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The Inbetweeners: Young people making sense of youth anti-social behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Beginning with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the UK government's 'Anti-social Behaviour Agenda' has served to label all young people as potentially anti-social. This study describes and analyses young people's accounts of anti-social behaviour and the impact of anti-social behaviour legislation on young people living in a rural context. Through semi-structured interviews with eighteen teenagers in a rural northern town who had undertaken anti-social behaviour but were not subject to any individual control measures, the research explores the participants' perceptions of their (informal) identification as anti-social, their interactions with institutions of social control and how these factors impacted on their sense of self. In particular, it explores the strategies that the respondents utilised to avoid internalising a deviant identity and through doing so examines the relationship between anti-social behaviour and youth as a transition. Whilst none of the respondents considered themselves to *be* anti-social, they had all been subject to informal control measures including being 'moved on' and having their details taken by the police. The findings indicate that for these young people, anti-social behaviour is inexorably tied to their liminal position as 'youths' and this allows their identities to be fluid and constantly changing. The respondents understand their social position/s as 'in-between' a variety of statuses, and it is postulated that the widely acknowledged vague nature of ASB definition and their identities as 'youths' allows them to negotiate the space between a pro- and anti-social identity without internalising either. They therefore construct anti-social behaviour as a normal part of conventional youth, and something which they will certainly 'grow out of'.

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the

degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Applied Social Sciences

Durham University

2012

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Declaration

I declare that this is my own work and has not been submitted for the award of a higher degree anywhere else.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE OF THESIS

This thesis sets out to describe and analyse anti-social behaviour and the impact of anti-social behaviour legislation from the perspective of young people living in a rural context.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The measures set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (CDA) marked the beginning of a political campaign against 'anti-social behaviour'. The legislation, policies and initiatives targeted at dealing with anti-social behaviour will, in this thesis, be referred to as the 'anti-social behaviour agenda' (Home Office, 2003b). 'Anti-social behaviour' (ASB) represented a new category of pre-criminal behaviour and was constructed in political rhetoric as any behaviour which adversely affected the 'quality of life' of the ordinary law-abiding citizen of Britain. From nuisance to low-level criminality, ASB encompasses any behaviours which cause (or are likely to cause) "harassment, alarm or distress" to other people (Home Office, 1998). The new measures introduced by the CDA, most famously the Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO), aimed to prevent ASB through placing restrictions on people who acted in an anti-social manner. Whilst the measures were not originally intended to be used against young people (Burney, 2002: 473), a government review of ASBOs in 2002 indicated that 74 percent of all ASBOs between 1999 and 2002 had been issued against individuals aged under 21 (Campbell, 2002a). By 2002 anti-social behaviour had become a 'youth issue' and the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003, through strengthening existing measures against young people and introducing new youth-focused measures, confirmed that young people were by then the central focus of the ASB Agenda.

The construction of young people as anti-social suggests that they are 'against' society; separate and distinct from the majority. As Cohen (2002) and Pearson (1983) have described, the behaviour of young people has long been considered as dangerous to the existing social order. Each generation identifies within its young people folk devils who are instilled with the qualities likely to cause the downfall of society. Historically, youth

represents the transition from childhood to adulthood: a transition which itself has been represented as dangerous and risky for both the individual and the wider community.

This PhD arose in 2007 out of an interest in the historical construction of youth as 'troublesome' and in the emergence of anti-social behaviour as a seemingly new category of deviance. These interests were matched by a curiosity about new legislation, the rationale for which suggested that young people were the primary perpetrators of anti-social behaviour, and the introduction of new ways of dealing with this 'modern' problem. The literature around youth anti-social behaviour at the time was made up of, largely, government-led reports, although a substantial section of the research focused on the accounts of individuals involved in the process of implementing anti-social behaviour policies and orders; community members and 'victims' (Skogan, 1990; Thorpe and Wood, 2004; Budd and Sims, 2001), criminal justice and local council personnel (Lucas and Whitworth, 2002; Home Office, 2004a), and the police (Bland and Read, 2000; Burnett, 2005). Yet there were relatively few empirical studies which took as their object of inquiry the experiences of young people at the centre of the debate.

Since the beginning of this study, the number of youth accounts in the ASB literature has increased yet these have typically focused on young people with ASBOs (McIntosh, 2008), or those affected by geographically situated ASB measures such as targeted programmes on 'problematic' housing estates (Sadler, 2008; Goldsmith, 2008) and Dispersal Orders relating to specific 'zones' (Crawford, 2008; 2009). This means that the experiences of other young people who are not officially labelled are largely absent from the literature. It cannot be assumed that young people who have avoided being given ASBOs and Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) are not affected by the ASB Agenda. Many of the early commentators on the CDA and ASB Agenda suggested that the introduction of ASB measures would negatively impact on 'ordinary' young people, yet there has been little attention paid to these individuals in research.

Further to this, the allocation of anti-social behaviour resources and targeting of measures has tended to follow crime hotspots (Millie, 2007) and thus empirical studies of ASB have largely focused on urban areas. The British Crime Survey (BCS) indicates that although 'teenagers hanging around' may be a lesser concern for respondents living in rural areas than in urban areas, it is still a principle concern in terms of ASB for rural residents (Upson,

2006; Flatley, et al., 2008). This suggests that young people in rural areas are equally represented as problematic and anti-social.

The ASB Agenda has served to construct the young people of 21st century Britain as potentially (if not actually) 'anti-social'. This modern 'ephebiphobia'- fear of youth - and related social control measures has important ramifications for the lives of young people and how they understand themselves in relation to wider society. In particular, an exploration is needed of the accounts of young people who are not officially labelled as anti-social but who may still be treated *as if* they are anti-social. In addition to this, the ASB experiences of young people from rural areas require further exploration distinct from the urban experience. It is against this backdrop that the fundamental question addressed in this thesis is: how do young people construct, understand and make sense of youth anti-social behaviour?

