centre, she told me that certain groups within the village could be 'cliquey' and this was echoed by Catherine who, like Charlotte, also worked behind the bar in the Centre.

> "I mean it does get really busy but for the amount of....like when we do the quiz nights, the quiz nights are rammed. And you come down here and you think where are all these people the other three weeks, you know....the other three weeks of the month, bar one night, you see a lot of people down here. So I think people don't come here because they see it as cliquey but I think because people don't use it, it become cliquey. Because you see the same faces but then there's different types of people in different shifts so if you

work the earlier shifts you get the after school groups in and you get all the parents chatting and a bit later you get the regulars or the people that come in for a drink after work. But I think that there are a lot more people in the village than there are that use the Centre so it's a minority that use it regularly really."
(Catherine)

I asked Catherine whether this perception of the Centre as cliquey became a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy and while she thought this was the case to a certain extent, she also felt there were other factors too.

Catherine was twenty-one years old and had lived in Romsworth for eleven years. When I first met Catherine, she was on a placement year as part of her university course and had come back to live with her mother, her step-father and two younger brothers for the year whilst working for the same company as her mother. Catherine had previously worked part-time behind the bar in the Centre, while she was at college, and she occasionally still helped out when she was back from university.

"Yeah, and I do think people are put off because it's not a pub and it's not a community centre, it's not one or the other, you haven't got the sort of pub atmosphere. If people haven't got children they don't want to come down and have a drink with, you know, a thousand kids screaming around the place. So I think people are a bit put off by that sometimes."
(Catherine)

Catherine felt that the physical building of the Centre being neither a pub nor a community centre put people off going there because the atmosphere of the place changed over the course of the day and into the evening. Many of my interviews were done in the Centre and this was something I noticed as well. In the late morning and afternoon the Centre would be very quiet. If I was there during the after-school period, around 4 or 5pm, customers tended to mainly be mums and dads (more frequently mums) waiting while their children went

to the various clubs that were on in the hall. Later than this, between 6-7pm it would mainly be people having an after work drink and also various sports teams holding their meetings. Saturdays and Sundays also differed with sports being shown in the Centre bar. Often people frequenting at this time of day would be families. Therefore, even regular users of the Centre had regular times that they visited and did not step outside of this in the same way that people might with a pub.

Catherine, Charlotte and Joanne, in their 20s, were all at the older edge of the age group I was researching and were all working within the village. Charlotte and Joanne were particularly critical of both adults and young people who did not get involved in events and those who did not support services and facilities available. But Charlotte and Catherine, both of whom, significantly, worked behind the bar in the Centre, had a good understanding of why residents may be put off joining in with community events or why they may simply not want to be part of the community of Romsworth.

5.4 Young people's experiences of community

The previous sections have addressed some of the ways that young people and adults defined community and what this encompassed and the ways in which young people viewed those who did and did not get involved with community events. In this section, I turn to young people's experiences of community, specifically their experiences of living in a place like Romsworth, where community and community building was a significant factor in the lives of many people living there. While some young people's definitions of community were similar to adult stakeholder notions of community, when I asked young people whether they saw Romsworth as a community, some felt that this simply was not the case. This often came down to the way that young people saw community as excluding certain groups of people and they often felt that young people of their age was one of these excluded groups.

James defined community as being encompassed by different people (see 5.3 Young people's notions of community) but while James's definition of community rested on difference, he also suggested that people being 'united' was also a significant factor in building a community. For this reason, James did not see Romsworth as a community because he did not perceive that people came together. Instead, James saw Romsworth as comprised of smaller, separate groups that excluded others. When I asked James to describe some of these different groups, he told me

> "I don't know, you see like the same few adults around, drinking their wine at the Centre and like and then you've got us and it's just general different people I suppose."
> (James)

And when I asked him whether he felt part of the community, he told me

> "No, but we're only teenagers ain't we? So like most of the stuck up people here, coz that's what they are, most people are stuck up, oh those inconsiderate youths and like, so you can't really be part of the community at this age. I suppose it's not worth trying."
> (James)

James perceived the physical building of the Centre as being significant to community and compared his group of friends to the different communities of adults he saw existing. James felt that his group of friends were excluded (as were other groups of adults) from these small communities of adults. James also specifically saw his age group as 'teenagers'. Weller (2006) argues that attention should be paid to the way young people self-define because definitions of children, teenagers, young people, etc. bring with them certain assumptions and values. Therefore, using self-definitions at least allows young people to control the 'baggage' (p.100) that comes along with the term they use. In this example, James talked about the way that other people see him and

his group of friends suggesting that assumptions about teenagers pervade the way they are perceived.

As a result of this exclusion, James felt that he and his group of friends were perceived as having nothing to contribute to the community and were not actively encouraged to participate. Therefore, they saw little point in trying to get involved. But when I asked James whether community was important to him, he told me

> "Not really, I'm happy just the way it is. I think it'd be embarrassing hanging around with adults, like I'm fine hanging around with people my own age. Like some people might think differently but…it doesn't really bother me that much to be honest. I'm fine the way it is."
> (James)

For James, the notion of community was tied to spending time with adults and he felt that this would be 'embarrassing'. He did not see his day-to-day interactions with his friendship group, or the things they spend their time doing, as community. Instead, James had more formalised notions of what community encompassed. This connection between community and spending time with adults was in part down to the way that adults have gone about attempting to create community in Romsworth. Organised community events tended to be for the village as a whole, or specifically for adults, and there were few events that took place just for young people. Therefore, some young people felt that in order to be involved in community they had to be 'hanging around with adults'. For young people, there were relationships that had developed organically (see 4.5 Intergenerational friendships) but the ideal of community (Young, 1990) that many adults talked about involved villagers coming along to events that had specifically been organised. This is also, in part, why young people's presence outside of these events, out on 'the street' (Matthews, et al, 2000a), was seen as problematic, rather than being seen as them engaging in community. In these cases young people were out of the boundaries of

organised events and therefore not conforming to perceived notions of community.

When I asked Ben whether he thought Romsworth was a community he echoed James's comments, suggesting that community existed in pockets but that young people were excluded from this.

> "Ben: No, for the older generation it is, err…parents. Coz they can all go out to the pub, have a laugh, all that. And they hold like the sports, when the sports is on there on the big screen, all the families go out. Like Freddy's mum and dad go there, Dave's mum and dad. And it's really nice for them. But for us, there isn't really anything to make us be closer. As friends, because we've known each other quite a long time we like, we are close as friends but I wouldn't call us a community from my perspective of age. But from their perspective of age they'll call it a community.
> Sarah: That's really interesting. Do you feel that you're not part…
> Ben: Like kicked out of it, if you know what I mean. Like they're excluded. But yeah."
> (Ben)

Ben drew a distinction between friendship and community suggesting that the difference lay in people being brought together through *community* in order to become *friends.* For Ben, community was not necessary to the functioning of his friendships group because they were already 'close as friends'. Furthermore, Ben saw community as something that adults needed and participated in, in order to form friendships. Like James, Ben pointed to the physical buildings in Romsworth, in this instance, specifically the Centre, as an important part in the creation and development of community.

5.5 Community and rurality

A number of adults and young people pointed to differences between the urban and the rural and the way that community existed in both of these (see 4.2.2 Young people's perceptions of adult decision makers, for further discussion on the way young people viewed urban/rural differences). This connection between community and rurality was also one that Liepins (2000a&b) discovered through her research in rural areas of New Zealand. Participants talked of their 'community' in terms of and connected to the natural landscape and shaped by the local economy of farming as compared to that of the city. Significantly, these were long established villages unlike Romsworth, a new development, yet similar associations still pervaded perceptions of community.

Kayleigh compared Romsworth to Luton; as split her time between the two places, she was able to offer a different perspective on perceptions of community and rurality.

> "Yeah, well obviously I don't live here, but I live here most of the time. But yeah, people know me now and they say hi to me on the street and everything. Whereas, if you're at home, well I like to smile to the old people, just so they don't think I'm a mugger or anything. I smile to them, I try to smile to them when I'm walking around my streets in Luton and they avoid eye contact and sometimes cross the road and you think, oh, okay. But here, it's even if you're in a car and someone's on the street and you see the person in the car smile at you and you don't even know them."
> (Kayleigh)

Kayleigh talked about archetypal representations of what community is about in comparing Romsworth to Luton. For Kayleigh people saying 'hi to me on the street' and people smiling at each other even though they 'don't even know you' helped to make Romsworth a community. Kayleigh suggested that because of this, she did not see Luton as having a community in the same way

Romsworth did. Distinctions between the urban setting of Luton and the (relatively) rural settings of Romsworth were also important here. Developers had 'branded' (see 3.2 Fieldwork Site) Romsworth as a village and this was important to many adult residents because notions of community were bound up in these traditional views of what rural and village meant. Geoff told me

> "I think our greatest success, one of the things we really set out to do, you know, taking our leave from come and create your own community has always been to make it a community and not an estate in the countryside or a collection of houses and one thing I find most depressing is the way in which you talk to people who say I don't know who lives next door to me, I never speak to them."
> (Geoff)

> "One of the things that the borough council did well early on was to say, when they were looking for designs for a new village and, and selecting this site and the people who did the designs was that it should be a village and not an estate in the countryside, it's a village and we get really upset if people call it a housing estate."
> (Geoff)

For Geoff, and a number of other adults and young people, there is a distinction between village and housing estate and between community and housing estate. Comments from Geoff suggested that community did not exist in housing estates in the same way that it did in a village and he echoed comments from Kayleigh that community was about interacting with people who live locally. Leyshon (2008) explores the way that young people position themselves within discourses of rurality. Young people in Leyshon's study made similar associations between living in a rural location and experiencing a sense of community, perceiving a difference between their rural location and other places. Some of the young people in Leyshon's study perceived 'outsiders' (p. 18) to be a problem and saw the place they lived as a discrete and isolated community where others were not welcome. While the location of

Romsworth is rural, I would question whether this actually makes it a village and to what extent this makes a difference to whether or not community exists there. For some young people, community definitely existed whereas for others it clearly did not. But Romsworth is not a village in the sense that longer-term settlements are and these ambiguities and the ambivalence towards community can be explained through this.

Some young people and adults connected the notion of community to that of village and while young people such as Kayleigh and Nigel told me that community was not necessarily important to them they both enjoyed attending events and interacting with the village as a whole. In the next section, I explore further perceptions of community discussing how some young people felt that community was irrelevant or of no interest to them at their particular stage of life.

5.6 Community and lifecourse

While most young people felt that Romsworth, to differing degrees, was a community, there were different extents to which they felt part of this. In this section, I explore whether young people saw community as an important part of their lives and whether they actually *wanted* to be part of it. Moreover, unlike previous work on young people and community, I examine whether and how young people thought their attitudes to community might change as they aged. Most young people suggested that there were aspects of Romsworth that they liked and that community was one of these things, but that community was not a significant factor to them in being happy where they lived. Instead, they pointed to factors such as friendship (see next chapter) as being much more important to them.

Most significantly, in my study, young people's reasons for not affording community particular significance were related to the particular *lifecourse stage* they were at, at that point in time. Catherine told me

"Yeah, I think it's important....maybe at my age, maybe not so much community but you just feel safe where you live and you feel that people, you know, neighbours are friendly and, you know, they'd look out for each other a bit. I'm not as fussed I suppose about a big family like community, coz I'm not at that stage in my life, perhaps when I've got children and I'm interacting with schools and other parents you know, when I graduate, I'm going to be looking for somewhere to live and I'm going to be working full time but I think, definitely for families, I think it's very important. And it's important to me in the sense that, you know, I like that I can walk the dog at night, I like that I can go running and I always feel safe in the village and I think you get that from that sense of community. You get that with it. You get that safety. So yeah."
(Catherine)

Catherine viewed community as something that would become more important to her as she got older and this, once again, tied the notion of community to adult understandings. Although in this example, Catherine suggested community was about having a network of people to interact with, she did not see herself as needing a network of people at this stage of her life. Instead, Catherine perceived community as something that would be more important, and more beneficial, to somebody who was either older or who had children themselves. Valentine (2003) discusses the way that different life stages affect whether people are viewed as adults, pointing to complex legal but also social and economic factors that signify adulthood. For participants in my study, community was another of these factors, something that was likely to increase in importance and signify a leap towards adulthood (see also, Worth, 2009).

Other young people also echoed comments from Catherine, describing and defining community in terms of what they saw as being important in the future

"Community's like a family away from your family. If you know what I mean, like, it's like you see all your friends as family because you all like, you all live together in the same area, you all go out to the pub and all that. It's like, it's kind of like, you're with your family but you're with your friends actually coz like, a community always helps each other out and all that. And like, it's someone you can trust, like if you want to go work and your kids are left at home and they're like four, you can ask your neighbour to look after them, it's like that. Always helping each other out and like no arguments and stuff. It's just, all that."

(Ben)

Once again, Ben pointed to community as encompassing features that were not a part of his current life but that may be in the future. 'All go out to the pub' or 'if you want to go work and your kids are left at home'. Kraftl (2008) and Pain et al (2010) both discuss children and young people's hopes for the future, but neither focus on hopes for community. Young people's notions and perceptions of community often came back to the way that they saw adults enacting community. Therefore, these discourses around community meant that community was something that they viewed as a hope for the future. Like Catherine, Ben perceived that community would be more important to him when he got older. As earlier comments from Ben demonstrate, he viewed friendship as more important and saw community as a way to develop friendships. As he felt that he already had strong friendships, he did not view community as particularly important to him or to the rest of his friendship group.

Brown (2011) discusses aspirations for the future among young people, arguing that young people draw a distinction between where they currently are and where they would like to be in the future. Therefore, these young people recognised that community was less important to them at this stage than other aspects of their lives, but recognised that this may become more important depending on their individual circumstances. Julie considered this

process by highlighting her feelings about community with reference to an example from the perspective of her parents

> "I'll give you a really small example, the other week, I had to go to the orthodontist because I got my brace off. Erm, I had to go to get my brace off and my dad was going to be at work all day and my mum had to have an operation on her hand. So neither of them could take me so all my dad had to do was go on Facebook and type in a load of people he trusted in the village, like can someone please take my daughter to the orthodontist and about ten people popped up saying, yeah, sure, I'll take her."
> (Julie)

This is a specific example of what Julie saw as the benefits of living in a place like Romsworth, but this example relates to the way in which other residents helped out her family rather than how she relates to community members herself.

This raises some significant questions about the nature of young people's relationships to community. Do young people view community in this way because there are more important relationships in their lives at this stage? Or do they see it this way because they are excluded from community? While I do not have solid answers to these questions, I would suggest that the answer lies somewhere in between these positions, with young people often suggesting that community had nothing to offer them or conversely being made to feel that they had nothing to offer community; and with young people placing a greater significance on other relationships that were part of their lives. Valentine (2003) draws on Jones and Wallace (1992) arguing that young people are seen as 'semi-citizens' (p.47) using examples such as the way that young people are not entitled to receive full income support benefits until they are twenty-five and the same can be argued for their acceptance into community. It is also worth noting that these notions of community that young people saw as less significant were only one variation of community and often

that proposed by adults and decision makers. When young people talked about their own versions of community (and often there was a crossover between their notions of community and their notions of friendship, see next chapter) they were much more likely to view community as a more significant factor in their lives.

5.7 Safety and security

While community was not necessarily a significant factor in the life stage that young people saw themselves at, most did talk about the benefits of living in a place like Romsworth. When I asked what they liked about living there, a key theme that emerged was the relative safety and security of the development. This was often tied to notions of community, with young people commenting

> "It's safe…very safe…erm….They have had things recently happen like…crime things…but I'd lock up here (the Centre) and walk home. Although I used to get told off for doing that. And it is a very safe community, you know."
> (Catherine)

> "I feel quite safe in Romsworth. I feel I could walk around Romsworth at two 'o' clock in the morning and not worry about seeing the wrong kinds of people. Whereas I'd never walk around Kettering at two in the morning, by myself."
> (Marcus)

> "And that's the thing, you do feel safe and if anything does happen, the neighbourhood watch, it's always told, like spoke about so you know what's going on and…But yeah, I could walk home and from here feel safe to walk down the street."
> (Joanne)

Catherine talked about feeling safe whilst out at night and she also told me that she regularly walked her dog, ran or cycled around the village and the surrounding fields and woodlands and was happy doing this at different times of the day or night. Catherine highlighted this relative safety with the example of locking up the Centre at night after working there, feeling comfortable that she would come to no harm. Marcus and Joanne talked about the relative safety of Romsworth compared to perceived threats that existed elsewhere. Marcus's comment that he could walk around, at any time of the day or night, without seeing 'the wrong kinds of people' suggests that these 'wrong kinds of people' exist in nearby towns. There was an implicit suggestion in this and in the comments from Joanne that Romsworth is different to these nearby towns. Joanne reiterated this idea of safety, suggesting that people are aware of what is happening in the village and, as a result, it is a safer place to live. Significantly, Joanne was talking about feeling safe to walk back from the Centre at 7pm in the evening and given that she spends most of her time in the village (see description of Joanne above) this is more about her *perception* of dangers elsewhere than about *actual* dangers elsewhere.