1.3 SPECIFIC AIMS

The specific aims and objectives of this thesis are:

1. To investigate, describe and analyse the social and political conditions in which some young people come to be understood as anti-social and the impact that this has on their everyday lives.

2. To explore, describe and analyse the ways in which young people make sense of their own and others' anti-social behaviour.

3. To explore, describe and analyse the relation between the representation of young people as anti-social and individual young people's construction of identity.

4. To investigate, analyse and describe how young people make sense of the association between ASB and youth.

1.4 INVESTIGATION

Eighteen young people, aged between 13 and 19, took part in this study. They were selected because they had undertaken anti-social behaviour (as defined by Home Office typology: see Appendix I) but were not the subject of any individual ASB measures. All but one of the participants were working class: the exception was middle class (Joseph, 13)[1]. These young people spent their leisure time hanging around on the streets, and engaged in anti-social and illicit activities to differing extents. These activities included smoking, drinking alcohol, some recreational drug use and underage sex. Not all participants engaged in all these types of anti-social, illicit or even illegal activities. Yet, the young people all reported being treated regularly *as if* they were anti-social through interactions with police and others in authority.

Describing and analysing these young people's experiences of anti-social behaviour required a method of investigation that provided information about the subjective landscape within which the participants made sense of their lives and their interactions. For this reason, data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The data collected from interviews was supplemented by ethnographic observation at a youth club in a northern rural market town, SmallTown[2] from 2008-2011 where I was a volunteer youth worker. SmallTown is my home town, where I attended secondary school and lived throughout the research, allowing me a greater depth of understanding of the local context and social environment which the participants inhabited.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part One comprises three chapters (chapters two, three and four). It provides an examination of the relevant literature to the historical, political and sociological circumstances in which young people are understood as anti-social, and how this may impact upon their identity.

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[1] The social class of participants was judged broadly on socio-economic grounds based on the researcher's existing knowledge of the geographical area and the family backgrounds of the participants. It is referenced to provide contextual information for the study rather than being a category of analysis.

[2] The names of the young people who participated in the study and the name of the town where they lived have been changed to protect the participants from identification and ensure anonymity.

Chapter 2 begins by taking the concept of 'anti-social youths' and tracing it back through history. It explores the discourses that have been attached to troublesome youth from the Medieval period in Britain to the present day. It examines the ways in which youth has been conceptualised, and focuses on the characterisation of youth as a transition between the fixed statuses of childhood and adulthood. It also explores the concept of 'liminality' (Turner, 1967) and the importance of the liminal phase in providing youths with an 'in-between' space which is ambiguous and fluid. In doing so, chapter 2 establishes this study as an historical 'snapshot' of the lives of young people in the 2000s.

Chapter 3 focuses on anti-social behaviour as a 'new' concept. It traces the emergence of the term in political discourse, its subsequent passage into legislation, and the increasing focus on young people as the primary perpetrators of ASB. The second part of chapter 3 deals with the existing literature about young people and ASB. It examines the impact that ASB measures have on young people's lives and how they reflect upon the representation of youth as anti-social.

Chapter 4 outlines the key concepts which have informed the research questions and theoretical underpinnings of the research. In particular it explores Goffman's (1963) notion of social stigma and the ramifications that this may have for the individual. It draws on the work of labelling theorists (particularly Becker, 1963) in order to explore the process through which a deviant label is attached to an individual, and what the social consequences of that label may be. It makes a case for understanding 'anti-social youth' as a stigmatising label and explores the potential responses to that label at an individual level, in particular how the anti-social label may be resisted or avoided.

Chapter 5 describes the methods used and methodological approach adopted in this study. It situates the research in the broader disciplines of criminology and youth research, through the adoption of a constructionist epistemology rooted in symbolic interactionism. It also outlines qualitative interviewing as the most appropriate way in which to empower and respect young people in the research process. The chapter addresses the ethical issues involved in research with young people, and the manner with which these issues were approached with particular focus on the issue of consent. It provides a narrative of the

research process and experience, and provides short biographies for each of the participants, ending with a brief demographic of the research site.

Part Two of the thesis presents the empirical study. Chapter 6 is organised around four primary themes raised by the participants during the interviews. It investigates young people's experiences and perceptions of factors associated with youth ASB, namely: family, education, the police, and hanging around in groups on the streets. In doing so, the chapter explores both the ways in which the participants define ASB and their accounts of the impact that the ASB Agenda has on their own lives. The first part of the chapter describes young people's accounts of family and education as factors in both causing and preventing ASB. It explores the extent of influence that the respondents attribute to family and education on their own behaviour, and the contradictory ways in which they construct these relationships in terms of others people's ASB. The second part of the chapter investigates the participants' accounts of the processes that inform the perception that they are anti-social. For these young people this typically arose from their hanging around in groups in public places and their interactions with the police which were the primary sites in which the measures of the ASB Agenda were enacted. The section also explores the specific influence that their rural situation has on the ASB experiences of participants.

Chapter 7 describes the ways in which the participants managed/resisted an anti-social identity. It explores the participants' experiences and opinions about who is anti-social and why they themselves are labelled as such. It outlines that the participants were able to 'negotiate' the label of anti-social youth and maintain a non-anti-social identity. They were able to do this by utilising a variety of strategies including 'othering' and individual strategies of identity negotiation. All of these strategies, or 'techniques of negotiation', allowed the participants to deny the anti-social label through conceptualising their behaviour in various ways as 'normal', in the past, or as part of growing up.