The suggestion that Romsworth was different from nearby towns also came down to the urban/rural difference, with young people suggesting that they knew people in the village and that people knew them, therefore if anything happened that they were uncomfortable with, there would be somebody to turn to. This is set in opposition against nearby towns, where there were 'the wrong kinds of people' which made young people feel unsafe.

The theme of safety meant different things to different age groups of young people. The (above) examples came from some of the older young people I spoke to. For them, the perceived safety of the village was a key factor because they felt that they were able to walk through the village after nights out, while pursuing hobbies, or when walking their dog. For some of the younger young people I spoke to, the perceived safety of the village was about both how they felt when they were out and about but also what their parents let them do and how long they were able to stay out. Tamar told me

"I wasn't really allowed outside of Northampton coz my mum didn't trust me. And, like, she didn't trust the other people as she'd say. But because she knows everyone here and she knows Romsworth's a safe place, she'll let me out. So I like it really, it's nicer, I get more freedom. Mum didn't, she didn't let me out really, in Northampton. She didn't really like the people I hung around with. They were kind of like chavvy and always wanting to cause trouble and now she's moved here and seen the dramatic difference...even though I hang around with boys and it's like late and dark, she's not bothered, she knows that nothing would ever happen, that they'd never hurt me or anything silly like that and that just coz we're teenagers but because she knows them she...it kind of sets her down and she doesn't mind."
(Tamar)

"Erm...the people are nicer, there's no bullying, I used to get bullied at my old school because of different cultures and backgrounds and stuff but everyone seems to be relatively the same here"
(Tamar)

Tamar connected the notion of community and safety to that of freedom, suggesting that her parents were happy for her to be out in Romsworth with her friends in comparison to Northampton where they were not comfortable with her being out. Tamar pointed out that her mum 'knows everyone here and knows Romsworth' and this was a significant factor in her feeling comfortable with Tamar being out. This is both in terms of knowing Tamar's friends, because 'they'd never hurt me or anything silly like that' by comparison to the friends she had in Northampton that her parents didn't trust; and also because Tamar's parents knew the other people who live there, meaning that they knew who she was likely to be interacting with. Tamar also suggested that she was able to stay out later than she would be if she lived elsewhere and that the

friends she spends time with were an important part of her parents feeling happy for her to do this.

Other young people saw the perceived safety of Romsworth as an attractive feature for new people moving into the village. Charlotte told me

> "I think for my age it's a nice place to first move into and get into the village environment do you see what I mean? And for the older generation it's nice because it's nice to bring your family up in and it's safe as such"
> (Charlotte)

Charlotte saw the village as an attractive place for people in her age group to move to because she saw the safety of the village as a positive for people wanting to bring up children. Charlotte's reasons for liking these feelings of safety and security were different to those of the younger young people that I spoke to and were related to looking to the future in order bring up a family (see also 5.6 Community and lifecourse).

Romsworth was perceived by all the young people I spoke to as a safe place where respondents felt comfortable to be out at all times of the day and night. Reasons for liking this perceived notion of safety and security differed between age groups; the younger end of the age range pointing to factors like being able to go out and stay out later than they would if they lived elsewhere; the older end of this age group referring to factors such as seeing the village as a nice place to settle down and bring up a family. Valentine (1997a) discusses parents' connection of a rural location to perceptions of safety. Valentine (1997b) discusses parental fears in relation to letting their children play outside and suggests that parents perceive the dangers in the lives of their children as different to the dangers they themselves faced at the same age. However, Valentine goes on to suggest that young people often find ways to subvert parental rules. For the young people in my study, this subversion of parental rules was mainly unnecessary with the rural location of Romsworth

providing parents with reassurance that their children were safe. However, other factors, such as friends and other people living in the village also factored into these perceptions.

Harden (2000) discusses children's perceptions of safety both in and outside the home and argues that children often feel safest in the home but their immediate neighbourhoods also provide feelings of safety that are not always experienced in some urban communities. This was echoed by my research with young people making close links between notions of safety and security and the notion of community. Young people suggested that everybody knowing each other meant that people were aware of what was going on in the village and were looking out for each other. But these factors were also responsible for some of the problems that young people faced (see 4.4 Rules, regulations and being moved on) with their visible presence seen as problematic purely because people were always aware of what was happening in the village.

5.8 Community as places

Particular places, sites and buildings were important to young people's understanding and articulation of community. Most spoke about specific events or specific places where they saw community happening and there was often a crossover in these notions of time and place. Young people pointed to events such as the bonfire and the fun day, the two main events in the village calendar, which happened in specific *places* on the field on a winter evening and a summer's day respectively. Young people also talked extensively about different facilities in the village, such as the shops, the take-a-way and the café.

5.8.1 Places for young people

In this section I explore two case studies, *the shop* and *the cafe.* These were both places that young people felt that they were welcome and that they could

spend time (and significantly money) without their behaviour being problematized by adults living in Romsworth.

5.8.1.1 Case study one – the shop

I asked participants whether they felt that the physical buildings in Romsworth helped or hindered the development of community. Residents had fought for some of these facilities and services to be built and the extent of these facilities marks Romsworth out from other developments of its size. I was interested in whether, from the perspective of young people, this fight had been worthwhile and whether they saw these as a factor in community.

When I asked young people what they liked about the physical spaces in Romsworth, most of the younger young people pointed to the development around the area of the shops, with the convenience store being the most important of these.

> "I think the shops and err…I think the best thing about it that really brought a lot of us happy was the shop, the hairdressers, the Indian and the café. I think that was great for us to like…it was really good coz it just meant…it gave us more freedom coz we could just go to the shop when we wanted…"
> (Ben)

> "When I moved here there was this place (the Centre) and that was about it really. And then about a year after I moved here there was a shop, which was like a god send because we used to have to travel to Broughton if we wanted something. But that was like really good, that was the best thing that's happened to Romsworth I suppose. Then we got the hairdressers and the Indian, the Indian, we're always going there."
> (James)

Significantly, both of these participants describe the shop as 'the best thing' to happen, and suggest that this made the group much happier. Yet this is despite comments from both adults and young people that young people did not tend to hang around the shop (see 4.4.1 Establishing the rules). Instead, these young people were much more likely to be consumers, linking the shop to notions of freedom and independence. In having access to a shop, young people felt that they had to be less reliant on their parents in order to get things that they wanted, when they wanted them. Young people told me about the logistical difficulties they had previously had in getting to the shop in a nearby village, an hour's walk away from Romsworth. Ben went on to say

> "it's nice to have a shop, it makes you feel like, I don't know, that you're more grown up because you can go to the shop. For older people it's just like, oh I'm going to go the shop. But having a shop feels like it's more of a community and that they've thought about us." (Ben)

This emphasises the difference in the way adults and young people were able to access facilities and services, with many adults being able to get out and go to the next village or further afield without having to think too much about it. For these young people, using the services that had recently been developed in the village was not something they took for granted. Ben also pointed out that the shop made Romsworth *feel* 'like it's more of a community'. This is something other young people talked about, telling me that they felt having some of the other facilities there (the hairdressers, the café, the take-a-way and the beauty salon, etc.) made the difference between Romsworth being a housing estate and a community because they did not need to leave and go to nearby villages or towns in order to procure these services.

Under section 106 of the *Town and Country Planning Act* (1990), developers are required to build facilities like this into new developments but for these young people, this requirement had an unintended knock on benefit. For Ben and his group of friends, the addition of the shop made them feel 'that they've

thought of us' and, while it is unlikely that the development of the shop was done specifically with young people in mind, it is significant that a facility, built for the village as a whole, was perceived by young people as something that benefitted them more than other people living there.

5.8.1.2 Case study two – the café

Young people, particularly younger young people, also saw the café as a place they liked to spend their time. Philo (2004) and Bell (2007) both discuss spaces of sociability such as cafes and restaurants suggesting that they are the sorts of places where people who do not know each other can come together to meet, talk and discuss. During fieldwork, I spent a lot of time in the café, both doing interviews and also as part of the observation side of data collection.

> *Extract from fieldwork diary*
> *I have begun to feel like a regular in the café! When I order, the owner asks whether I want 'the usual' (green tea with jasmine). I'm increasingly beginning to feel that I'm getting to know other people living in Romsworth through going in there – for example, the other day I saw Mick and his wife and stopped to chat for a while. Other times queuing or waiting for lunch means that people start a conversation.*

When I spoke to the owner of the café he told me that when he was in the process of opening the café, people in the village had asked him whether it was going to be an internet café. He told me that he wanted to move away from people sitting behind computer screens with their backs to each other and make it sociable space, as in the cafes of the 18th century that Philo (2004) and Bell (2007) both discuss, where people could meet and socialise. The décor of the café was comfortable, like a vintage tearoom, and while there was frequently music on in there (easy listening and jazz) it tended to be at a volume that didn't hamper conversation.

Most of the young people I spoke to saw the cafe as a place they liked to spend time in and this was in part down to the welcome they received there. However, I rarely saw groups of young people in there, discovering instead their fondness for the café after I had met them elsewhere. Among the friendship group of young people I spoke to, all suggested that they liked to spend time in there, with one of the group, Adam working part time in there.

Adam told me that he really enjoyed working in the café and he saw it as being different to the rest of Romsworth

> "That's why I love this place so much, it's so suited…this sort of place is part of I don't know, I kind of relate to this kind of culture erm…I don't know how to describe it, it's quite I don't know…how do you explain it…I don't know…I can't quite explain how it is but other than my dad's West Indian background and like music and jazz and things like that. That sort of cultural identity is something I can really…that's kind of my cultural identity I suppose, yeah."

> "Like Chris was going to have a Treme evening down here, like New Orleans…so Cajun thing and that's really cool and so like, things like that, that would really boost the amount of culture in here. Because in a place like this, you can't really, it has no real culture for it anyway." (Adam)

Adam suggested that the café added to the cultural identity of Romsworth, bringing different events to the village that would otherwise not take place. Adam felt that the village did not have a cultural identity of its own and that it was difficult to experience other cultures there. Adam had previously pointed to the newness of Romsworth as being part of the problem in this (4.4 Rules, regulations and being moved on) in that there was no precedent set in terms of what people did and how they lived.

The young people who were part of Adam's friendship group also enjoyed spending time in the café because they felt they were welcome there. And I conducted several interviews with Adam and members of his friendship group in the café, feeling the same sense of welcome that these young people did. Some talked about waiting for Adam to finish a shift and not buying anything. I conducted an interview with Adam and James in the café and we were in there for over an hour only buying one drink each during this time. Therefore the group saw the café as a place where they were welcome to spend time without excessively spending money, rather than as a place where adults would complain about their presence.

Research done in urban settings by Vanderbeck and Johnson (2000) and Matthews et al (2000b) focuses on 'the mall' as a place where young people like to hang out. While the shop and the café are not quite the same as a mall, there was still a focus on consumerism with young people spending time in places where they also spent money. The shop and particularly the café were places that young people felt comfortable and welcome. Nairn et al (2003) also discuss similar places (a club, cafes and a bookshop) within a rural setting where young people felt welcome because they were treated differently to how they perceived they were treated in other places.

Significantly, for the young people in my study, both the café and the shops were located in the same area, I noted and it was mentioned in several interviews with adults and young people that young people did not hang around in this area (a lack of young people's visible presence on the street being something that Nairn et al (2003) also noticed within their study). Despite young people feeling that they could not hang around, they still enjoyed spending time (and money) in these places, the shop affording them feelings of independence and the café welcoming them without them feeling that they had to spend vast amounts of money. In the next section, I address places where young people did not feel as welcome.

5.8.2 Places for adults?

In this section I explore some of the places that young people told me they did not as feel welcome. These tended to be places that young people saw other people, usually adults, enacting their own versions of community. Versions of community that young people themselves often felt excluded from.

5.8.2.1 Case study one – the Centre

Most young people cited the Centre as being a place where community took place but there seemed to be a divide in whether they felt part of this depending on how old they were. Young people who were over the legal UK drinking age of eighteen years old saw the Centre as a place that they would go to spend time both with their families and their friends. Whereas those under eighteen had differing opinions on the Centre, with some seeing it as a place where they spent time with their family but others feeling excluded from the sense of community that they saw taking place there.

Definitions of community from Ben and James pointed to the Centre as a place where adult versions of community took place but also as a place from which they were excluded. Ben and James both referred to adults drinking in there, making friends and spending time with other adults but suggested that they didn't feel part of this. A few of these younger young people told me that they sometimes went to the Centre with their parents but that they were too young to go in there on their own.

In an interview with the manager of the Centre, she told me about the difficulty she faced in terms of letting under-eighteens into the bar.

> "They want to come in here, like they want to come, we've got a pool table and they want to come in and play pool and I want to say yeah, you can but I can't because they're not spending any money, they'll use it, like you'll get two people playing pool and fifteen of them

watching them and then it puts the other people off, so from a business point of view I can't have that but there is nothing else for them to do."
(Centre manager)

From a business perspective, the Centre tried to keep under-eighteens away because they were perceived to have no money to spend in there. But, young people told me that sometimes, during the day, they were allowed in to play pool but that depended on who was working behind the bar. The Centre manager recognised that there was little else for young people to do but needed people who were in the Centre to be spending money.

During an interview with James, he told me about his friendship group's frustration with not being allowed into the Centre.

"We're not allowed to play pool because we're not eighteen. We're not allowed in there unless we buy something and we're not allowed in after nine 'o' clock or eight 'o' clock anyway."
(James)

This interview took place on the playing field outside the Centre, and while we were talking, some of James's friends came out of the Centre to ask to borrow twenty pence to play pool. James seemed unhappy about this and told me

"James: So it turns out you are allowed. Apparently we're not though.
Sarah: How have they managed to get themselves...
James: God knows, probably depends on who's behind the bar.
Sarah: And that varies then does it?
James: Yeah."
(James)

This demonstrates the inconsistent approach towards young people using the community building of the Centre. From personal experience the Centre was quiet during the day and would benefit from anybody coming in buying drinks. But young people told me that they thought the drinks sold there were overpriced and were therefore reluctant to buy a drink if they were in there playing pool.

The comparison between the Centre and the café was significant, with young people choosing to spend their money in the café because they felt welcome in there. There was an assumption from those running the Centre that young people did not have money to spend and therefore they were not allowed in but, contrary to this, young people were instead choosing to spend their money elsewhere, in the café and the shop because they saw these places as welcoming them and offering them value for money. While the facilities of the Centre appealed the welcome they received did not. This also ties in with the earlier discussion on whether young people felt part of community. In buildings like the Centre, which had been specifically designed as a community building, young people were perceived as having nothing to offer.

5.9 Community as times and events

Specific events that took place in Romsworth were also something that young people talked about in relation to the existence of community. The main events taking place over the course of the year were the fun day in the summer and the bonfire in November. These events were organised by the RVA and the whole village was encouraged to attend (this differs from events such as quiz nights and party evenings which take place in the Centre and therefore only a limited number of people are able to attend). The events took place on the playing field and in the Centre. In the course of fieldwork I attended two fun days and two bonfires. These events were particularly significant to Romsworth as a new place because they were part of the attempt to create community and to bring different people living in the village together.

Amongst the friendship group of young people I spoke to, the fun day was seen as a family event, something they used to attend with their parents and siblings, but that they were less interested in now. The bonfire, on the other hand, was an event that they all enjoyed. James and Ben said of the 2011 fun day

> "It's alright, you see people you know, I suppose. Like, the people sitting over there, they're my neighbours and it's like you see people that you know and it's alright for an hour or so. Then it gets boring."
> (James)

> "I didn't go to this one coz I was working again so. And apparently it was terrible, so…Err…the singer was absolutely terrible, err…the rides were based more for children. Always at that age, you know there was a big inflatable over there? Kid my age wouldn't be allowed on there. It's more like for the children. It's never like made something for the teenagers, never. They never think about the teenagers."
> (Ben)

I had seen James and some of his friends as he was leaving the fun day that year and they all told me that they had been there for the afternoon but they were going back to one of their houses because they were bored of it. They said that this particular fun day had not been as good as some of the ones that had gone before.