Chapter 8 explores the issue of 'youth', what it means to these participants and how anti-social behaviour is linked to youth. It outlines the participants' own views of youth as a transition between childhood and adulthood, and describes the thresholds that were discussed by them as marking the boundary between youth and adulthood. It explores the vocabulary of 'liminality' that the participants used to characterise their position as between a variety of statuses rather than occupying a fixed status. In this chapter it is

argued that the participants' construction of their lives as liminal allows them to drift in and out of various roles and identities; they are able to be everything and nothing at the same time.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by drawing together the themes in prior chapters to consider the research as a whole.

1.6 THE THESIS

The characterisation of all young people as potentially anti-social through policy and rhetoric emerging from the ASB Agenda has created a situation in which normal youth activities (such as hanging around with groups of friends) are identified as anti-social. This has resulted in young people being targeted for ASB control measures, both formally and informally, in order to regulate their activities. This thesis, through an analysis of the experiences of young people who were not formally labelled, suggests that the targeting of young people as anti-social has a negative impact on individual young people both through problematising their leisure activities and through stigmatization. The eighteen young people in this study were regularly identified by people in their community as 'anti-social youths'. This often led to police action and by invoking informal ASB control measures (such as 'moving on' the young people) the police served to confirm the 'victim's' judgement of the young people as anti-social youths. In this way the young people are informally labelled as anti-social youths and were, as a consequence, treated *as if* they were anti-social.

The participants made sense of their own identification as anti-social by presenting it as an incorrect judgement of them attributable to a number of factors:

i. Their age. The participants considered their age to be a significant factor in identifying them to be potentially problematic to others. They viewed this as a reflection of wider discourses of youth, particularly media representations of young people as dangerous.

ii. Their leisure activities, particularly hanging around on the streets in groups. The young people believed that this was constructed as problematic largely because they were

'youths' and therefore viewed as intimidating (although they suggested that *any* group of people is intimidating regardless of age).

iii. Their appearance. The participants suggested that some young people could be correctly identified as anti-social people – who they referred to as 'chavs'- by their clothing choices (sportswear, baseball caps and Burberry-patterned attire), but they felt that they were often mistaken for 'chavs' because people judged their clothing to be similar to what they described as 'chav style'. They also believed that wearing a hooded top (hoodie) distinguished them for police targeting due to the negative connotations ascribed to 'hoodies'.

iv. The reputation of their family and/or friends. The participants suggested that young people that have family members who are criminal or 'known' to the police are likely to be targeted for intervention as they are judged to be the same type of person as their relative. Similarly, if young people associated with individuals considered to be a 'bad crowd' then the police would judge them 'guilty by association'.

v. The rural area in which they lived. The thesis argues that young people who live in rural areas believe that they are more likely to be identified for less serious behaviour than that undertaken by urban teenagers. For the young people who had lived in cities outside of SmallTown, the level at which their behaviour was considered problematic was much lower in SmallTown. Behaviour which they felt would have been disregarded as 'messing about' in other areas was considered in SmallTown to be anti-social behaviour. Thus they felt that SmallTown was over-policed and youth ASB over-identified. The respondents suggested that police officers were more able to regulate young people in rural areas because they were less likely to resist and were therefore and 'easy target'. This was constructed by the participants as individual officers taking advantage of their position of power over young people who were unable to resist.

I describe the ways in which the eighteen young people encountered and experienced ASB control practices. The practices were typically aimed at groups rather than individual young people and did not include formal ASB measures such as ASBOs or Curfews but were regularly imposed on the participants. In particular the police tactics included: informal dispersals (young people being told to 'move on' from a specific area), collecting young

people's personal details, giving warnings and informal reprimands. The young people were also subject to other practices due to their characterisation as anti-social including: local shop policies which prohibited their purchase of alcohol (if aged under 21 or without identification); a 'mosquito' device which had been installed in the market place to 'repel' the young people from congregating there; and removal from public spaces (and private spaces that were accessible to the public) by caretakers and security guards. It is argued that these practices have a stigmatising effect and further exclude young people who are already marginalised.

I argue that the participants made sense of anti-social behaviour by invoking both relational and essential definitions of the activities. The participants characterised their own ASB as occasional and relational, and therefore not a reflection of their character. However, the young people defined the ASB of other people in terms of essentialised definitions. The participants maintained clear and consistent opinions of other people's anti-social behaviour as a manifestation of their innate bad character and personal choice. The young people utilised the contemporary folk devil of the 'chav' to describe an anti-social individual. In defining anti-social others they constructed the behaviour as something innate to the individual 'chav' whom they characterised as inherently selfish, destructive, violent and uncaring. In terms of their own anti-social behaviour, the participants enacted a relational definition; their behaviour was only anti-social in relation to the circumstances, their age, or the location. It is argued that these oppositional definitions of both ASB and anti-social individuals allowed the young people to engage in a process of 'othering' which employed the conceptualisation of chavs as an out-group and thus confirmed the participants' association to 'normal' society. By engaging in a process of othering through enacting stereotypical views of chavs, the young people were able to define themselves as *not* anti-social.

I also argue that, despite engaging in what they defined as anti-social behaviours; acknowledging their similarities to anti-social people; and being identified as anti-social by their community; these young people did not consider themselves to be anti-social. This illustrates that the young people did not internalise the stigma of being labelled as anti-social youths. The participants' maintenance of a non-anti-social identity was dependent on the utilisation of a number of identity strategies including 'othering' and (what has been defined here as) 'techniques of negotiation'. These techniques to negotiate the anti-social

identity involved both accepting and denying the anti-social quality of their behaviour whilst always denying the anti-social identity. The specific techniques are:

a. Acceptance of behaviour, denial of label
   (i)   Minimising the impact of their behaviour
   (ii) Denying responsibility for their behaviour
   (iii) Characterising their ASB as an occasional event in terms of Drift/Fluidity
b. Denial of behaviour, denial of label
   (iv) The reformed character
   (v)   Judged by stereotype
   (vi) Deflection of label onto others
   (vii) Neutralising the behaviour through normalising

I explain that these techniques of identity negotiation are employed by the young people used to mediate the stigma of their label, and that the social and political conditions in which they are able to negotiate the stigma relate to their youth status and the specificities of the category of anti-social behaviour. These "buffers" to a stigmatizing anti-social identity are for these young people: their age, their liminal position, their experiences of the ambiguous and inconsistent ASB defining process, their other positive identities, and their belief in the transience of youth. I have argued that young people do not adopt an anti-social identity as they are able to opt in and out of the role of anti-social youth without it becoming a primary definer of their identity. The respondents' constructions identity was based on their ability to drift in and out of identities; to be different roles at the same time. This allowed them to access other positive identity roles to define them rather than the anti-social label. In this way, the stigma of the anti-social label is attached not to them individually but to their status as 'teenager' and therefore it is not a permanent label.

Throughout this document, I make the case that these young people occupy a liminal position in society between childhood and adulthood. The accounts of the young people and their constructions of their own and others' ASB illustrates that they regularly use a vocabulary of liminality to explain and make sense of their position. They construct themselves not simply as "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1967) the statuses of childhood and adulthood, but also between good and bad, geek and chav, underclass and middle-class, social and anti-social. It is argued that this liminal position allows young people to

exist *in-between* different roles and statuses. They are therefore able to opt in and out of different identities without committing to any (until adulthood). The respondents viewed themselves as 'on the way' to adulthood: a fixed status defined by maturity, independence and responsibility. Yet, it is argued that the transition to adulthood for these young people is a complex process dependent on a variety of factors; personal, social and cultural. The relationship between youth and anti-social behaviour is such that, for these young people, anti-social behaviour represents a phase in youth in the same way as maturity or independence: they are all aspects of an interconnected web of factors which mark an obstacle course on the transition from childhood to adulthood. The participants viewed anti-social behaviour as a part of the liminal youth period and the anti-social behaviours which they were involved in as acceptable due to the expected 'rebellion' which occurs during youth. In the same way that they constructed themselves according to childhood and adulthood – as neither child nor adult but somewhere on the continuum between – they construct themselves as both anti-social and not anti-social.

The central thesis presented within this study is that young people construct anti-social behaviour as a normal part of conventional youth. The first part of the study outlines that social anxieties about youth have, for centuries, focused on behaviours such as rebellion, rowdiness, and risky behaviour. These young people's accounts indicate that they view their own anti-social behaviour as a normal part of being a youth because the very behaviours that identify them as 'anti-social youths' - being rowdy, engaging in risky behaviour and pushing boundaries - are part of the process of finding their way to adulthood. Rather than being opposed to society, these young people were not committed to any anti-social values. This was evident in their future ambitions and plans for adulthood which reflected wider social norms and values: having children, getting married, having a career and a home. Therefore, these young people may be viewed as 'anti-social youths' but this does not mean that they are against society. They are simply navigating the transition between childhood and adulthood in the ways that are made possible to them.

PART I

CHAPTER 2: A HISTORY OF 'ANTI-SOCIAL YOUTH'

2.1 INTRODUCTION

"Our society does not like young people." (Haines and Drakeford, 1998: 1)

This chapter explores the history of anti-social youth. Pearson's (1983) historical study of 'hooligans' traces the portrayal of youth as problematic throughout history and the contradictory way in which the youth problem is presented as a new phenomenon for each generation. This chapter explores 'troublesome youth' as socially and culturally constructed, and argues that this generation's anti-social youth is simply the last generation's hooligan. The first section of the chapter (2.2) situates youth as a liminal period in the transition between childhood and adulthood. The next section examines the constructions of youth in Britain from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century subculture of the 'Teddy Boys'. The final section (2.4) examines the key themes that have been constant throughout history in the representations of young people, particularly that they are dangerous to society. The chapter follows Pearson's argument that in portraying its own youth as worse than ever before, each generation forgets the youth of the past. Every generation reinterprets history in looking back with nostalgia at the 'mischievousness' of youth in the past who were, in their own time, considered to be society-threatening deviants. While Pearson's focus was the 'British way of life', this chapter explores the history of troublesome youth in order to contextualise the way in which young people today have been constructed as anti-social.

2.2 DEFINING YOUTH

Ariès (1962) famously asserted that childhood did not emerge as a separate social category until the seventeenth century. He suggested that seven stages of life existed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: childhood (from birth to seven years), pueritia (from seven until 14 years), adolescence (from 14 years to the mid-twenties), youth (after

adolescence until 45 or 50), senectitude, and finally old age. Youth is the prime of a person's life, characterised as such because it:

> "… occupies the central positions among the ages, although the person in this age is in his greatest strength… This age is called youth because of the strength in the person to help himself and others" (Ariès, 1962: 19)

This view of youth as occurring in later life and characterised by 'looking after others' is in contradiction with modern conceptions of youth. Youth today more closely resembles Ariès' 'adolescence', typically associated with independence from responsibility and often a reliance on others. In this thesis, youth is defined as the time between childhood and adulthood. This stage represents a transition from child to adult, encompassing concepts such as 'teenager', adolescent/adolescence, puberty and 'coming of age' (Mead, 1954; Springhall, 1986). It is tied to (although not exclusive of) biological, physiological and socio-legal factors. Yet ultimately, youth is a socially constructed concept, evidenced by the different experiences and definitions of youth over time and in different cultures. 'Youth', although often defined by stereotype, is not a homogenous group. Common characteristics such as age or social position are mediated by other factors such as race, ethnicity, gender and religion meaning that not all young people experience youth in the same way. Mitterauer (1992) illustrates that qualities often considered as biological certainties - such as sexual maturity - change over time in accordance with social and cultural changes. Thus there is no 'shared youth'; individuals experience it differently according to their social, cultural and political context.