Ben told me that he had not been able to go along to the fun day this year but that he had heard reports from his friends that it wasn't as good as it had previously been. Ben felt that he had outgrown the fun day and argued that it is much more 'for the children' pointing to the types of entertainment available there. Ben also used talking about the fun day as an opportunity to comment on the lack of events for his age group. The fun day is presented as an event for everyone in the village but for many of the young people I spoke to, like other

events and facilities in the village, it had nothing specific to offer their age group.

This was the second time I had attended the fun day and, for me, it was very similar to the one I had attended the year before so young people's complaints were firstly about the familiarity of an event, that doing the same thing year after year was eventually becoming boring. Secondly some young people were beginning to outgrow this event. Their expectations for having fun had changed and the fun day no longer met their needs in the same way.

Young people from this friendship group talked much more fondly about the bonfire. In the two years that I went along to the bonfire it cost £5 to get in which included a lengthy firework display and a raffle ticket. As with the fun day, the event was held in both the Centre and on the playing field. The Centre bar was used and was very busy but there was also a bar tent outside and various food stalls serving burgers, jacket potatoes, chips and other such fast food.

James compared the two events telling me

> "Bonfire night's the most popular because, like fireworks, innit? But fun day last year was pretty good but this year, I don't think the weather was that brilliant. I can't remember, it wasn't cold but it wasn't as good as last year. It was all right. But bonfire night's always pretty good because there's always competition between the villages."
> (James)

James told me that other villages also had firework displays and that this competition was over who has the best fireworks. This displays a territoriality at a very local level and this element of competition binds people together.

At the second bonfire I went to, I was surprised to see that there were several groups of people who had not paid the entrance fee but were instead standing on the other side of the fence of the playing field watching the fireworks from there. This suggests that there were also adults in the village who did not buy into the community ethos that adult stakeholders were trying to create. There was a suggestion from a number of these adults, and from young people as well, that people living in Romsworth went along to these events not just for entertainment but also to support the events that were laid on for the village. These events were organised by the RVA who then decide what to spend the profits on. Some of this was then spent on facilities within the community and some of it was put back into other events that take place. Clearly, people were interested in watching the fireworks but did not buy into the idea of community enough to pay money to watch them.

One young person suggested that people like that would be sorry if events like this no longer took place

> "I think people, just, they know it's here but had they not known it was here, they'd sure as hell moan about it. It'd be those type of people…oh we don't have anything in the village to do…well do something about it then. But then you'll get it but then they'll never do anything about it."
> (Charlotte)

Most of the young people I spoke to really enjoyed these events and I was keen to understand how they felt about the field, a space that they used regularly, and saw as being out of the gaze of adults in the village, being used for such events. Most suggested that they saw this as a good thing and that at events like this they were encouraged to take part and become involved with the rest of the community. Tamar told me that she really enjoyed both events, particularly the bonfire because she was able to stay out even later than she would ordinarily be allowed to do.

5.10 Summary

Young people had their own, much less formal, versions of community than adult notions of creating a particular sort of community. For young people, these notions of community encompassed times and places, specific events, different relationships – from saying hello to people in the street to friendships with adults and other young people. Community was also about feeling safe and secure where they lived and, for younger young people, their parents feeling that they were safe and secure and, as a result, giving them more freedom than they would have if they lived elsewhere.

Young people's relationships with community were often complex. Creating, developing and maintaining community was important to many of the adults I spoke to but young people often placed a different emphasis on community, seeing their friendships as more important and/or, significantly, viewing community as something that would grow in importance at a later stage of their lives. It is also significant here that the vast majority of adults I spoke to had lived in Romsworth for a number of years, many from the beginning of the development. Therefore I rarely met newer residents so it is difficult to gauge what their opinions of Romsworth were.

While young people did not place an emphasis on community, it is difficult to entangle whether this was because other aspects of their lives (such as friendship) mattered more, or whether their perceived exclusion from community meant that they sought sociability elsewhere. It is clear that young people often felt excluded from the dominant discourses of these adult notions of community and this was for a variety of reasons, either because there were places they were unable to go or where they felt unwelcome (such as in the example of the Centre) or because they had no desire to spend time with adults socially, something some young people thought would be necessary to getting

involved in community. As a result of this, some young people thought that there was no point trying to get involved. Building on themes raised in this chapter and the previous chapter on Intergenerational Relationships, the next chapter focuses on the friendships of young people.

6. Friendship

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapters, on Intergenerational Relationships and Community, have explored young people's notions and experiences of these areas but have also begun to raise the theme of friendship. Several young people placed greater emphasis on friendship than they did on community and young people had friendships outside of the boundaries of their age groups with older or younger people living in Romsworth. There is a clear gap in literature surrounding young people's friendships, with Bunnell et al (2012) among some of the few scholars currently writing about geographies of friendship and suggesting that a focus on young people's friendships is one of the ways in which work in this area could be taken forward.

In this chapter, I suggest that there are blurred lines in the differences between friendship, community and the other social networks of young people living in Romsworth. Building on the previous chapters on Intergenerational Relationships and Community I will explore what friendship meant to the young people living in Romsworth whilst, as can be seen from the interview schedules (see 8. Appendices), friendship was not a key theme of the original interviews. It emerged repeatedly and organically as an important facet of young people's everyday lives in Romsworth. I discovered that respondents, specifically those from a friendship group of fifteen, sixteen and seventeen year olds, spoke at length about their friends and friendship networks in relation to questions about community and technology.

This chapter also focuses (although not exclusively) on one particular friendship group of young people that I met repeatedly during fieldwork (both in formal interviews and during observations). Their friendship was the most significant relationship its members had: whereas older young people talked about relationships with partners and a variety of friendships this (slightly

younger) group talked almost exclusively about their group of friends. This group also underwent the most changes throughout the time I was conducting research in Romsworth, going from a closely knit group when I first met them to smaller more fractured groups who saw each other much less by the time I finished fieldwork.

6.2 Friendship and transition

Amongst the friendship group I spoke to, including James, Ben, Tamar, Adam (see Table 2 Sample and previous chapter on Community for further information on these respondents) and having previously included Julie and Jane, the relationships between individual group members were complex. As I went through the interview process with these young people, I was given a snapshot of their friendships at the particular time of each interview, their opinions of their friends depending on different tensions, arguments and rifts that had occurred within the group since the last time I spoke to them. These rifts increased in frequency (or at least these young people told me more about them) as they approached the transition of leaving school and moving on to college, work and other ventures. This is contrary to the findings of Brooks (2003) who discovered that amongst a group of sixth form students, most went to long lengths in order to protect their friendships from the transition of going to university that they were facing. But my respondents differed from these young people, in that their friendships were based on living in the same place and this place being a new development with few young people in their age group, rather than going to the same schools or colleges (section 6.3 Friendships of convenience). Thus, in distinction to previous research, the key aim of this section is to give a more detailed sense of the *dynamism* of friendship groups both in relation to how they *fracture* as well as how they remain cohesive.

I initially met this group through interviewing Adam. During the first interview I mentioned to Adam the difficulty I had had in finding young people in

Romsworth. He told me that there were very few young people in his age group living there.

> "We all know each other so we all…there's only about (lists names) there's about ten/twelve of us all together. So we can just call each other or something, see whoever's coming out and then we'll just walk around or stay at the field"
> (Adam)

The small number of young people in this age group resulted in most of them knowing and regularly spending time with each other. Adam went on to tell me that most of his friendship group had known each other for a number of years having gone to Romsworth primary school together. Romsworth Primary opened in September 2004 and young people growing up in Romsworth before this time had gone to a variety of different schools. This made a significant difference to the friendships of young people in my study, with those attending Romsworth primary meeting their friendship group and maintaining this friendship group despite going to different secondary schools. Conversely, those who went to a variety of different schools tended to have few friends within Romsworth and instead their individual friends or friendship groups were concentrated outside the village.

Catherine made reference to the difference that she saw between people in their twenties, like her, and younger people living in the village

> "they'll grow up together and go on to secondary school together and then know everyone in the village"
> (Catherine)

As demonstrated by the young people who had attended the primary school, Catherine suggests that the process of getting to know people, developing relationships and making friends would be different for younger young people than it was for young people in her age group.

As I continued the interview process I discovered that, between interviews, there had often been rifts and arguments between individual group members. It appeared that these arguments were increasing in frequency as the group approached this transitional phase of leaving school. Among the members of the group, there were plans to take up a variety of different college courses and/or jobs and therefore I got the sense that group members were all moving in different directions. Significantly, most group members had gone to different secondary schools and therefore did not see each other during the school day but this had not had an impact on their friendship. But some group members having summer jobs had changed this. Tamar told me that, in the past, the group would gather in the morning to get their respective buses to school then would get together as soon as they were home from school

> "we'd be straight out, sometimes I'd even miss my dinner because like I'd just go straight out with them because like we're all massive best friends and we all get on really well. And now, coz they all go work, I'm just sat at home doing nothing, waiting for them to come home" (Tamar)

For Tamar, her friends having summer jobs, and not having a job herself, had changed the dynamic of the friendship. When they were all at school, everybody's days had been taken up with the school day. But since school ended and the others got jobs, Tamar felt that she was waiting around all day in order to spend time with the group. But she also told me that she still saw the friendship of the group as being more important to her than her friendships outside of Romsworth.

> "we've got closer as well, like school friends aren't as important now coz we live together so we're always together."
> (Tamar)

For Tamar, place played an important part in her friendship with the group. Friendships elsewhere were less important because she saw these people less

regularly and even though most of the group was working, she was still able to see them outside of work times. One of the problems she saw happening with the group was that individuals were all working at different times and over different shifts so it became increasingly difficult for the group as a whole to spend time together.

Ben and Adam also initially talked about spending time with the group as a key way in which they spent their spare time.

> "we do have quite a lot of parties, as a group, like the whole group of us, like Freddy, Dave Ivan and us lot and Adam we all organise as a group like. Coz we were pretty…we've been good friends for like some of us have known, well I've known Freddy and James twelve years and then Adam six years and (to Sam) you guys maybe four or five years."
> (Ben)

> "today, we've just had a massive breakfast at Adam' house, like all of us went. That's where we just came from."
> (Ben)

> "I get up at around ten 'o'clock, I have breakfast, get ready and then I'll go out and I'll spend the whole day out with friends."
> (Adam)

Ben emphasised 'all', 'the whole group' and 'all day' highlighting the importance of the group and the amount of time they spent together. Adam reiterated this telling me that when he was able to he would get up and the whole of the rest of his day would be spent with his friends.

While going to different secondary schools had not impacted on their relationships with the rest of the group, leaving school, getting summer jobs (see comments from Tamar – above) and, past this, moving on to college and

work was where cracks and fractures began to show in the friendships. Participants talked about pursuing different interests or having different aspirations and therefore not wanting to spend as much time with the rest of the group.

"James: No, you get stabbed in London…
Adam: Says Dave, they just want to stay in the countryside their entire life…
James: Because they think they'll get stabbed in London.
Sarah: So they're keen to stay are they?
Adam: Oh yeah, they want to stay round here. Although they want to be professional footballers. So I don't understand how that works."
(James and Adam)

"But like if I went to uni I wouldn't like to go like Northampton coz I want to be away from home. Because it's boring to go and have to come home, if you go uni most of it is like the nightlife…"
(James)

James and Adam, who had just started college the last time I saw them for the guided walk, talked about wanting to move away from Romsworth in order to go to university. They differentiated themselves from their friends Dave and Freddy who were doing sports courses at a different college, and who wanted to be footballers and stay in Northamptonshire, ideally living in a place similar to Romsworth. Adam and James made fun of Dave and Freddy and their perceptions of life in a big city. They were much more keen to get away from Romsworth and were looking to go to university.

James perceived that he would not be able to enjoy the nightlife of university if he was still living in Romsworth. Adam echoed this, telling me that he would only come back to Romsworth to see his family and also went on to say that his parents were also thinking of moving if he went to university. Therefore he would have no further reason to come back to Romsworth. Significantly,

neither Adam nor James talked about missing their friendship group or coming back to see friends if they moved away. It became clear that the group had fractured and the individual members had aspirations that had become more important than the friendship of the group.

In the final interview with Ben, he told me that he had stopped coming into the village as much in recent weeks, citing arguments and fractures between group members as a key factor in his decision.

> "most of the Romsworth mates have fallen out now. So Sam and Dave...me and Dave don't like Sam because he said loads of stuff about us. Me and Adam had a fall out but we're fine now and Adam and I haven't fallen out. Me and Tamar have fallen out as well."
> (Ben)

For Ben, these fractures meant that there was little point coming into the village. In this example, Ben talked about 'the Romsworth mates' the implication being that he was no longer part of the group. This differs from how he had talked about the group in the first interview. Ben told me that he had begun to pursue interests out of the village. With the help of family friends he had set up his own business and he also worked on his family's farm and stables in his spare time. He told me that his friendships were much more closely tied to the people who stabled their horses there, giving me an example of these people helping out with a task on the farm.

> "But like we're quite close and we can all have a good conversation and help each other out and yesterday I had to, my mum went in her horsebox, we had to go get three hundred bales of hay we could only fit fifty in. For a run, it was ten miles there and back. And err...unloading fifty bales and walking them from here to that post over there is a pain, but they brought their lorries along and they loaded theirs up and they helped us and it was so much quicker. It

didn't take much out of their time but it was nice of them to help us." (Ben)

"Yeah, but the thing is, because I see the liveries as community...Coz I don't live in, well I live just outside Romsworth so I see that as my community. Whereas my friends probably see the friendship of the group as a community. If you know what I mean."
(Ben)

"We all just help each other out and that's what I think's good. Like in Romsworth...my mum and dad on the yard, all the people there they can have a conversation too and like all, the like, dads if you like there. It's like my dad probably has some nice people that he can talk to. Like this guy Glen, who's a mechanic, he's a nice guy. And my mum has Andrea and lots of people to talk to."
(Ben).

These comments were made in in response to questions about community with Ben telling me that he saw the people who used the farm and the stables as his community. But this is also about friendship and the way that friendships can emerge from community based relationships. This also emphasises some of the difficulty in separating out community and friendship.

Ben compared the way that he perceived his friends saw community to his own perceptions of community. He felt that his community was outside Romsworth, with the people who stabled their horses on his family's farmland, whereas he thought that his friends saw the group as their community. This also echoes comments from young people who talked about their group being their community because they felt excluded from wider adult notions of community.

Ben also talked about this community of people as friends of his parents. This was another example of friendship growing from community and, again, highlights some of the difficulties involved in separating out friendship and

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community. For Ben (and for some of the other young people I spoke to) there were blurred lines between notions of community and friendship, seeing the friendship of the group as a community and seeing community turn into friendship.

Ben went on to tell me that working on his own business, combined with his friendships elsewhere and his work on the farm, meant that he had little time to dedicate to his friendships in Romsworth.

> "I'd say at this age, you've finished your exams, you're moving on with your life. Like you start to like, decide what you want to do, you're maturing and it's like quite a mature thing to be deciding what you wanna do in life and work and all that."
> (Ben)

Ben saw himself in the position of making decisions for the future about what he wanted to do as a job, where he wanted to live and the possible directions his life might take. For Ben, these visions of the future had little to do with Romsworth or his friendships there.

6.2.1 Transition and nostalgia

Whilst Adam and James seemed to have become emotionally detached from their group, other young people from the same friendship group talked about the breakup of these friendships in a more nostalgic way. Crucially, there is not currently a literature focussing on what nostalgia means to *young people*, but writers such as Philo (2003) and Jones (2003) have discussed the way in which adults can use memory (and also nostalgia) in order to access the experiences of childhood, questioning whether this can help to provide an account of childhood and youth that is sympathetic. Thus, in my study, some of these young people provided important insights about the ways in which they were specifically *nostalgic* for the way their friendships had once been. Jane told me

"I fell out with all of them in May because I had a house party when my parents were away and all of that lot came over and things got broken and mum went mental at them, and if she saw them around she'd give them dirty looks and things like that. And they thought that I hated them but I didn't have a problem with them. But ever since then, my mum doesn't like me going out with them because of what's happened. Well, she said, you can still be friends with them, I just don't want them anywhere near my house. Which is fair enough."

(Jane)

Julie and Jane had been friends with 'the boys' for a number of years but a few months before I began to interview them these friendships had begun to dissolve. There were a variety of reasons for the dissolution of this friendship, Tamar's inclusions in the group (see 6.2.2 Gender, sexuality and the breakdown of friendship) was one of the reasons that Julie and Jane cited. But there had also been a party at Jane's house where things had been broken and this had caused friction between Jane and her parents. From this point onwards their friendships with the boys began to fracture. Julie and Jane discussed the possible reasons for this

"Julie: they've all kind of changed a little bit.