Reflective of physiological notions of sexual maturity and puberty, youth began to be discussed as a period of 'adolescence' at the turn of the 20th century with the work of G. Stanley Hall (1904). He described adolescence as a phase characterised by biological, physiological and emotional change, which typically takes place between 14 and 24 years. Hall acknowledged that adolescence was distinct from puberty and proposed that adolescence is the result of both biological and cultural factors (Demos and Demos, 1969; Arnett, 2006). Adolescence was considered the period between the 'savage child' and civilised adult (Kehily, 2007) and a time of 'storm and stress' for young people. Hall believed the social response to this potentially difficult period should be education to ensure the correct passage was achieved to civilised adulthood (Hall, 1904; Savage, 2007). Adulthood here is conceptualised as a time of rationality and civility, with youth

[13]

representing the passage towards this from the innocence (or savagery) of childhood (Jenks, 1996). Thus, the understandings of youth represent both the need for protection and the need to impose responsibility, both conformity and autonomy. These contradictory conceptualisations represent the position of youth as a 'non-status' – that is to say it both symbolises aspects of child and adult whilst being simultaneously neither. It is only by knowing what it is not (i.e. child or adult) that youth can be defined (Jenks, 1996).

van Gennep (1960) suggested that status changes in a person's life-course regarding factors such as age, place and social position, are often marked by social groups with special rituals or ceremonies. He described these rituals as 'rites of passage'. van Gennep analysed the social world as one in which distinctions are made between groups, and human life as a series of transitions between these groups.

> *"The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another. Wherever there are fine distinctions among age or occupational groups, progression from one group to the next is accompanied by special acts... Transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization, and death. For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined." (van Gennep, 1960: 2-3)*

A rite of passage facilitates change from one status to another (child to adult for example) through three distinct stages: separation, transition, and reintegration. The first stage, separation, involves detaching the individual from their 'old' social position and separating them from the rest of society. This can take the form of temporary changes in appearance such as enforced head-shaving (upon entering the Armed Forces, for example), through to permanent physical mutilations such as circumcision. These symbolic actions distinguish the individual as different from their previous status, and thus begin their passage to a new status. The second stage represents a transition between the previous and new status, and is referred to as 'liminality' (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1967) (discussed in further detail in the following section). The final stage in a rite of passage involves reintegrating the individual back into society and into their new social role. This is usually facilitated by a ceremony to symbolically reintroduce the individual in their new status (graduations and

wedding ceremonies can be interpreted as examples of reintegration) (van Gennep, 1960; Deegan and Hill, 1991). Youth is regarded as a significant transitional period, occupying a liminal space between childhood and adulthood (van Gennep, 1960). In relation to youths, van Gennep (1960) suggested that physical puberty and "social puberty" are distinct from one another. Many ritual actions – such as Jewish circumcision practices – although marking change from child to man can take place anytime between the ages of two and twenty. This indicates that although physical puberty is a factor in instigating a rite of passage from child to adult status, these rites occur according to social rather than strictly biological conditions.

The concept of 'liminality' (utilised in chapters 7 and 8) has been described variously as the space 'in between', on the threshold, "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1974). It is characterised by openness, indeterminacy, fluidity, change, and is considered a process of 'becoming' (Turner, 1967; van Gennep, 1960).

> *"…liminality represents the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions, outsiderhood refers to actions and relationships which do not flow from a recognized social status but originate outside it, while lowermost status refers to the lowest rung in a system of social stratification in which unequal rewards are accorded to functionality differentiated positions." (Turner, 1974: 237)*

Individual 'liminads' (those in the liminal period) lack a confirmed social status. In the case of youths they are neither child nor adult but something 'in-between'. Liminads are separated from the rest of the community and submitted to practices aimed at creating a transformative process which Turner refers to as "a becoming" (1969). The liminal period represents a symbolic domain which is distinct from previous and future states; it is ambiguous and represents nothing of what the liminads were or will be (Cook-Sather, 2008; Turner, 1974).

Rites of passage are more clearly evident in smaller tribal societies as illustrated in anthropological ethnographies of the twentieth century (for example: Mead, 1954). Child to adult rites of passages in western societies can be identified in religious practices such as Catholic confirmation and Jewish bar/bat mitzvahs (Foster and Little, 1987). For middle class youths educational activities such as university attendance or extra-curricular activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, which both have recognisable

reintegration ceremonies at their conclusion, may be seen as rites of passage (Delaney, 1995). Yet for marginalised young people there are fewer recognisable initiations into adulthood. Broadly, the three stages of 'rites of passage' can be extracted from the lives of youths in contemporary British society: separation is characterised by a move away from child-like activities and from leisure time at home with family to spending leisure time outside of the home often in public places with peers of the same age. The liminal period (youth) can be articulated as the period which is often spent in public places on the streets. The end stage of re-integration occurs when the young people 'settle down' which marks an end to their time spent 'on the streets' and comes as a result of structural life changes such as finding a partner, getting a career, having a children, and/or moving away from the family home (issues raised by the participants in this study and discussed in chapter 8.2). Mahdi (1987) suggests that modern societies no longer have elders willing to aid young people through initiation into adulthood. She suggests that rites of passage are particularly important for marginalised young people, yet the threshold at which reintegration occurs is unclear for these youths.

Northcote (2006) suggests that the absence of traditional initiations forces young people to create their own rituals: "[they] try to enact their own rite of passage through indulging in adult behaviour such as drug-taking, alcohol consumption and sexual intercourse." (2006: 4). Activities now defined as anti-social behaviour such as drug-taking, smoking cigarettes and underage alcohol consumption are part of youthful rites of passage (Butler, 1998; Barry, 2006). Merten (2005) suggests that engaging in 'troublesome' behaviour is a way which young people are able to separate themselves from their previous 'child' identity and redefine as youths.