Jane: They've all grown up a lot…

Julie: They haven't grown up, I think we've grown up and they've just…

Jane: Really?

Julie: They're really immature, I think they're so immature.

Jane: Some of them are.

Julie: But they tend to go to town now, a lot more…

Jane: At night and stuff.

Julie: Like every night and I don't really have the money right now. And I don't know, they've kind of all gone their separate ways.

Jane: They don't even hang around together much anymore."

(Julie and Jane)

There was an age difference of a year between Julie and Jane, Julie was fifteen and Jane was sixteen. Julie was in her last year of school and Jane was in her first year of college. Therefore Julie was a year younger than most of 'the boys' but she saw them as being immature, she felt that she had changed and grown up whereas Jane saw 'the boys' as having grown up because they went into town every night. Significantly, Julie pointed to this as one of the reasons for the split in the group, she suggested that she was not able to do the same things as 'the boys' because she did not have the money to go into town every night. But Julie and Jane also perceived that individual members of the group had gone their separate ways and did not see each other as often. Therefore this fracture was not just one between Julie and Jane and the boys but affected the group as a whole.

Julie and Jane spoke fondly of the times when they were closer to the boys, telling me tales of how they used to spend their time together.

> "Jane: Like, back then, I'd just text them even if it was just one of them and say, do you wanna meet up and go for a walk and a chat and something like that.
> Julie: And usually all them would come out and it would just be all of us together and have a laugh. And now it's kind of like, they've got mopeds and stuff so they tend to just go to their friend's houses. Coz a lot of them used to go to school in (nearby town) so a lot of them go there on peds and they, I don't know, gave up and they don't talk to us anymore. I can't remember the last time I spoke to them.
> Jane: I mainly see them at parties or out in town and stuff but I don't see them much in Romsworth. It's Curtis who's eighteen and then Dave and Freddy going up town as well. If I go out I'll see them there.
> Julie: But it won't be like a proper conversation…

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Jane: No, it's completely different to what it was a few months ago
which is weird.

Julie: It's weird to think that this time last year that used to be what
we used to do, like every night nearly and it is sad and I do miss it."

(Julie and Jane)

Both Julie and Jane missed being part of a group and this also links to the issues
raised in the previous chapters both in relation to there being few young
people living in Romsworth *and* Romsworth being difficult to reach and having
few facilities for young people in this age group. This meant that young people
found it difficult to visit friends who lived elsewhere and these friends found it
difficult to reach them and often saw little point in coming to Romsworth
because there was very little to do when they actually got there. This lack of
facilities also meant that young people (and me as a researcher!) had to rely on
being out and about in order to meet other young people. Given the formalised
ways in which adults living in Romsworth went about the creation of
community it is significant that they did not include in this more formalised
provision for young people.

For Julie and Jane, once their friendship group began to fracture, they went
from spending time in a large group to just spending time with each other. Julie
was particularly nostalgic for the time when they were still close friends.

"I miss things like that. And being like really close with them."
(Julie)

"Julie: It's not good, I miss it.
Jane: I do as well. I miss it yeah."
(Julie and Jane)

Julie and Jane reflected on what they had enjoyed about their friendship with
'the boys' and seemed genuinely saddened that this had come to an end. They

both talked about the way that they occasionally saw 'the boys' around the village but that the way that they interacted was no longer the same as it once was. Nostalgia for the way the friendship used to be played a part in the way Julie and Jane felt about their friendship. While they recognised that individual group members had changed, and that the group as a whole no longer had as much in common, they still keenly felt the loss of this friendship.

These examples highlight the fractures that began to occur in this group as they approached a transitional phase in their lives and how the individuals or the sub-groups felt about these rifts. While the group was still at school (albeit different schools) they still had the same schedule for the day, leaving and arriving home at roughly the same time. Different jobs and further education options meant that young people were at home at different times of the day and night and therefore couldn't always spend time together. This also links to hopes and aspirations for the future (raised in the previous chapter 5.6 Community and lifecourse). Some group members having access to transport meant that they were able to leave the village more freely than those who did not have this access. Leaving the village was also the preferred option for entertainment but young people also pointed to finances as a reason why they may not be able to do this. Finally, different outlooks to life and different aspirations for the future meant that young people began to see that they had little in common, outside living in the same place. Therefore a variety of factors influenced how the group had split as they went through this transitional phase. In the next section, I explore other reasons for the breakdown or the change in friendships.

6.2.2 Gender, sexuality and the breakdown of friendship

The previous sections have focused on a number of different reasons for the split in this friendship group but gender and sexuality also began to play a part in this and, in this section, I explore this further. Significantly, the part played by gender and sexuality in this rift was a factor that was mainly talked about by

female participants. Jane and Julie felt that problems in their friendship with 'the boys' only began to emerge when Tamar first moved to the village and joined the group

"Jane: It used to be me, Julie and the boys...
Julie: The boys and then Tamar came along and that's where all the tensions started. Coz it was kind of like, I know this sounds really petty, but it's kind of like they're our friends, back off. And they kind of like ditched us and went with them."
(Julie and Jane)

"Julie: And she thought that fitting in with the group meant taking the mick out of me, that by taking the mick out of me that made the boys like her...
Jane: Like the boys used to take the micky out of me and Julie all the time...
Julie: But we'd stick up for each other, we wouldn't turn against each other...
Jane: Like, I just take it and give them banter back and have banter with them...
Julie: She does the banter against you, the girl. Instead of against the boy."
(Julie and Jane)

Julie and Jane appeared to be jealous of Tamar's friendship with the boys and felt that their place in the group had been usurped. They felt that Tamar had replaced them in the affections of the boys. Julie and Jane went on to tell me about the way they perceived that Tamar had transgressed an unwritten gender rule, that rather than trying to fit in with the group as a whole, Tamar had tried to fit in with the boys. As a result they found her behaviour problematic, not the way a girl should behave towards other girls. They suggested that instead of joining in the 'banter' of the boys, she should have attempted to stick up for Julie and Jane. Instead she had joined in with the boys

and Julie and Jane felt that this was inappropriate. Julie also felt it was significant that Tamar hadn't lived in Romsworth for as long as they had

> "she hasn't been in the village very long, maybe about a year."
> (Julie)

This suggests that they perceived friendship as something that should grow over time, they had lived in the village for longer than Tamar and therefore it was inappropriate for her to enter their friendship group and end up as being better friends with the group than they themselves were. Julie and Jane saw Tamar as having taken away something that belonged to them and it was also significant that they blamed her solely for this, not mentioning the boys', or even their own part, in the fracture of this group.

Sexuality also began to play a part in the fracture of this friendship group, with friendships developing into relationships. Julie and Jane mentioned further problems with Tamar, in that Tamar began a relationship with a boy that Jane liked

> "Jane: Coz she went out with Dave as well and she knew I liked him
> and everything...
> Julie: She went out with Sam as well..."
> (Julie and Jane)

This further explains the way that Julie and Jane felt about Tamar, they perceived that she had not behaved in the way that a friend, particularly a female friend should behave.

When I spoke to Tamar, she told me that she too had had problems with friendships developing into relationships. Tamar and Dave had been close friends since she moved to the village. They went to the same school and Dave had taken her under his wing when she was new both to the village and to the school, introducing her to his friendship group. Tamar considered Dave to be her best friend. In an informal conversation with Tamar she told me that in the

weeks before the first interview, their relationship had become closer and she had finally admitted to him that she would like them to be more than friends. Dave initially told her that he felt the same way but then changed his mind. This made their friendship difficult for Tamar.

Julie and Jane echoed this telling me about the way their friendships had been impacted on by developing relationships.

> "Jane: I was really, really close to going out with Dave and then he went out with Frankie and he was telling me and Frankie that he liked both of us at the same time, then I found out…
> Julie: No, I found out before you did…
> Jane: And then I went on Facebook and found out they were in a relationship and I was like, oh right. But me and Dave have sorted it out since then."
> (Julie and Jane)

> "It's kind of my fault me and Sam don't get along because I kind of messed him about. He turned around and said to me, so when are we getting together then? And I said, I blurted, we're not getting together. And it kind of went from there and he just kind of used to be like really nasty because he didn't like what had happened. But no, we're okay, we just don't really talk."
> (Julie)

In both of these instances, the attempt of a friend to take a relationship further had caused problems. Dave played Jane and another girl off against each other and it made their friendship difficult, more so because Jane found out through the public medium of Facebook that he was in a relationship with the other girl. As with the (above) example from Tamar, this caused problems with their friendship and although Jane told me that they had 'sorted it out since then' their friendship was not as close as it once was.

For Julie, the situation was different and rested on the way she dealt with her friend telling her he liked her. Sam wanted to turn their friendship into something more but she did not want to do this. Turning him down created tension in their friendship and Julie echoed comments from Jane, that they were 'okay' but that they did not spend very much time together anymore.

While gender and sexuality were not the only cause of the breakdown of this friendship group they still played a significant part in its demise. My focus on friendship has, herein, brought together (albeit briefly) two sub-fields of geography that rarely cross – geographies of youth and geographies of sexuality. Indeed, current literature tends to focus on young people's sexuality and sexual education (for example Philo 2011 raises issues around the discussion of children's sexuality; Bell and Aggleton 2012 address the promotion of sexual health to young people in Uganda; and Waitt and Gorman-Murray 2010 explore young people's experiences of sexuality in urban and rural areas) rather than on their sexual or romantic relationships, so this aspect of my research addresses overlooked areas both in terms of young people's sexuality and sexual relationships but, also, the impact of this on their friendships. Tamar, Julie and Jane all found it difficult to continue friendships with boys that they had either been in or attempted to be in a relationship with or with boys who wanted to be in a relationship with them. Significantly, it was only the girls from the group who talked to me about these issues. The next section addresses why these friendship rifts are particularly problematic for young people living in newer developments such as Romsworth and addresses the way that young people sometimes saw their friendships as ones of convenience.

6.3 Friendships of convenience

This section explores an issue that has begun to emerge through the previous chapters. I have already discussed the way that several young people told me that the lack of young people in their age group meant that they interacted with older people more than they perceived they would if they lived elsewhere (see

4.5 Intergenerational friendships). But young people from the friendship group I spoke to, also talked about the way that their friendship with the rest of the group was, to some extent, one of convenience. *Place* was key to this: young people told me that Romsworth as a new development meant that there were very few people in their age group and, therefore, there were fewer opportunities to make friends than if they lived elsewhere. Young people suggested that their friendships would be different if they lived elsewhere and that their friendships were different to those of their peers. Several young people also suggested that, in the future, friendship networks would be different for young people growing up *in Romsworth*, partially because there would be more young people living there but also because most of these young people would have gone through the primary school together and formed friendship groups then. Some of the young people also speculated that there would eventually be a new secondary school built nearby to accommodate the children in the village. They pointed to the almost yearly expansion of the primary school as evidence that this would be needed and suggested that being in primary and secondary school together would vastly change the experiences of young people in the future. The friendships of respondents were rooted in both time and place, with their experiences of friendships being unique to this particular time and this particular place.

Tamar talked at length about her friendships with the rest of the group telling me

> "if you go to Northampton, I would hang around with the same
> people that I am. It wouldn't be a variety, it would just be the people
> that I fit in with. I don't necessarily fit in with these lads but we have
> to live with it, we get on."
> (Tamar)

Tamar felt that if her friendship group lived elsewhere, they would be unlikely to be friends with each other because they had little in common. Tamar saw factors like tastes in music as ordinarily being crucial to the formation of

friendships. Significantly, she talked about being friends with people that she would 'fit in with' if she lived elsewhere, that she would not ordinarily be friends with a group of people she felt that she did not fit in with. Tamar also said that the group 'have to live with it' suggesting that their friendship is, at least in part, about the convenience of living in the same place.

Tamar had lived in the village for two years, which was a relatively short space of time compared to the rest of her friendship group, therefore her experiences were also linked to moving to a new place. Once again, there is little existing literature relating to young people's experiences of moving to a new community (although see Bushin and White, 2010 on young people moving to pre-existing communities) but there are examples of these experiences from an adult perspective. For example, Reed et al (1998) explore connections to place for older people moving out of their local area into care homes and Manzo et al (2008) explore the impact of a US scheme to develop and regenerate existing areas of housing and relocate residents elsewhere. It is also worth noting that in both of these examples, residents are not always in control of where they move to and, in that sense, parallels can be drawn between their experiences and those of young people who have moved with parents. For Tamar, while most of the rest of the group had been friends since primary school, she had joined the group relatively late. Tamar talked about the friendship networks she had where she previously lived

> "in Northampton, it wouldn't matter if one person fell out with you because you could go and see other people and have that choice there. But it's either us or people outside Romsworth and it's sometimes you can't go and see them and you're stuffed."
> (Tamar)

> "Yeah, if there's an argument, we just say, like, no just pack it in and get on and things like that. And then we're sorry and we'll get on again because we realise that as soon as one of us goes in the rest of them are going to go in because it's awkward. And there's just no

point coz we know that we need each other. We're still best friends
so."

(Tamar)

"Like coz James, he's (laughs) different he listens to like Slipknot
and like full on like scream. And then there's like David and Freddy
and they're like the pretty boys that go clubbing every Friday or
summat. And they're like chavs, you can see them with their cars,
blaring their music out. And then there's me, all indie, Jack Johnson
kind of music. So like the different...it's nice having the different
cultures and we all get on. Even though we're so different. Coz if we
weren't together as a group, we'll probably be separate with other
groups that's the same as us...do you...we probably wouldn't talk."

(Tamar)

Tamar compared her friendships in Northampton with those in Romsworth
suggesting that in Northampton, she had had a wider friendship network so
had a variety of friends to spend time with. But in Romsworth, Tamar told me
group members tried to avoid arguing with each other because, unlike her
friendship group in Northampton, there was simply nobody else to spend time
with. Group members also tried to avoid conflict because of the way this
impacted on the group as a whole. Individuals in the group arguing created
tension within the rest of the group and, when this happened, nobody wanted
to stay out. Therefore the group tried to avoid this altogether as other friends
lived further away and were harder to reach.

Tamar recognised that individual members of the group had very different
tastes and interests but that because there were so few young people living
there the only option was to tolerate and manage these differences. For these
young people, being part of the group was more important than spending time
with people with shared interests. Tamar went on to suggest that, as
Romsworth grew, young people would have a different experience growing up
than their group (see also comments from Catherine above in section 6.2

Friendship and transition). Instead of a single group, young people's friendship groups would be more fractured

> "I think it'll kind of, it will change and they will go into their, there'll be James's group and then there'll be my group and then there'll be the David group. It won't be the variety group. They'll kind of make their own."
> (Tamar)

Tamar felt that their group was significantly different to friendship groups of other young people elsewhere where she perceived that young people were friends with people whom they shared interests with.

The importance of music cultures was echoed by a number of other participants as they talked about the differences within their group. In an interview with James and Adam they talked at length about their tastes in music and TV. When I asked them whether the rest of the group shared their interests, they told me

> "James: No, they're musically oblivious.
> Adam: They're not really into the Boosh because it's really quirky and weird.
> James: Yeah and they'll just put on something like, yeah The Only Way Is Essex.
> Adam: Geordie…?
> James: Geordie Shore, oh yeah, MTV, mainstream…
> Adam: Bang. Whereas me and Dan sit there and it's like, this is painful.
> James: Match Of The Day.
> Adam: Soccer AM.
> James: Awful. Oh yeah, I watch Family Guy, I love comedy. Everyone watches Family Guy.

Adam: Everyone killed it, it's a wicked programme but everyone killed it."

(Adam and James)

"If you don't listen to mainstream music like me and James do not, I'll listen to anything that's a lot older…or really good…if it's really good, I'll listen to it. I won't listen to it just because it's mainstream or just because it's come out this month. I don't know how but I always identify people in groups and music is just something that I can just say, you're this kind of person because you listen to this kind of music. I don't mean to stereotype people, it's just how it is."

(Adam)

Adam and James saw themselves as outsiders and defined their friendship and identity against what they saw as mainstream cultures. James said that his other friends were 'musically oblivious' because they followed chart music and didn't appreciate his tastes in music. Adam suggested that the group all had to be tolerant of the views and tastes of its individual members.

"Erm…we…nobody likes it when James's playing his music, nobody likes it. But we also get on with James, because a lot of them have known James since…Freddy and Ben they used to go Loddington Primary and he went Loddington Primary coz they all lived in Loddington area. And Freddy and Ben moved to the Romsworth area ages ago, but he only moved here about four or five years ago. But when he came, they all still knew him, so they were all still really good friends, so that kind of gave them a boost. And the fact that Freddy's a very popular person so he's friends with him, so he's not friends with everyone else…knowing the right people is a really big part of mingling within those kind of groups…kind of…once you know the person, you rise above all the…everything that's like on the front page of the stereotype."