> *"Girls distinguished between their peers who were "quiet" and those who were "rowdy." Rowdy girls tended to be expressive in public, and often this was referred to as being "loud." This exuberant self-expression symbolized many characteristics valued by teens, such as self-confidence, social dominance, and risk taking—especially because public spaces were controlled by adults. Conversely, being quiet conveyed meanings of being compliant and timid." (Merten, 2005: 140)*

The activities undertaken by young people are often acceptable in adult society but are considered as 'anti-social' when undertaken by teenagers, such as smoking, drinking and hanging out with friends. For the girls in Merten's (2005) study, rowdiness and sociability with friends were central parts of 'teenhood'. For these girls activities like drinking alcohol,

smoking and sexual relationships were intended to indicate their teenage status rather than being for rule-breaking purposes. They did not necessarily want to be *seen* to be breaking the rules and largely avoided such activities in front of teachers and parents, they simply considered the behaviours necessary to distinguish them as not-children. Public spaces and 'the streets' are often the site of significant transition for young people towards adulthood but this also makes them hyper-visible to society (Matthews, 2003). Young people who spend time on the streets are therefore more likely to be *seen* when undertaking liminal activities and this can consequently mean they are identified as anti-social. These young people occupy a greater liminal position in society than others whose activities are less publicly visible as they are both symbolically between childhood and adulthood but also find themselves located between child and adult places – away from the home but not allowed access to adult spaces. There are often fewer negative consequences for privileged young people who undertake rule-breaking behaviour. Middle class youths are more able to successfully negotiate the liminality of youth; social control agents such as teachers and police officers are more likely to give them the 'benefit of the doubt', as illustrated in Merten's study:

> *"Sara broke the rule against cheerleaders sitting with basketball players on the bus (as well as kissing her boyfriend), she was neither dismissed from the cheerleading squad nor suspended from school; adults were willing to assume the best. ....That these suburban girls could use rule/law violations in a ritual manner, with little consequence, powerfully reflected their privileged position." (Merten, 2005: 144)*

Marginalised young people who lack the social or economic power to undertake the liminal process in formal rituals or in private settings are more likely to be identified as 'anti-social'. Intoxication and 'rowdy' activities are far more socially acceptable for university students than for young people who hang around on the streets. Both are engaging in youthful liminal activities with the same aim of successfully entering adulthood, but less privileged youths are constructed as 'troublesome'. Some young people are secluded from the rest of society into liminal spaces (the streets); they are not in the family home but are denied access to adult spaces such as pubs and nightclubs. Their 'anti-social' activities such as underage street drinking, hanging around in large groups, graffiti, general noise and nuisance will be discarded when the liminal period concludes. That is to say that they are acceptable activities for adults (and will therefore no longer considered anti-social upon adulthood), or are 'anti-social' dependent on the liminal spaces in which they take place.

[17]

Therefore, this thesis employs a definition of youth as a transitory period of liminality between the social statuses of childhood and adulthood, and troublesome behaviour as a characteristic of this transition.

The transitional, liminal period between childhood and adulthood has long been a concern for politicians and the general public (Pearson, 1987). The next section describes the ways in which youth has been characterised as problematic throughout history beginning with the Middle Ages.

2.3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF YOUTH IN BRITAIN

> *"I would that there were no age betweene ten and three and twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest: for there is nothing (in the betweene) but getting wenches with childe, wronging the Auncientry, stealing, [and] fighting" (Shakespeare, 1898 [1623]: 146)*

The regulation of youths has a history at least back to the 8th century in Britain (Sanders, 1970), although limitations of historical information about females means that a great deal more is known about the experiences of male youths. Ariès' (1962) suggestion that youth did not exist until modern times has been challenged by a number of commentators who present evidence to the contrary (Goldberg and Riddy, 2004; James, 2004; Hanawalt, 1993; Shahar, 1990; Griffiths, 1996; Smith, 1973; Ben-Amos, 1991; 1994; 1995). These scholars argue that although youth may not have been recognised in pre-modern times as we now understand it, the period between the mid-teenage years and the late twenties (sometimes as late as 35 years) mirrors that which we now understand as youth. Youth existed in medieval and early modern society as a distinguishable period between childhood and adulthood defined through common understandings, tradition and laws.

2.3.1 Medieval Youth - Disorderly Apprentices

Griffiths (1996) refutes Ariès' assertion that children became 'little adults' at the age of seven or eight in Medieval times. He highlights the use of legal authority and age-dependant laws as indicators that a period of youth preceded full adulthood in early-modern times. An individual could legally inherit property at 15 years (Shahar, 1990), but could not leave an apprenticeship until age 21 (or when married) for females and 24 years

for males (Griffiths, 1996). Lone working was often not legally allowed by the Guilds who regulated trades and apprenticeships until the age of 24 years (Ben-Amos, 1991). Youths were considered too immature to hold positions of authority such as tavern owners or jurymen until at least their mid-twenties (Griffiths, 1996) when adulthood maturity was reached through full economic independence, usually around age 25 (Shahar, 1990). Beginning when an individual began full-time working or entered a trade, youth was a period where a young person learned about the world free from the responsibilities of marriage, children and financial strains due to their perceived inexperience (Ben-Amos, 1994). Adulthood was reached when the individual had become able to look after others as well as themselves, typically in their late twenties and marked by marriage (Perrot, 1997; Griffiths, 1996). The relative freedom they were allowed constructed youth in Medieval times as 'wild and wanton' in comparison with 'sad and wise' adulthood (Hanawalt, 1993: 6).