(Adam)

This was echoed by other members of this group who told me that group members took it in turns to play music they liked to the rest of the group. While Valentine (2008) views 'tolerance' as problematic when applied to community, in this instance all of the young people were exercising the power of tolerance but all were subject to this exercise of power too. Again, the emphasis here was on the differences between members of the group but also the history that the group had together. Group members viewed their joint history as more important than the differences and even though the group did not share common interests, they were prepared to put this aside and tolerate what different members liked or enjoyed in order to keep their friendship.

This friendship group was unusual in that their friendship was based on the shared experience of living in the same place rather than being built on common interests. While these differences may not be viewed from the outside as significant, the group was mainly comprised of white middle class people of roughly the same age, these differences were significant to the young people in this group. Yet, despite these differences, the group had stayed friends with each other, most of them having met at primary school. Their friendship was one of convenience because Romsworth as a new development meant that there were very few other young people living there and these young people realised that if they did not spend time with and become friends with each other then they would not have anybody else to spend time with.

Arguably, these differences were also a factor in the rifts that eventually occurred within the group. For a number of years, at least, the group had tried to ignore their differences and resolve issues almost before they arose. Eventually they reached a point where these differences became too big to ignore and this coincided with leaving school and taking up new ventures. Therefore, these young people were beginning to develop a greater sense of independence with some learning to drive and accessing their own transport; therefore they were more able to spend time with new friends than they previously had been.

This notion of friendships of convenience moves young people's relationships with others beyond work done in subcultures and post-subcultures. For subcultures, young people grouped together in order to be part of the same scene. Friendships were never mentioned; instead, young people were always seen as resisting or attempting to shock. Again, work in post-subcultures rarely mentioned friendships occurring within groups and again, within this work, young people were seen as grouping together for common interests. Even for Mafessoli (1994) and the neo-tribes, where young people came together, albeit briefly, it was still in order to be part of the same culture. For these young people, place was key to their friendships with them accepting differences over music tastes, TV, comedy and other popular cultures and embracing the similarities of living in the same place.

Therefore, these relationships were not post-subcultures or about belonging to a tribe, instead they cut across tastes and were not aligned to any one culture or consumer practice (as the examples above demonstrate, there were clear differences and sometimes oppositions to the music tastes of individuals). The lack of affiliation to different cultural practices highlights why using the term 'friendship' is so important in discussing these young people's relationships. Scholars of youth studies have previously been so caught up in notions of culture, politics and identity that they have, on the whole, overlooked the importance of friendships for young people.

While this section has addressed the friendship of a specific group of young people, other young people talked about their friendships with people outside of the village, the next section addresses both these friendships and some of the issues that arose from them.

6.4 Friendships outside the village

This section addresses young people's friendships with people who lived outside Romsworth. For the young people who were not part of the friendship

group I spoke to, friendship networks were more frequently based outside Romsworth. This tended to be older young people, those who had not attended the local primary school together but had lived in Romsworth for a number of years, or those who had moved to the village later, either with parents or independently. Young people from the friendship group also talked about friendships they had had outside the village, and these friendships became more significant as fractures in the group began to show. Young people talked about the difficulty they had in maintaining these relationships, their friends rarely visited them in Romsworth and, while there were a variety of reasons for this, transport was a key factor. Respondents also told me that a lack of facilities for young people and their whole friendship group living elsewhere meant that friends rarely came to visit them. As a result, young people had to work hard in order to maintain these friendships.

6.4.1 Transport

Transport, particularly public transport, was a key issue for young people and their friendships outside the village. Infrequent buses meant that young people who were unable to drive or who could drive but did not have access to a car were reliant on friends and family for lifts when they wanted to visit friends. A few of the young people I spoke to mentioned cycling or walking to see friends who lived in nearby villages but, for the majority of young people living in Romsworth, transport options tend to be reduced to buses and cars. James told me about his difficulties of using public transport.

> "First time I ever got a bus to Northampton, it just didn't turn up. I was just waiting there and it was freezing cold and I got like, coz usually I get a bus to Kettering and it'd always, they're always late but the first time I got a bus to Northampton the bus to Kettering was on time and the other one didn't come."
> (James)

"I've been stranded in Kettering a couple of times and had to walk back, once at eleven 'o'clock at night"

(James)

James's experience of using public transport was not positive, with buses either not turning up, or with him being left stranded. Other young people echoed his comments about these issues and my own personal experiences of catching the buses to nearby towns also reflected these experiences. Therefore, for young people going out into town, visiting friends or having friends to visit was difficult when relying on buses. I took the bus to both Kettering and Northampton in order to try it out for myself.

Extract from fieldwork dairy

The journey to Kettering is timetabled to take 20 minutes, it costs £4.90 for a return and the last bus leaves Kettering at 6.44pm. The journey to Northampton is timetabled to take around 45 minutes but, when I caught the bus, in the middle of the day, i.e. not during rush hour, the journey was closer to an hour. It cost £6.50 for a return and the last bus back leaves Northampton at 8.40pm. Both services run hourly Monday to Saturday with no buses through the village at all on a Sunday. Both buses were uncomfortable and dirty (the bus to Northampton being so dirty that I couldn't actually see out of the window). The bus to Kettering was early and I only just managed to catch it whereas the bus to Northampton was over ten minutes late.

Informal conversations with young people also revealed that they had heard that, as with many rural bus services, both these buses were going to be cut so they ran even less frequently. The irregularity of timetabled buses made planning social events difficult. Julie and Jane commented on the way that having no buses running in the evening impacted on going out.

"Julie: the only cinema in our radius would be…
Jane: The Odeon…

Julie: I don't know how many miles away Northampton is…

Jane: It's about…

Julie: I don't know how long a mile is.

Jane: It's about nine to ten miles.

Julie: Well within about a five to six mile radius...

Jane: It's Kettering.

Julie: And you always go there and what's the betting that you see someone you know. That's how packed it gets because you always see someone you know there.

Sarah: And because of the buses you can't see a film that finishes any later than about half six or something.

Both: No.

Jane: Plus if you get the bus, you have to get the bus to town and then you'd have to get a bus from town to Tesco's and then get a bus…

Julie: So it doesn't drop you actually at the cinema. Then you'd have to walk there and you'd have to walk back and then you'd probably miss…

Jane: The only time it drops you down there is when it's the school bus. It drops you down by the Tesco's because the school route changes."

(Julie and Jane)

For young people reliant on public transport, going out to the cinema in the evening was often not an option. On the few occasions that they did go out, evenings had to be planned in detail because of the difficulty of getting home. Julie and Jane pointed out that in order to go to the cinema they had to get two buses and that meant that they had to watch a film that was on during the day and finished in time for them to catch the last connecting bus to Romsworth. Therefore, for these young people, Romsworth, as a sustainable community, was not truly sustainable.

For most of the older participants, friendship groups mainly lay outside the village so, once again, they were reliant on either travelling by bus, getting lifts from their parents or being able to drive themselves. Even amongst those who could drive and had regular access to a car, there was a difficulty in seeing friends regularly. Joanne and Catherine both told me that friends rarely visited them

> "but all my friends won't come and visit because they think it's too far and even my partner when I said I was moving up here he was like "that's really far" but it's not, it's only like 7 minutes from Northampton, it's not far."
> (Joanne)

> "I used to live in town which was a lot more convenient. But now I can drive it's not such a big issue. I sometimes feel like I'm always going to everybody else's house but it doesn't really bother me to be honest" (Catherine)

For Joanne, the lack of friends visiting was down to their perception of the distance, most of her friends were able to drive but still saw the distance as being too far. This was echoed by Catherine who told me that friends rarely visited her, instead, she made the trip out of the village and into nearby towns to see them. Joanne and Catherine also told me that their whole friendship group living elsewhere also impacted on the frequency of their friend's visits. In most cases, the individual members of their friendship groups lived nearby each other, Joanne's friends being mainly congregated around Northampton and Catherine's group living in Kettering. It was therefore seen as much easier for the person living in Romsworth to travel in order to see the rest of the group rather than the whole group coming out to Romsworth to visit one person. This also highlighted the lack of facilities for young people in this age group with respondents suggesting that there was little point in their friends coming to visit them because there was nothing for them to do once they were there.

For the young people who were able to drive, learning to drive and having access to their own transport had been a significant turning point in their lives. There was a clear divide between those who were old enough to drive and those who were not, particularly in relation to how they viewed living in Romsworth. This also links to the literature on transitions with learning to drive often being a key milestone in the lives of young people (Valentine, 2003). Marcus told me that learning to drive had changed his perception of living in the village.

> "I don't think…well personally I don't think there's a lot to do for a young person in Romsworth. That's why I often find myself going to my friends. Err…depending on how old you are, obviously if you're about eighteen, nineteen you can come down here for a drink with your friends and things but for someone who's…if your study's on sixteen to twenty year olds, when I was sixteen I hate living in Romsworth coz there was nothing I want…I could do. I'd just find myself getting the bus into Kettering coz I wouldn't…I'd get bored."
> (Marcus)

Marcus's perception of living there changed with being able to drive and therefore being able to get out of the village and see friends. He told me that he now enjoyed spending time in Romsworth because this was the time that he spent with his family. Other older young people also echoed this suggesting that Romsworth, for them, was about spending time with their families and time outside the village was about friendships.

Several young people also talked about the way that they felt learning to drive had given them independence. When I asked Catherine how she tended to spend her spare time, she told me

> "I don't actually spend that much time in Romsworth. I think it's just coz obviously I'm a bit older and I've got a car. I've got my independence so I'm not much…I'm not here all that often."
> (Catherine)

Catherine connected being able to drive and, more importantly, having her own car with being independent and not having to rely on public transport or on lifts from parents. Other young people talked about transport impacting on the types of jobs or college options that were available to them.

The socio-economic make-up of the village being made up of mainly middle class, affluent people *did* mean that young people had an expectation that as soon as they were able to, they would learn to drive but often buying a car relied on being able to get a job in order to run it. Therefore, some of these young people were caught in a trap of not being able to get a job because of issues relating to transport and not being able to buy a car because they did not have a job.

6.4.2 The hard work maintaining friendships outside the village

Several respondents told me about the sheer amount of hard work and, in fact, expense they had to put into maintaining their friendships outside the village.

Denise was twenty-one and I met her through the Guides where she volunteered as a helper. Denise lived in Romsworth with her parents and her younger sister, having moved there five years before from Leeds. She worked as an auditor and was planning on buying her own house in one of the nearby towns but told me that on her own this was going to be expensive and was therefore proving to be difficult. Given that Denise volunteered within the community, I anticipated that she would tell me that she really enjoyed living

there but, in actual fact, Denise's dislike of the village meant that she spent as little of her free time there as possible.

All of Denise's friends lived outside Romsworth, either in Kettering, Northampton or further afield in Birmingham and Leeds and this is where she spent the majority of her weekends. I asked Denise where she was most likely to go when she went out and she told me about the effort she put into spending weekends with friends.

"I go to Kettering, I'd say the most, because my best friend lives there. Like she lives right in the centre so it's like stumble out the door, stumble back in the door. Then I go to…I'd say Birmingham the next most because it's a better night out. And we'll either hire, like my friends, we'll either hire an apartment and go mad. And I think I go to Northampton the next most. And then Leeds the next most after that."
(Denise)

"Denise: if I'm drunk in town, getting here costs me a fortune. Absolutely ridiculous, I never, ever get a taxi home from Kettering. Never, I will always stay at someone's house. It's just ridiculously overpriced.
Sarah: What kind of prices are you looking at?
Denise: Say…well it'll always be after…I'll always be after midnight, so you're talking like what? 30 quid to get back here sometimes."
(Denise)

Denise was the only person from her group of friends who lived in Romsworth and, therefore, getting a taxi back from town on her own was not an option because it was too expensive. Therefore, even on nights out to nearby towns, Denise always had to rely on being able to stay at a friend's house. Denise went on to highlight how expensive it is to get home from nearby towns telling me

that on one occasion a group of friends were visiting and they went out to Northampton, they were unable to stay with other friends and

> "there was a few of us and it was cheaper to stay in the Ibis than it was to get a taxi home."
> (Denise)

Throughout this interview, Denise mentioned several times that she had no friends of her age group living in the village and that there was nothing to do there in order to attract friends from elsewhere to come and visit her. Therefore, in order to enjoy a social life and spend time with friends, Denise had to plan ahead, spending much of her time, and money, outside of Romsworth.

Emma echoed these comments by Denise telling me about the difficulties she found in spending time with friends outside of Romsworth. As with Denise, for Emma, much of her social life happened outside Romsworth. When I asked her what she did in the evenings or at weekends, she told me

> "I'll go visit friends or I'll ask my friends to come stop over mine, that's about it. Then weekends away in town and not come home until god knows what time on Sunday. Well sometimes it has to be Saturday because Sunday's a bit of a hassle trying to get back."
> (Emma)

Emma was eighteen and studying A-levels at a local college. She had lived in Romsworth for three years and lived with her mum and sister. I first met Emma on a bus to one of the nearby towns where she was with a friend. I asked them both to take part in my project but Emma's friend told me that he lived elsewhere and that this was actually his first trip to Romsworth. Emma told me at the time that she only knew one other person her age in Romsworth and that the rest of her friendship group and her boyfriend were from elsewhere and

went on to say that these friends rarely visit her because of the difficulties of transport and the lack of facilities for young people.

Emma also told me that, like Denise, in order to go out into town she had to stay over with friends because of the expense of getting home in a taxi. Emma did not drive so had to rely on public transport or lifts from friends and relatives in order to go out and to get back home again.

Michelle and Fiona also talked about difficulties in maintaining friendships outside the village.

Michelle and Fiona were eighteen and seventeen respectively and were studying A-levels at the sixth form of nearby schools. Both had lived in Romsworth for eight years and they estimated that they had been friends for six or seven years of this, having met each other on the school bus. Despite going to different schools (at the time, their school bus dropped off at several different schools) they struck up a friendship and as a result of not seeing each other during the day at school, used walks around the village as a way of maintaining this friendship. The pressures of coursework and exams meant that these walks had become less frequent than they would have liked but they tried to see each other at least once a week.

Fiona found this particularly difficult because with a July birthday, she was one of the youngest people in her year. Other friends had turned eighteen and regularly went out to pubs and clubs, something she would not be able to do for a few months at the time I interviewed her. She told me

> "It's that weird age, because seventeen, you're raring to go out and
> drive but you're not actually legal in the eyes of the law to go out
> and do…you know…
> Which is odd how they work that system itself, coz you find that the
> people who are generally older find it frustrating because they want
> to go out and leave school and work and that kind of thing… Even to

just go out...even if you weren't drinking, if they don't let you in and all your other friends can go in, if you think about it...it puts...it's annoying..."

(Fiona)

Fiona's comments echo Valentine (2003) with adulthood encompassing a wide range of legal classifications. In this instance, Fiona and her friends were all in the same school year but being able to drive or go out to pubs and clubs depended on being seventeen or eighteen. She highlighted the difficulties in maintaining friendships when some members of a group were able to do things that others were not. Michelle was also keen for Fiona to turn eighteen so they could go out together. She echoed (above) comments from other young people about the cost of taxis and the difficulties in catching buses.

"Sarah: And the last bus leave Kettering really early?

Michelle: Yeah, it is a silly silly time.

Sarah: So do you have to rely on taxis if you're out?

Michelle: Yeah, like when I go out, I have to stay at a friend's or fork out thirty quid..."

(Michelle)

Michelle went on to say that, as a student, she could not afford to go out with friends if she had to get a taxi home so had to always rely on staying at a friend's house.

For young people living in Romsworth, transport issues and lack of facilities for young people meant that in order to see friends who lived elsewhere, they had to leave the village. Bunnell et al (2012) suggest that one of the ways that geography could develop studies of friendship is through work on mobilities and transnationalism, outlining a number of different studies, which have addressed the two. But for these young people, it was simply a kind of 'everyday mobility', Pooley et al (2005) that affected and impacted on their friendships. For those without access to a car or for those who wanted to go

out for a drink in the evening, social events needed to be carefully planned and relied on being able to stay at somebody else's house. In light of the issues raised here, the next section explores the way in which social media impacted on young people and their friendships.