In the medieval and early modern periods apprenticeships were symbolic of the transition between childhood and adulthood, and although may not have been experienced by all young people are a good indication of the place of youth in the social structure. Apprenticeships typically began at age fourteen and lasted around seven years. During this time youths worked and lived under a master tradesperson while they trained in a trade, and they were often unpaid apart from board and lodgings (Dunlop, 1911; Muncie, 2004). Although historical reports privilege the experiences of young men, there is evidence that young women were equally likely to leave the familial home: a small number entered into apprenticeships but the majority entered domestic service for the same period (Ben–Amos, 1994). Apprentices were formally indentured and officially regulated by Guilds to ensure compliance to certain standards of behaviour from both masters and apprentices. Historical reports regarding apprentices often highlight immaturity, recklessness and rebellion as characteristics of youth (Dunlop, 1911; Ben-Amos, 1994). This is evidenced by the factors that were regulated by the Guilds which included the way in which youths spent their leisure time, how they dressed, the length of their hair, and what they were permitted to own (Smith, 1973). An 'Ordinance' of the Merchants Adventurers of Newcastle upon Tine [sic] in 1649 indicates that youth clothing has long been viewed as a symbol of youth rebellion:

> "Whereas our Predecessors ... formerly made divers good and laudable
> Acts ...for the regulating of the Manners and Apparrell of the

> *Apprentices, belonging to the said Fellowship; yet we finde little obedience or conformity, but on the contrary, abundance of disorder and pride in them, which if not timely prevented, will prove the ruine of youth, and a dishonour to this ancient Society.*
> *…every Apprentice …shall cut his haire from the Crowne of the head, keep his fore-head bare, his locks (if any) shall not reach below the lap of his eares, and the same length to be observed behind. …he shall weare a linnen Cap and no other, and that without lace, and they shall weare no Beaver Hats nor Casters."*
> *(Severall Proceedings in Parliament, 14th December 1649)*

Although it was generally the appearances of the working classes that provoked the need for regulation, Disraeli (1864) refers to a book for the middle classes published in 1672 with the long title: "New instructions unto youth for their behaviour, and also a discourse upon some innovations of habits and dressing; *against powdering of hair, naked breasts, black spots* (or patches), and other unseemly customs" (original author not cited) (Disraeli, 1864: 228). Thus, for young people of all classes, these 'unseemly customs' or youth fashions were interpreted as illustrative of young people's disregard for adult customs or traditions.

Smith (1973) provides evidence that 17th and 18th century apprentices had their own subculture with accompanying literature, both formal and informal meetings and engagement in politics. London apprentices were a group particularly notorious for being rowdy and riotous, particularly on Shrove Tuesday and May Day (Ben-Amos, 1994). Apprentices from the 13th to the 19th century were controlled through the imposition of various rules to regulate their appearance and dress, and thus curtail the development of this distinct apprentice 'culture':

> *"City regulations prohibited them from wearing any clothing except that provided by their masters and assessed fines for engaging in dancing or masking, for being present at tennis courts or bowling alleys, for attending cock fights or brothels, and for keeping chests or trunks without permission. The clothing regulations were often resented and often violated, as was the rule requiring apprentices to wear their hair short. In July of 1640, the court of Aldermen ruled that no apprentice would receive the freedom of the city unless he "shall first present himself at that time with the hair of his head cut in a decent and comely manner" (Smith, 1973: 150-51)*

Early modern youth were characterised (much like today) as rowdy, undisciplined and with an arrogant disrespect for authority. The perceived disrespectful attitude of young people

and the desire to instil deference is evident in the seventeenth century, with youths being expected to show deference to older members of society:

> *"Nor shall any Apprentice passé by any Free Brother of this Company, without civill respect, at least by uncovering his head, and that not slightly but submissively." (Severall Proceedings in Parliament, 14th December 1649)*

Within the apprenticeship system young people were treated as immature and not yet responsible. Youth was considered a period of development requiring training and guidance (both in employment and morality) before adulthood could be successfully attained. Apprenticeships were considered a:

> *"..."way of life between childhood and adulthood". Apprentices were no longer children; they had reached the age of puberty and were sent out of their homes to live in the homes of others, almost as the children of other parents, but not quite." (Smith, 1973: 157)*

Although not considered to be 'innocent' like children, youth were regarded as in need of protection from their own choices even in the early modern era (Cressey, 1997). Ben-Amos (1994), in her description of youth in the period 1500-1700 in England outlines that the period beginning in the mid-teenage years with gainful employment and ending with marriage in the mid to late-twenties can be considered as early modern 'youth'. Although many children entered some form of employment before they were 10 years old, this did not secure entry into the adult world. Adult wages and employment rights were often not instigated until the ages of 16 or 18, and sometimes up to the mid-twenties (Perrot, 1997; Loriga, 1997). Even after apprenticeships some Guilds could, by law, prevent those aged under 30 years from working independently (Loriga, 1996). While childhood was seen as a time of sexlessness (Ariès, 1962), youth was considered a dangerous time for the moral health of young men and women. Sexual maturation was seen as a mark of young people at risk of the 'temptations of youth'. These 'temptations' characterised youth as:

> *"a period in which indulgence in carnal lust, lasciviousness and sensual delights reigned...human instincts tended towards wrongdoing, evil and vice, which were especially marked in infants, children and youth. Without constant and diligent nurturing, strict discipline, and a proper education, young people would succumb and be doomed to do wrong" (Ben-Amos, 1994:12)*

It was considered that if young people were not subject to strict discipline and imposed celibacy prior to marriage, "the frute [i.e. the child] may growe wylde, and conteine in it fervent and mortal poison, to the utter destruction of a realme." (cited in Ben-Amos, 1994: 12). Young people required protection from their own desires in order to maintain the moral health of society, a sentiment echoed in current discourse of right-leaning newspapers which place single 'teen mothers' at the heart of societal breakdown.