6.5 Technology, social media and friendship

This section explores young people's relationships with social media and technology. As discussed in the previous section, leaving Romsworth in order to see friends was difficult and, therefore, young people often relied on technology and social media in order to maintain contacts with friends. All but one of the eighteen young people I spoke to used Facebook with most of them using this on a daily basis. Adam was the only young person not to have a mobile phone when I first spoke to him and, by the end of the interview process, Adam had given in to pressure from his parents and friends and had a phone. Most of the young people I spoke to had smart phones and this reflects the socio-economic background of Romsworth in that young people (or, more often, their parents) had the disposable income available to them to buy or have a contract on a top of the range phone.

As a result of smart phones, young people's relationship to technology and social media was closely linked as they frequently accessed social media sites such as Facebook and twitter through their phones. I often discovered that young people were almost unable to separate their use of different social media, texts and phone calls because it was through the object of their phone that they stayed in contact with others.

6.5.1 Arguments and social media

Most respondents had several hundred Facebook 'friends', with a few having in excess of a thousand. As a result of this maintaining these online friendships was sometimes more problematic than maintaining their offline friendships.

Christofides et al (2012) discuss the results of a survey conducted into young people's experiences of social media. Within this, they asked young people whether they had had 'bad' experiences on Facebook. Over a quarter of their participants reported a bad experience with well over half of these reporting incidences of bullying, 'meanness' (p.772) or misunderstandings. Others also reported either unwanted contact or accidental disclosure as issues. Julie (who had seven hundred Facebook 'friends') told me that she mainly saw social media as a positive factor in her life, but went on to say

> "I think it has it's negatives as well because I think as much as you can stay in contact with someone, if you've fallen out with someone and like back in those days you stayed away from someone or you had a fight and it was over, now the fights can carry on for months and people make statuses and people...I've seen so many nasty things on Facebook. And it gets really low when people tag people in statuses, write their names so everyone knows your business."
> (Julie)

Julie felt that arguments took much longer to burn out or be resolved when people took to Facebook to air their grievances. Julie used the phrase 'hiding behind keyboards' to explain why she thought this might be the case suggesting that people said things online that they would not ordinarily say to somebody's face. Julie and Jane gave me two examples of this happening. The first happened to a girl they knew from school and the second was closer to home directly affecting Julie.

> "Jane: So if somebody, for example, if a girl, if like a boy and a girl are going out and the boy cheats, the girlfriend'll find out and make a status about that girl...
> Julie: To tag the girl in it...
> Jane: And then an argument will occur on the status and everyone gets involved.
> Julie: It'll get to like three hundred comments.

Jane: Like Molly Chadwick's relationship status. This girl…erm…is now going out with a guy called Rob in our school and erm…she split up with her other boyfriend about two months ago…

Julie: It's a long time ago…

Jane: And erm…yeah and like, this boy, her ex-boyfriend was oblivious to all the comments that all his friends were saying on the status. Like they were saying, oh this is ridiculous, you've just got out of a relationship and then nasty comments coming from all the other boys from our school against all the other friends of this lad. But Molly text her ex-boyfriend saying, have you seen all these comments and he was like, no. He knew nothing about it and he didn't have a problem but it was all of his friends and their friends getting involved."

(Julie and Jane)

In this example, a friend of the boy and girl concerned had posted a Facebook status in which both of their names were tagged, this meant that all of their Facebook 'friends' could see this status and, more importantly, comment on it. Julie and Jane saw that there were several issues with this, firstly, the problem didn't come from the boy and the girl themselves, rather, it was the involvement of others that the issues came from. Secondly, this argument went on for much longer than Julie and Jane saw necessary. When somebody posts an update on Facebook, they are notified every time somebody comments on this. Anybody commenting is also notified when other comments are added. As a result of this, it is more difficult for people involved in arguments to get bored or forget about it because there is a steady stream of new comments constantly being added. Finally, Julie and Jane told me that incidents like this meant that 'everyone knows your business' and therefore friends on Facebook who were not necessarily close friends in an offline sense, were able to see intimate details of an individual's life without individuals themselves sharing this.

'Everyone knowing your business' was also something that several young people talked about in relation to Romsworth as a village and as a community.

Young people often felt that in order to have, what they saw as, positive benefits of living in a community (events, people to help out in times of trouble, people talking to each other in the street) there was also a more negative side which related to privacy. This is similar to the way that many of these young people saw their online interactions and in this sense online communications were as much about community as they were about friendship.

Julie and Jane went on to give me a second example of a situation that happened directly to Julie.

"It was just, basically, something happened with a boy she was seeing, and the boy she was seeing just seemed to come onto me one night and she didn't like it. And she tagged me in it, put everything that happened in the status and then just put…abuse, wasn't it? It was just literally this much of abuse one Facebook for like five hundred people to see…"
(Julie)

"It was embarrassing and it was shameful and it was, it wasn't like I'd done anything wrong"
(Julie)

"Julie: And people just think it's funny until they have it happen to them and honestly I cried for weeks because of that. It's just and honestly (to Jane) you hated it because you saw me so upset and…fair enough, when stuff like that happens it just shows who your real friends are. Much as it's good because you see who you really do need and who you really don't need it hurts because as much as you don't want to read the comments you do read them and people who you thought were your friend put things in because they follow the majority and because people think it's really great to make statuses about people…

Jane: Because they know they'll get so many likes...statuses about people that don't like you as well...

Julie: And then you realise who doesn't like you. I mean I got something like thirty likes on that status and half those people I knew and I thought they were...it was awful. It was the...honestly, I've never seen such a bad status and that was about me."

(Julie and Jane)

Again, Julie talked about the way that hundreds of people could see and get involved in a private incident between herself and another girl. She went on to talk about the emotional impact of this telling me that this had made her feel ashamed and embarrassed. Julie and Jane never talked about this experience in terms of bullying and they did not even seem to be surprised that it had happened in the first place. Instead, this seemed to be a common occurrence, which happened to most of their peers at some time or another. Julie had a clear understanding of the differences between online and offline friends suggesting that part of her distress at this incident came from the sheer number of people getting involved and seeing intimate details of her life but also because some of the people that she considered to be real friends were getting involved and turning against her. Julie's comment 'when stuff like that happens it just shows you who your real friends are' demonstrated the way she saw her online relationships, that the people she interacted with on Facebook were not necessarily real friends. Her disappointment lay in the people she considered to be real friends not standing by her when this happened.

These examples demonstrate some of the problems that young people had when their offline friends were managed online but other young people talked about the difference that social media made in maintaining relationships with friends and family they were not able to see as frequently as they would like.

6.5.2 Benefits of social media

Young people talked about the way that social media afforded the opportunity to interact with friends when they could not be in the same physical place together. Nigel was in a band and told me

> "I'd say four other guys in my band are my best friends and we all live in five separate places which is really awkward. I live here in Romsworth, and our drummer lives in Stanwick, the singer lives in Northampton, the bassist lives in Towcester and the other guitarist lives in Kettering so…we're widespread all over the county. It's really difficult to get together when we need to. But it's alright, I can meet up with the guitarist, with the other guitarist, and we can work songs out and stuff. We can drive to the drummer because the other guitarist drives as well. So we can drive over to Stanwick and record our ideas and stuff. It's alright, it works out."
> (Nigel)

> "basically you can record a three minute idea, put it on soundcloud, all the rest of my band can hear it, they can download it, put their ideas to it, keep uploading it."
> (Nigel)

The band all living in different places and not all being able to drive meant that getting together to write and practice was not always easy. Instead of physically being in the same place together, the band used Soundcloud, a social media site allowing subscribers to upload and download music from people they were connected to, in order to write and record music. The band's use of social media meant that although individual members were in different localities, they were still able to work on joint projects.

Other young people talked about social media and technology affording them the opportunity to connect with friends and family who lived in different parts of the UK, or further afield in different countries. Emma told me

> "I need to get Skype, I've got my godmother who lives in Luxembourg and I don't really talk to her much and my boyfriend's going to uni so I'm going to need Skype to talk to him sometimes."
> (Emma)

> "To be honest, quite a lot of it is family because I've got quite a lot of family here, there and everywhere that I don't get to see really."
> (Emma)

> "With my family it's like once or twice every week. Of course there's family in America, Scotland of course talking to them and arranging visits. So a few times a week just to see how they're doing."
> (Emma)

Technologies were an important factor in Emma being able to connect with significant people in her life. Emma had a large family, spread over various parts of the world and her boyfriend was leaving the area for university in Liverpool. For Emma, making regular phone calls to these different sets of people would have been costly so she turned to technologies such as Skype and to social media to maintain contact. Emma had somewhere in the region of five hundred friends on Facebook but told me that many of these were family members. Social media and technology allowed her the opportunity to contact these people for free whenever she wanted to.

Ben also told me about the importance of social media to maintaining friendships with people who lived in different countries. He told me that Facebook was one of the main ways he stayed in touch with people.

> "I've got friends that live out in Portugal I don't want to text them because it'll cost me money so Facebook's a great way to talk to them. But other friends that live in like Scotland and Ireland and but...I just use Facebook because I don't want to text and waste all my money, coz it costs like, even though you've got the amount of texts."
>
> (Ben)

As with the above comments from Emma, Ben pointed to a key benefit of Facebook being that it is free and this is something that a number of other young people also reiterated, telling me that they saw little difference between social media and texts. Both texts and Facebook were means of communication they used through their phones but because Facebook was free to use, young people often used this to communicate with others when they had run out of mobile phone minutes or texts.

Social media was also a key way through which young people organised social activities. Several participants talked about Facebook groups being set up in order to arrange activities like going to the cinema, days out and parties. Tamar gave me an example of one such group

> "Ivan sent around the Harry Potter thing and people just joined in and go. So I joined the group and I'm going to Harry Potter with the lads." (Tamar)

This group of young people saw the use of social media as a good way to plan social activities such as trips to the cinema and, given the difficulties that young people had with transport, (see 6.4.1 Transport) events like this needed to be carefully planned. The creation of a group like this meant that everyone who joined knew what the arrangements for the event were and could interact with each other beforehand. Young people also talked about groups like this as being a good way to meet new people before events.

"Julie: [we use it for] talking to new people as well, because people…if you're going to a party in a couple of months time and you're not going to know many people there, you can just go down the…

Jane: Event…

Julie: Guest list.

Jane: And just see who's going and try and make friends with them over Facebook so it's not as awkward when you go to parties and stuff. Making new friends, meeting new people, stuff like that."

(Julie and Jane)

This was echoed by other young people who suggested that they had or were going to join Facebook groups for new colleges or universities that they were going to in order to get to know people who were going to the same place as they were (Madge et al 2009 and DeAndrea et al 2012). In much the same way Churchill (2004) talks about similar such uses of computer-mediated communications, designed for users to get to know each other in a virtual sense before meeting up on a face-to-face basis.

Criticisms of social media and technology have suggested that an increase in communications of this sort mean a decrease in interactions with those in a close locality (Massey, 2005). Others have argued that users create narcissistic communities, only interacting with those who they have something in common with (Buffardi and Campbell 2008 and Rosen 2007). But contrary to this, social media and technology often offered a lifeline to the young people I spoke to, either because they were unable to go out to other places and see friends because of a lack of transport or a lack of money. Therefore this has implications for Bunnell et al's (2012) argument about the relationship between friendship and mobility. As a result of access to social media, young people felt that they did not necessarily have to physically meet up with friends in order to feel like they were interacting. Wang and Wellman (2010) address friendship networks arguing that individuals with a higher usage online presence have more friends both online and offline than those who use the

internet less frequently. For the young people in my study, social media may not necessarily have meant that young people had more friends but it did mean that they were able to stay in touch and keep up to date with the developments of friends and family who lived in different parts of the world. Young people also frequently communicated with friends who lived in the village via these means of communication. For most of the young people I spoke to, social media was an incredibly important part of maintaining friendships regardless of whether their main friendship groups were inside or outside Romsworth.

6.6 Summary

This chapter has addressed a largely under researched area of the lives of young people: that of friendship. The young people who took part in this study were in a unique position in the history of a new settlement and, for these participants, friendships were complex and as much constituted by contingency (being thrown together in a new community) as choice. Bunnell et al (2012) suggest that friendship should be studied in its own right rather than being subsumed into other areas, among these, studies of community. However, young people's experiences of friendship should be seen in the light that it is not always easy to distinguish between friendship and community. Therefore, for these young people there was significant crossover between the notions of friendship and community. In part, this was due to young people's relationships with community, specifically in Romsworth as a place with a significant relationship to community. Most young people did not feel a particular connection to community, citing friendships and other relationships as more important. Furthermore, several young people felt that they were not part of this community, that they were not actively welcomed or that they were perceived to have nothing to contribute. As a result, other relationships were seen as being more important but these relationships that young people categorised as friendships were sometimes borne out of community based relationships, it is just that these community based relationships were often more organic than the more formalised versions of community enacted by adult decision makers.

For the young people in this study, friendships *mattered* and were based in the everyday (Horton and Kraftl, 2006a) rather than in the sort of spectacular or subversive ways of spending free time that studies of subculture saw young people as engaged in. Horton (2010) discusses the varied importance to children of popular culture and, for the young people from the friendship group I spoke to, popular culture was an important part of their lives but not an important part of their friendships. Instead, common cultural interests such as music and television programmes were less important than *locality* with these young people forming friendships based on the convenience of living in the same place rather than shared interests. These young people had some novel (and democratic) strategies for dealing with these differences, for example each group member choosing music for the group to listen to for a set period of time. But despite this, transitions such as leaving school, starting college, getting a job and learning to drive and friendships changing into romantic or sexual relationships began to affect this group and caused some irreparable fractures.

Friendships also mattered to older young people but, significantly, they knew very few other people in their age group in the village. Therefore, these young people were either friends with people older than them or their friendship groups were based outside Romsworth. For the latter, maintaining these friendships required a great deal of time and effort with young people planning nights out and weekends away in great detail so as to avoid either being left stranded in a nearby town or paying high prices for taxis home.

Technology and social media was also an important part of developing, maintaining, and at times, dissolving friendships. These technologies, crucially, allowed young people to stay in touch with friends and family who they were not able to see on a regular basis. For those who did not have access to transport, they were a key factor in being able to stay connected, particularly when friendship networks were spread over a variety of different places. But

these relationships were not necessarily problem free with some young people reporting bad experiences as a result of their interactions with others.

Overall, time and place were a defining factor of young people's friendships in Romsworth with several participants speculating that for future young people living in the settlement, experiences of friendship would be different. Young people suggested that friendships in the future would be more like they perceived friendships to be in other, more established places, with young people grouping together over common interests rather than over the shared experiences of living in the same place. Whether or not this will turn out to be the case remains to be seen but these young people saw their friendships with others as different to other people of the same age who lived elsewhere. Therefore, in terms of emotions that mattered to young people (Kraftl, 2013) nostalgia for the past was as important as hopes for the future.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

My research has addressed the experiences of young people living in a new settlement, a settlement specifically built with significant attention to the notion of community. It has focused on the ways in which living in this place has impacted on young people's day-to-day relationships with other residents, both young people and adults; their relationships with the notion of community; and their friendships, both inside and outside of this development. Key to this is place, space and time; with young people living in a new place at a specific stage of it's development, using spaces that were either perceived as belonging to adults or, sometimes more problematically, ambiguous and therefore contested spaces. For these young people, relationships, both with people of their own age and with adults were often impacted on by their use of specific spaces. In this chapter I reflect the methodology I used; explore my main findings, summarising my key contributions to academic research; and outline prospects for future research.

The aims of this research have been

1. To explore the intergenerational relationships of young people aged fifteen to twenty-six in a new settlement
2. To explore young people's relationships with community in a new settlement
3. To explore young people 's friendship networks in a new settlement

The research has sought to make a significant new contribution to literature in the areas of friendship, intergenerational relationships and community, whilst recognising a degree of overlap in these areas; young people viewed their friendships and community relationships as interconnected and interlinked

and their relationships with adults living in the village blurred these lines. Furthermore, young people connected the notions of community and friendship not just to people but to *spaces, places and times* seeing community as happening in and enacted through specific spaces and places at different times. Likewise, living in a new place at a specific stage of its development impacted on their friendships in a variety of ways, from the work young people had to put into maintaining friendships elsewhere to friendships of convenience occurring as a result of few young people living there.

The age group fifteen to twenty-six is a difficult one to make generalisations for (Furlong et al, 2011). So much happens in these years that the experiences of the upper and lower extremes of this age group can be, and often are, vastly different. For the purposes of analysis, I sometimes differentiated between younger young people and older young people but this was mainly because I met a friendship group at the younger end of this age range whereas older participants tended to be individuals. The experiences of individuals were not universal but there tended to be commonalities in those over the age of eighteen at least in part because they were able to do certain things that pertain to adulthood (Valentine, 2003) such as driving, drinking, etc. And likewise, there were commonalities in those under the age of eighteen, often because they were unable to do those things that pertain to adulthood. Despite these differences, there were also shared experiences over the wider course of this age group.

In the next sections, I discus main contributions, summarising key findings, outline suggestions for further research and I begin by reflecting on the methodology used for the project.

7.2 Reflections on the methodology used

Data was collected over the course of a year by spending approximately two days per week in my fieldwork site. I combined ethnography with detailed in depth interviews, interviewing eighteen young people aged between fifteen

and twenty-six and seven adults who either worked or lived in the settlement. With each of the young people I spoke to, I conducted up to three interviews and a guided walk. Interviews ranged in length from twenty minutes to over an hour and guided walks tended to be in excess of an hour too. Interviews with adults were also lengthy, taking somewhere in the region of an hour.

There is much discussion around what ethnography *actually* is (see page 72-73 for a discussion of ethnography) and some researchers would consider in depth interviews to be part of this process but for the purposes of my research, I always intended for in depth interviews to form the main body of the data I collected and for observations and other ethnographic methods to provide context. Therefore, I decided that I would view and discuss these as two separate methods.

7.2.1 Interviews

In depth interviews were a valuable way of gaining data from young people and I would definitely use these in a similar way in the future. Initially I had wanted to interview young people on an individual basis and as it turned out, the first few participants I met had few friends of their age living there. But later on, it was necessary to be more flexible and interview in pairs; this not only saved time but also added a different dimension to the interviews.

As part of the interview process, I showed young people a selection of photographs related to 'young people' (see appendix 4 - Images) and asked them to comment on these. This worked particularly well with participants who were shy or quiet but was effective across the board and is a method I would definitely use again. I found it raised a wide range of interesting discussion and gave young people the opportunity to talk about what was interesting or important to them. As a result, some interesting and contextual tangential themes were raised and this added to the richness of the data gathered.

One of the challenges I faced in the course of interviews was getting young people to commit to a time and a place in order for the interviews to take place. I had initially intended to conduct three interviews and a guided walk, if possible, with each participant. I found that while interviewees were initially keen to take part, by the third interview they were finding it difficult to commit to the research process and I was therefore unable to finish three interviews with all of the participants. After this had happened a few times, I took the decision to combine three interviews into two. Initially I feared that this would be at the detriment of the data gathered, I was worried that this wouldn't give me the opportunity to build up a relationship with participants in the time available but this actually proved to be the better method with all the participants I recruited after I changed the interviews around completing both interviews.

The final part of the interview process was a guided walk, these walks are often used in research with children and young people (Prout, 2002; Christensen and Mikkelson, 2008) and I found this to be a particularly effective method, giving young people the opportunity to show me places and spaces, which were important to them. I was initially worried that these walks would be difficult as there was no interview schedule to work to but I soon found that conversation in these walks were much more free flowing that I had initially anticipated. I was surprised by how interested participants were in *me,* and some of the conversation here was less about them and more about my PhD, the university, and even personal details such as where I lived and the types of music and TV that I liked. While these details emerged throughout other interviews it was interesting to see how participants, at times, were interviewing me. I was comfortable with this though, as I felt that it re-dressed the balance, and made the research process more of an exchange.

On reflection, I realised that my personality (Moser, 2008) played a part in the success of the interviews and therefore, for future projects, the number of interviews is less important if I am able to effectively build up a rapport with

participants in a short space of time. Moser argues that personality is an important factor in the research process because it changes more slowly over time, as opposed to positionality which is more changeable. Personality also means that there is a degree of consistency to how we respond to certain situations. However, I found that I unintentionally played up and down different aspects of my personality depending on whom I was talking. Therefore, there is still a degree to which I changed and manipulated my personality in order to suit the specific situation, whether that was interviews with young people, adult community members or decision makers. On reflection, this slight shift in *who I was* in different contexts contributed to the success of the interviews.

Overall, the process of doing interviews was a huge learning curve for me. Admittedly, this may be a completely different experience in a future research project but I would attempt to take what I learnt here forwards into further work. I would, in particular, consider what participants are likely to be able to commit to and structure interviews accordingly. I would also worry less about changing aspects of the research that do not appear to be working, such as removing or adding questions and themes from the interview schedules and combining interviews in order to make better use of the time available.

7.2.2 Ethnography

This was the first time I had 'done' ethnography and therefore I found it difficult to know exactly *what* to record and how to record it. Instead, I often found that in the process of talking to interviewees, something I had seen whilst I was out in the settlement either reinforced or contradicted what they were saying. While I do not feel that the research suffers for an, at times, inconsistent approach to ethnography, if I was to use this method in a future research project, I would at least attempt to record the data I gathered in a more consistent and systematic way.

In the early days of fieldwork, when I knew very few people living in the development, I found the process of 'being there' (Geertz, 2008) difficult. I often felt that I was clearly an outsider and that I would be challenged on my presence there, this was particularly the case at the first events I attended. I found the first fun day difficult because this was one of my first trips to Romsworth. However, at this event I talked to a few people about my research and discovered that on the whole their response was positive. As I got to know more people I became more comfortable, particularly when I got to know the café owner and various people who worked at the centre. This meant that I could have a cup of tea and a chat to a familiar face and these people also introduced me to others, legitimising my presence and my work there. As a result of this, I would potentially be more confident at the start of a similar project.

Another challenge I faced was at what point to tell people that I was a researcher. I had initially decided that my research would be as overt as possible but I quickly discovered that the reality of doing this was not always appropriate to the situation (McKenzie, 2009). Therefore, the research was as overt as the specific situations would allow.

Despite these issues, if I were to conduct a similar research project I would definitely use ethnography as part of the methodology, using this allowed me to collect a rich variety of data, initially giving me a clear snapshot of the settlement at a particular stage of its development. This snapshot then provided the basis for developing deeper, longer term view of the settlement; making suggestions for policy and exploring the geographies of the friendships of young people living there. Ethnography also gave me the opportunity to get to know the development well, this was useful both in terms of recruiting participants but also helped when I was conducting interviews as I was often able to clearly understand particular places and spaces that people were talking about.

In the next section, I begin to discuss my key findings. As friendship is my key contribution, I begin with this.

7.3 Friendship

The key contribution of this thesis is to build on the small but growing body of work on friendship that currently exists in geography (Bunnell et al, 2012). While work in this area is beginning to emerge; for example see Cronin (2014) who explores friendships in the workplace; Gorman-Murray (2013) who explores friendships between straight and gay identifying men; and Bartos (2013) who examines the way children's relationships with family and friends influence their perceptions of the environment; my thesis is distinct from this in that it addresses young people's friendships and the relationship of these friendships to living in a new place. Young people's friendships are largely underrepresented and downplayed within work on young people and youth cultures. The focus in this thesis on young peoples' friendships moves studies of youth and young people beyond work on subcultures (see Cohen 1967; Willis 1977; Hebdige 1979) which argues that young people express themselves in order to resist dominant ideologies. Further to this, my research also moves studies of youth beyond post-subcultural understandings of young people, concentrating not just on cultural factors but on geographical and temporal understandings too. Further to Muggleton and Weinzierl's (2005) suggestion that studies of youth need to take into account "fragmentation, flux and fluidity" (p.3) my study explores this through notions of friendship. This study explored in significant detail how transitions, gender and sexuality, and social media are constitutive of experiences, relations, emotions, and spaces of friendship. Space place and time were key to the development, maintenance and dissolution of these friendships, as I examined the perceived impacts of living in a newly-built settlement: specifically through the ways that young people were friends with other young people living there primarily *because* it was convenient, but also acknowledging the hard work that young people had to put into maintaining friendships elsewhere.

The friendships of young people in my study were situated in a particular time and place; that of a new settlement at an early stage in its development. While this context is relevant to *all* the areas of this thesis, it is particularly significant to friendship. Several young people speculated that for future generations of young people growing up in Romsworth, friendships would be different with young people meeting at primary school and developing, maintaining and dissolving friendships from there. Young people who had already met through the primary school suggested that, with a larger overall population of young people, they would be able congregate in friendship groups with people who were more like them rather than having to be friends with somebody because they lived in the same locality. For young people living in this particular place at this particular time, experiences of friendship were somewhat unique and based on geographical factors rather than on social or cultural factors. These experiences were different for older young people than for the friendship group of younger young people I talked to with older young people being forced to forge friendships outside of the settlement due to the lack of other young people in their age groups. Younger young people's friendship groups were forged around the shared experience of living in the same place rather than through cultural or social similarities.

It was only when they reached an age where they were able to earn money and travel independently of relying on parents or family members that young people they began to separate from the groups that had been key friendship groups to them when they were younger. Brooks (2003) discusses similar potential breaks downs within friendships groups but young people in her study were approaching the transition of leaving college and going to university. For the young people in my study, living in the same place had helped to forge these friendships but once they were able to leave more easily, these relationships began to break down *even though* the shared experience of living in the same place went unchanged. Even for older young people who had jobs and access to their own transport, these geographical factors were still in play as they sometimes saw themselves as the outsiders within their respective groups of friends, all of which often lived in the same place. As a result of this,

they were always the ones who needed to travel and plan in order to maintain these friendships. For young people across the board, maintaining friendships outside of Romsworth required a great deal of planning and organisation; the difficulty of transport links meant that they needed to ensure events and trips out ended before the last buses ran or somebody could pick them up. If this wasn't possible they often needed to plan in advance to make sure they could stay at friends' houses outside of Romsworth. Therefore, the context of the settlement as a new place, only a decade into its development was a key factor in the way young people's friendships were developed, maintained and dissolved.

Another contribution of this thesis has been to highlight the dynamism of friendship – how the same friendship groups both cohere and fracture over time. While issues such as gender, sexuality and new challenges such as leaving school and starting college or work (see also Brooks, 2003) were factors in the breakdown of these friendships, living in a new place significantly contributed to this, with young people telling me that they had initially become friends with others simply because they lived in the same place. As the friendships of these young people were situated in a new space at a specific stage of it's development, so were the break down of these friendships. For these young people, milestones like learning to drive, being given greater independence by their parents and becoming more financially independent meant that they sought entertainment outside the village, something they had previously been unable to do. As a result of this, differences in what they enjoyed doing, choices in music, films, etc. became more significant.

Bowlby (2011) suggests that there is scope for exploring the relationship between the virtual and friendship. For the young people in my study, social media and technology were both critical to the development and maintenance of friendships, with all but one of the young people I spoke to using Facebook (significantly, the one person not using this, Joanne, viewed that it would be something she would begin to use as she got older) on a daily basis. Furthermore, all but one of the young people had a mobile phone when I first

met them (Adam was the only one without a phone and he initially saw little point in having one because he was always out with other members of the group but, by the time of the final interview, he had given in to pressure from his parents and friends and now had a phone). Once again, the geographical factors of Romsworth as a new place at a specific stage of its development were also key to young people's use of technology and social media. Young people told me that their use of social media afforded them the opportunity to interact and keep up to date with friends and family they were unable to see on a regular basis because they either lived in different cities or countries, or sometimes because they were living nearby but transport was a problem. Young people used different social media in order to meet their specific needs but Facebook and twitter were some of the most common. Technology also helped to facilitate this use of social media with young people often unable to separate their use of social media from their use of the object, such as their mobile phone, which they used the technology through. Once again, technology afforded young people the opportunity to stay in touch with people they were separated from by distance or by lack of transport.

However social media and technology were also problematic with young people talking about their frustrations with online arguments going on for much longer that offline arguments would and the lack of privacy that sometimes came about as a result of this (Christofides et al, 2012). But overall, young people viewed social media as a positive factor in their lives, not only helping them to maintain existing friendships (particularly when they were unable to leave the village) but also helping them to make new friends (Madge et al, 2009). While Madge et al's work focuses on the experience of making friends in the context of a university, my research takes these ideas forward, concentrating not on students, but a wider range of young people living in a specific geographical/social setting; also addressing not just making friends but how these friendships were maintained and how they broke down. For these young people then, hopes for the future were important; thinking about and developing new friendships mattered, but so did nostalgia and emotion for the past, particularly friendships that had broken down.

The way that young people's friendships were developed, maintained and dissolved was impacted on by a multitude of factors but key to this was geography with the friendships young people made often dependant on living in a specific *place* at a specific *time*; a new settlement at an early but changing stage of it's development. For some young people, this meant that their friendship groups lay outside of Romsworth, mainly because there were no other young people in their age group living there (or at least none they knew). For other young people, time and place were more significant factors in their friendships than cultural or social factors with young people telling me that they were friends with people simply because they were roughly the same age and lived in the same place. The young people I spoke to, however, speculated that this may not always be the case and that as the development, particularly the primary school grew, friendship groups would be far more likely to form around common interests such as music, TV and films.

In the next section I summarise my findings on the theme of community.

7.4 Community

This thesis has also explored young people's experiences of community, specifically in a place that aimed to be a 'community'. Time place and space was key to many of the problems young people faced here with contestation over space an issue between adults and young people.

Young people's physical presence in public and community spaces is seen as problematic (Valentine 1996; Skelton 2000 & 2009; Matthews et al 2000 a&b), and Romsworth, as a new settlement, was no exception to this. Time was of particular significance to his as participants talked about the way that history and memory (or lack of it) set a precedent for what young people were able to do, or felt that they could do (Jones 2003; Leyshon and Bull 2011). Young people felt unwelcome in public and community spaces and the newness of the development mean that there was no precedent set for what happened in these

spaces. Therefore young people were unable to argue that young people had always played or hung around there because these were new spaces in a new development. As with friendship (see above) young people speculated that in the future, there was a possibility that this could change but that a precedent needed to be set before this could happen.

As a result of this contestation of space, young people felt that they were criticised for being *anywhere* outside. Even public spaces, such as the park, were viewed, during the day, as being the preserve of younger children and if they spent time there in the evening, they were accused of hiding away and being up to no good. While this is the same as many other places, the newness of this development and the concept of community building *intensified* these perceptions of young people's presence as a threat. There was nowhere that young people had '*always gone'* and that adults turned a blind eye to. Rather, the newness of the development and consequently it lack of history, meant that their presence was viewed in even more threatening terms because they were 'polluting' (Matthews et al, 2000b) what adults would like to have seen as a newly-constructed, pristine, untainted space.

Romsworth has been changing and expanding since 2000; therefore, some of the issues raised by young people and discussed throughout the thesis may not affect other young people in the same way in the future. However, contestations over public and community spaces are likely to get worse if there continues to be a lack of facilities for young people in this age group. 2011 Census data revealed that, at the time I completed my research, young people in my age demographic made up approximately 5 per cent of the population of Romsworth but young people in the 0-15 age group accounted for over 30 per cent of the population. Therefore in the near future, young people in this age group are likely to significantly increase. While most of the adults I interviewed initially told me that Romsworth did not have a problem with young people 'hanging around', young people who were old enough to be out in the evening, but not old enough to be able to drive or to drink in the Centre bar, were perceived by a number of residents to be a problematic presence. Their use of

spaces around the village, such as the pond, the field and the street (see plan of Romsworth p.68), was contested and sometimes challenged which in turn led to incidents making young people feel as though they were not welcome in these space. I experienced this first hand when out on a guided walk with two participants and it left a real impression on me to have experienced this problematised use of space from their point of view. These issue over space resulted in young people feeling that they were subject to certain village rules and detailed to me, specific incidents that had occurred when they were see to transgress this rules. As a result of these rules, young people felt that certain places in the village were out either subject to certain rules about when and how long they could be there without their physical presence being a problem or completely out of bounds. Given that there is likely to be a significant increase in young people of this age group over the next few years, if there are no facilities for their growing numbers and visible presence are increasingly likely to be seen as problematic. Therefore, Romsworth and other developments like it are in serious need of services and facilities for this age group, otherwise tensions between adults and young people are likely to increase.

Throughout the course of the research, many people I spoke to connected notions of community to ideas surrounding what constitutes a village (Liepins, 2000a&b). The urban/rural difference was one that both adults and young people raised suggesting that an emphasis on the rural was an important factor in building community. This notion of Romsworth as a village was also a factor in the (above) contestations of space with adults and young people telling me that if was difficult to do anything unnoticed in Romsworth because as everyone knew each other. Young people found that when they transgressed the rules over space there was either a danger that somebody would tell their parents or that they would appear in village media such as the newsletter or the forum. Therefore their behaviour and particularly their use of spaces in the village was regulated by surveillance. The fact that the development was small by comparison to nearby towns meant that this surveillance was possible but connections between notions of village and community meant that village

media had been set up in order help with the creation of community and this in turn also served as a surveillance tool for young people.

Romsworth was branded as a village and was almost always referred to as 'the village' during conversations with both adults and young people. Yet, when asked directly about this, several young people told me that they did not actually see Romsworth as a village. Instead they cited elements of the urban and the rural, highlighting that it is very difficult to build a new village. Notions of community were strongly linked to this with adults telling me that they got upset if people called Romsworth a housing estate because it was a village and they were building community there. The suggestion was that community does not exist (or certainly does not exist in the same ways or the ways they want it to) in other places and they cited examples of people not speaking to their neighbours or community not taking place in more urban areas and developments or in places that were not villages.

This study has specifically addressed young people's relationships with and definitions of community, something that is rarely addressed in previous work on young people and community. For young people, relationships with community were often complex. While many adults (particularly those associated with the local parish council or involved in running clubs and groups) saw community in an uncritical way, as a positive and something they were aiming for, young people did not always view it in this way. Some young people enjoyed volunteering and being active with clubs and groups but others felt that they were not welcome or that they were perceived as having nothing to offer within these adult notions of community.

Another gap in current geographical research with young people research lies in the link between community and transition. For the young people in my study this relationship was important with several young people viewing community as a factor that would become important to them in the future when they had children of their own. Moreover, young people felt that, at this stage in their lives, they were not actively welcomed in and seen as a valid part

of community. Many young people also saw other factors of their lives as being more important than community at this stage and this is again where the blurring of the lines between friendship and community lie with some young people expressing the way they saw their group of friends as their community.

Bunnell et al (2012) suggest that work on friendship is often subsumed into work on community and from my findings it is easy to see why this is the case. Young people saw community as something that helped adults make friends. Therefore, community and friendship were part of the same spectrum with community being an important, but outer layer, where relationships were not as close as friendships. Further to this, young people saw friendships as often developing from these community relationships. It is difficult to say whether young people living in other places (particularly places that do not have such a strong connection to the notion of community) would see the relationship between friendship and community in the same way. But there is clearly scope for further research in this area.

Community was not always a significant factor for young people across the age group, with many placing greater emphasis on relationships with friends. But some of these friendships were borne out of community-based relationships (again emphasising the difficulty of separating out community and friendship) and therefore these relationships were sometimes as close to notions of community as they were to notions of friendship. The difference came in how young people categorised these relationships and this is also significant because this is about the way that young people view community relationships. As I have already discussed, many young people saw community as something they were excluded from and therefore did not categorise their relationships with other people in these terms. Social and community media were also important to young people's notions of community but online spaces that were specifically set up to serve the needs of the community were used very differently by adults and young people. Young people perceived these spaces as being by adults, for adults. And in much the same way as Matthews and Limb (1999) argue with physical spaces, these spaces were designed to reflect adult

needs and usages. Young people viewed these spaces as another way through which their behaviour was regulated and community rules were established and enforced. However, these young people were far savvier than they were given credit for and subverted this control by using these spaces, unseen, in order to see both what other people were saying about them but also what their parents were doing.

In the next section I summarise findings on the theme of intergenerational relationships.

7.5 Intergenerational Relationships

Further to contributions on literature surrounding friendship and community, my research has addressed young people's intergenerational relationships. While I discovered that some of these relationships repeated issues found in previous research, particularly those in relation to participation and communication, (Percy-Smith and Malone 2001; Hill 2006; Tholander 2007; Gallacher and Gallagher 2008; and Faulkner 2009), young people also displayed more *positive* relationships with people outside of their immediate age group. Relationships with people outside of their immediate age group *mattered* to young people (Hopkins and Pain, 2007) – community relationships became friendships and this happened across the age groups. Younger young people had relationships they called 'friendships' with people they had helped out (the Indian take-a-way owners for example) whereas other young people had been helped out by people already established in the village (Charlotte). These relationships were difficult to separate out, with a complex interweaving of friendship, community and intergenerational relations taking place at Romsworth. As with friendship, notions of space, time and place played a key role in the way that these relationships were formed. Young people told me that these relationships had been formed as a result of there being very few other people in their age group. Therefore, as with friendships, these relationships were situated in the context of a new settlement at an early stage of its development. Young people also saw their intergenerational

relationships developing because of the emphasis placed on community there, telling me that they tended to spend their free time with others outside of the boundaries of age groups. This was both because of the size of the development but also because of physical spaces, designed to create community such as the Centre bar, which meant that people who used these spaces saw each other regularly. Once again, as discussed above, friendships were based around the commonality of living in the same place rather than similarities such as age. Therefore, time played a key part in this and as a result, as with young people's friendships with other young people, this is something that could change in the future as the numbers of young people continue to grow.

As with notions of community, a clear distinction was also drawn between the urban and the rural in terms of young people and their intergenerational friendships. Young people speculated that their relationships with others living in the settlement were different to people living in different types of geographical locations such as nearby towns and cities. In this sense, not only is time important with distinctions being drawn between how experiences of friendship many change over time but place is also key with distinctions draw between Romsworth and other places

Young people's intergenerational relationships were tied closely to time and place. The geographical nature of a new settlement was of particular relevance to their less positive relationships; they wanted to be involved in the decision making processes and decision makers wanted to involve them but there was a disconnect between these two groups in terms of how they could get young people involved and how they could implement their ideas once they were involved. While this in itself is not a new finding, it is worth considering that even in a new development the same issues of communication between decision makers and young people arise.

But contrary to these tensions, there were much more positive relationships between adults and young people. Young people talked about these relationships as friendships and these came out of a variety of contexts; though

helping out a local business to being taken seriously by authority figures and finally with young people being supported in a variety of ways by older people living in the village. Much of the existing work on relationships between adults and young people focuses on tensions between the two groups or, when there is a focus on more positive relationships, these are often relationships that have developed out of organised initiatives (see Christens and Dolan, 2011). While friendships of the type young people talked to me about may exist in other areas, they are rarely mentioned in research yet they are an important element to young people's experiences of friendship in a new development such as this. In this sense, place is also crucial to the formation of these friendships with young people speculating that in nearby towns and cities, relationships like this do no exist.

7.5 Research impact

The research has addressed an often overlooked age group in exploring the experiences of 15-26 year olds (Hopkins and Pain, 2007). Current work that exists on young people often addresses children and much younger young people. Further to this, the research explores the *friendships* of these young people, an area that in currently under explored within geographies of both children and young people (Bunnell, et al, 2012). Finally, the research explores these relationships within the context of a new settlement; these experiences are largely overlooked, not only in research but in policy as well.

Therefore, this research has implications for furthering studies of youth and young people beyond subculture and post-subcultural understandings and moves towards adding a new dimension to current work on young people. In addressing the friendships of young people and exploring how these friendships are developed, maintained and dissolved my research goes beyond explanations of young people simply coming together for specific cultural and political reasons and events. Instead, through this exploration of what young people's friendships mean in their everyday lives, I address the way that their cultures are multiple and, more importantly, that friendships and cultural

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similarities are often distinct entities; young people identified with different types of music or other cultural activities from their friendship groups but were still part of these groups because other similarities, such as living in the same geographical location were more important to them. Furthermore, this study being conducted with both and age group that is less often represented in research in a context where the experiences of young people are often ignored by both current academic research and policy means that this research is a starting point for redressing this balance. From my study, it is clear that there is a disconnect between young people and adult decision makers even in a new developments like Romsworth. Furthermore, it is also clear that Romsworth (an other new developments like it) suffer from a severe lack of facilities for the age group my research addressed. As a result of this, mistakes from other, older more established villages, towns and cities were already being repeated here despite a keen interest from both young people and adults to engage and discuss with each other over facilities. Whilst this development was relatively small and there were very few young people in the age group studied, in future years, this will be very different and therefore Romsworth and other developments like it need to look at possible ways to engage *with* and provide much needed facilities *for* young people in this age demographic.

7.6 Future work

While friendship was not the initial focus of this study, I soon discovered that relationships with friends was a significant area in the lives of the young people I undertook research with. Young people talked about these friendships in relation to many of the other themes of the research and therefore friendship warranted particular attention. As a result of this, the friendships of these young people became the main focus of this study. There is a clear lack of work in geography into young people's friendships. Therefore, my research raises a number of areas for development, both in terms of friendship but also in relation to community and intergenerational relationships.

Firstly, work on young people's friendships needs to take into account other aspects of work covered in geographies of children and young people. Sexuality was an important factor in the breakdown of the friendships of the group I talked to, but one I could not follow through in depth in my study. Therefore, further research into the blurred lines between young people's friendships and sexual relationships, and the part their sexuality plays in this, would reveal a great deal about young people's friendships today (Vanderbeck 2008).

The friendships of the young people in this study were also inextricably linked with transition but also with the experiences of living in a new development where very few other young people in their age group lived. The experiences of living in a new place, particularly from the perspective of young people is largely underrepresented in existing research; however Hadfield-Hill (2012) who addresses children's experiences of living with new technologies in a sustainable community; and Kraftl et al (2013) who explore the embodied experience of a group of 9-16 year olds living in a new place still under development are notable exceptions to this. However, these studies do not take into account how friendships are shaped by the experiences of living in a new place, particularly a new place where very few other young people live. Therefore work on friendships and transition needs to further take into account place – especially different geographical contexts than the one in which this study was situated – as a significant factor in how young people's friendships are developed, maintained and dissolved.

Nostalgia also played a key part in young people's perceptions of the breakdown of these relationships and there is currently little work with specific reference to young people's experiences of nostalgia. Instead, work in this area tends to focus on the experiences of older people looking backwards and the part that memory plays in these reminiscences (Philo 2003; Jones 2003). For some of the young people I spoke to, nostalgia was for a very recent past, before the fracture of their friendship group and, as a result of this, stirred up different emotions to those evoked by (adults) looking further back into the

past. Therefore, work on young people's friendships should also take into account the part played by memory and nostalgia.

Further to this, as a result of living in a new development with very few other people in their age group, these young people developed some very significant intergenerational friendships with other people outside of their immediate age group. The focus of intergenerational relationships rarely falls onto friendship, particularly with reference to young people's friendships. Therefore the way friendships develop outside of the commonalities of immediate age groups and the other factors that help these friendships to form is also an important factor to further explore.

In terms of community, the relationship between notions of community and the lifecourse stage that these young people were at was significant. When young people talked about their own versions of community (and often there was a crossover between their notions of community and their notions of friendship) they were much more likely to view community as a more significant factor in their lives at a later stage, and friendship as more important at the stage they were currently in. Once again, place played an important part in this. Community was an important and much talked about notion within my case study site and therefore further exploring young people's notions and connections to both community and friendship in other areas, either where community is also important or where this is less important, is an area worthy of further exploration.

7.7 Final remarks

For the young people in this study, notions of friendship were bound up with a number of other significant areas of their life and, in taking into account the way that their friendships were developed, maintained and dissolved, key areas of community and intergenerational relationships have also been explored. While there is, at times, substantial crossover with these areas of

friendship, community and intergenerational relationships, they are also distinct in their own right in terms of the way young people experience them.

The process of designing and conducting this project, analysing data and writing this thesis has been a thoroughly enjoyable one, made all the more pleasurable with the time I was able to spend with young people, listening to what was important to them in their lives. I would like to thank them for their time and patience in taking part in the research; for their humour and intelligence which made the interview process so much more fun; and most of all, for taking me seriously and reminding me of aspects of my own life at a similar age that had been long forgotten.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Young People Interview 1

Describe an average week to me…

Describe last week to me…

(where, who with, transport)

Are there any…

- Seasonal variations to this
- Usual hobbies and interests that don't appear here
- Other things you do on a regular basis that don't appear here

How would you describe Romsworth?

What do you like about it?

- People
- Physical characteristics
- Things for young people to do
- How it's changed since you've moved here
- Distance to town, nights out, friends

What do you dislike about it?

- People
- Physical characteristics
- Things for young people to do
- How it's changed since you've moved here
- Distance to town, nights out, friends

What's it like for a young person to live here?

- Older
- Younger
- Your age

Where else have you lived?

How does Romsworth compare?

- People
- Physical characteristics
- Things for young people to do

- How it's changed since you've moved here
- Distance to town, nights out, friends

What do you think other people think of Romsworth?

- People who live here
- People in surrounding villages
- Family and friends outside

Do you have any friends in Romsworth that might be interested in taking part?

I'd like to do some follow up interviews with you, would you be interested in taking part in these?

Appendix 2 – Young People Interview 2

Based on 'average week/last week' what sort of technologies do you use in your daily life?

- Mobile phones
- Social networking
- MP3 players
- TV
- Email

How do you communicate and stay in touch with friends?

Where do your five closest friends live?

What do you use your mobile phone for?

What sort of Romsworth based online facilities are there?

- Website
- Facebook groups
- Twitter
- Other social networking
- Forums

Do you use any of the above?

Are you a member of any other online forums?

Do you ever communicate with people from online forums on a face to face basis?

Interview Questions – Third Interview

Have you attended any of the following?

- Bonfire

- Fun Day

- Events at the centre

Are there any other events that you have attended?

What's it like to attend these events?

To what extent do you think these events are attended by young people?

What sort of events and facilities would you like to see take place in Romsworth?

What makes a community?

Do you feel that Romsworth is a community?

Do you think that physical buildings (like the Centre, the shops, the café) help or hinder this?

Is community important to you?

What's your sense of how important this is to others?

Do you feel part of the community of Romsworth?

Do you get involved in community events?

What about the RVA, do you know much about what they do? Do you get involved with them?

What do you understand by the term culture?

Do you think that Romsworth has it's own culture?

- In the way people act

- The things they do in their spare time

- The sort of jobs they have

Do you identify with this culture, do you feel part of this?

What other sorts of cultures do you identify with?

Do you think the majority of your cultural activities take place inside or outside Romsworth?

What do you understand by the term youth cultures?

Do you see the things you do as youth cultures?

I googled youth cultures and I chose a selection of images and words, what do you think of these? Do you see these as being youth cultures?

Lots of those images were from newspapers so with that in mind, how do you think young people are perceived in local and national media

- local and national newspapers
- local and national TV coverage

How do you think young people are perceived in Romsworth?

Do you think there's a relationship between the two?

Appendix 4 – Images

travelblog.viator.com

gunsrapcrime.blogspot.com

gopumpkin.co.uk

huntingothers.com

guardian.com

Facebook.com

tumblr.com

tumblr.com

tumblr.com

innovativespinerehab.wordpress.com

Theme 1: About the interviewee

1). How long have you lived/worked in Romsworth?

Prompts:
- What role(s) do you play in Romsworth?
- Can you tell me a little bit about...? (i.e. find out factual information about any activities/services/groups etc. the interviewee is involved in).
- How/why/when did you get involved in this?

Theme 2: urban growth and sustainability

2a). Northampton has begun to experience some rapid urban growth, Romsworth is one of these areas, what impact do you think this is having on the County and young people in particular?

Prompts:
- What are new/rapidly-expanding residential areas like for young people growing up there? (any specific evidence/examples of this?)
- How has planned urban growth been affected by economic crisis? Any evidence of how this is affecting communities, especially young people?
- What is your experience of living / working in a rapidly expanding urban community?
- Is this community a safe place? Why?
- What are the main issues in this community?
- What has it been like to live / work in a community which has been developing over a long period of time?
- What is the greatest success of the community to date?
- Would you change anything about the design of the community?

- Who is involved in making decisions in the local community? Are young people involved in this?

•Is there a need for any particular services in the community? Are there any issues, challenges or barriers to setting up services?

Theme 2: Young people in the case study community

2). We are interested in young people aged 10-16 who live in Romsworth. How are young people perceived within Romsworth?

- (If appropriate) Does your work/group/activity involve work with this age range? If so, please tell me about this. (i.e. find out factual information about this=group/activity/service and the kinds of young people who use it)
- How have you engaged with young people in [name of community]? How successful was this? What worked well and not so well?
- Are there any particular issues relating to young people in [name of community]?
- How do other adults in Romsworth view young people? Is this a fair assumption?
- Do you think young people and adults interact within the community? When and how does this take place?
- How are young people represented in the local media / do young people in Romsworth conform to these stereotypes?
- Are there any key places/activities in the community where young people go? Are these well used?
- Are there any particular issues you want to raise about young people in Romsworth?
- How mobile are young people living in Romsworth / what type of transport do they use?
    - Thinking about 9-16 year olds, do you think they spend much of their social time in Romsworth? What evidence do you have for this?

- <mark>Thinking about 16-25 year olds, do you think they spend much of their social time in Romsworth? What evidence do you have for this?</mark>
- What do you think about provisions for young people in the area?
- Are young people involved in local decision making?
    - <mark>Do you think they feel part of the local community? If so, what evidence do you have for this? If not, why do you think this?</mark>
- Are there any particular areas in the community where young people congregate?
    - How do residents feel about this?

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