2.3.2 18th and 19th Century Youth –Slum Kids and Juvenile Delinquency

The Apprenticeship system lasted into the 19th century, although the terms gradually changed with industrialisation. The Enlightenment brought a new form of thinking and authors such as Locke (1779) and Rousseau (2007) challenged existing understandings of 'childhood'. Locke's (1779) 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education' refuted the commonly held view that children were innately marred by 'original sin', instead presenting the notion that children were effectively an empty vessel which was able to be filled by experiences – "tabula rasa" (Synnott, 2006). Rousseau (2007) proposed that education was the only way in which to prevent the corruption of youth, constructing an image of 'the natural child'. The remaking of the child from "little devil" into "little angel" (Synnott, 2006) was significant to perceptions of youth. Youth was constructed as a time beginning with innocence but with the potential for corruption and temptation (Jones, 2009). Youth was to be a time of learning, between the irrational and fantastical beliefs of childhood to the rational and scientific views of adulthood (Jenks, 1996; James and Prout, 1998). If young people were 'blank canvasses' it was essential to ensure the correct training was given in order to create good and virtuous adults. Young people were therefore seen to required welfare intervention rather than punishment.

The Industrial Revolution brought large numbers of people into cities to work in factories which was accompanied by child/youth labour, unemployment caused by mechanisation of work, overcrowding, poverty and crime often associated with the 'slum kids' (Shore, 1999; Perrot, 1997). The consequences of mass migration and the legacy of those such as Rousseau and Locke meant an increased concern for the moral health of youth who were believed to be at great risk of corruption from city life. Attention centred predominantly on the 'children of the poor' who were perceived not only as a risk to the social order but also posed a risk to middle class children through 'contamination' (Savage, 2007). This led

to a wave of welfare-based reforms including the establishment of the 'Philanthropic Society' in the 1780s which opened an institution to ensure the reform of poor criminal children, the first of its kind (King, 2006).

A number of pieces of legislation ('The Factory Acts') beginning with the Factory Act 1802 introduced new regulations for children and young people (all aged under 18) working in factories. The period of reform culminated in the Factory Act 1901 which stopped child labour entirely for those aged under 12 years, limited hours for 12-18 year olds and improved general conditions. The Factory Acts were based in welfare discourse and revolutionised understandings of youth through officially separating under 18 year olds from adults and positioning young people as primarily in need of protection. The legislation required factory owners to provide better working and living circumstances for all their employees, and eventually obligated them to establish schools for children. Young people were removed from factories and placed into schools with others of the same age while workplaces became 'adult' spaces. Consequently, young people had more free time which, for the poor, was usually spent on the streets unsupervised and thus were considered more open to the 'temptations of youth' (Shore, 1999).

This became a further area of social anxiety as youths were perceived to be 'running wild on the streets' (Cunningham, 1996; Duckworth, 2002). Perception held that the working classes were less able to resist the temptations of idleness and vice (Emsley, 2005), and segregation of the sexes became normal as a response to the perceived dangers of youth sexual maturation (Humphries, 1981). Long-standing gender stereotypes were reflected in social concerns; males were considered naturally more sexually predatory and females held responsibility for resisting male advances (Muncie, 2004). Girls in particular were heavily burdened with the constraints of sexual moralising and were regulated to prevent immoral behaviour (Perrot, 1997; Humphries, 1981). Mayhew remarked on the problem of working class girls entering prostitution:

> *"Some have wondered why the daughters of the poorer class principally serve to swell the number of our streetwalkers. Are poor girls naturally more unchaste than rich ones? Assuredly not. But they are simply worse guarded and therefore more liable to temptation. The daughters of even middle class people are seldom or never trusted out of the mother's sight, so that they have no opportunity allowed them for doing wrong. With the poorer classes, however, the case is very different. Mothers in that sphere of life have either to labour for their*

living or else do the household duties themselves, so that the girl is employed to run errands alone from the tenderest years, and, when her limbs are strong enough to work, she is put out in the world to toil for herself." (Mayhew and Binny, 1862: 386)

Reformers made little distinction between the 'depraved' and the 'deprived' who were equally at risk of corruption. Delinquent youths were discussed sympathetically, often being referred to as 'unfortunates' (Mayhew, 1861). Poor children were 'open to temptations' through practices such as street gambling and the reading of 'penny dreadfuls'; cheap, serialised literature popular in the mid-1800s. In sentencing one juvenile delinquent a judge reportedly remarked that "...he had been led away by bad companions and *low books*" [emphasis added] (Telegraph, January 1856 quoted in Sutter, 2003). Penny dreadfuls were considered dangerous for the minds of young people, even those of previous 'good character'. Their stories of highwaymen and robbers were believed to give young people 'instruction' to delinquency and have a corrupting influence so were heavily discouraged (Springhall, 1994; Sutter, 2003; Boone, 2005).

The eighteenth century is often heralded as marking the emergence (or re-construction) of 'juvenile delinquency' (Gillis, 1975; Shore, 1999; Muncie, 2004; Hendrick, 2006; 1997; 1990; Duckworth, 2002). As has often been the case, the welfare reforms which aimed to 'save' troubled youths was matched by a parallel discourse of punishment. Social anxieties for the first time established a new comprehensive system of dealing with delinquents which encompassed welfare, education, employment and crime control. Juvenile delinquency was constructed through the creation of employment restrictions for children and young people, the rise of philanthropic organisations which sought to protect and reform youths, a renewed focus on education and the huge increase of people in the cities as a result of industrialisation (Platt, 1969; Hendrick, 2006; Muncie, 2009).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a growing concern for what was perceived as an increase in juvenile crime (King, 2006) led to the establishment of 'The Committee for Investigating the Causes of the Alarming Increase of Juvenile Delinquency in the Metropolis' (reported in The Morning Post, 14th September 1816). It is unclear whether the perceived rising juvenile crime rate was a reflection of reality as there were no official recorded crime statistics at the time (Muncie, 2004). Yet, evidence was presented in Parliament that, "In 1813, there were committed to Newgate 62 boys under 16 years of age... In 1816, there were committed 1,683 persons under 20; of these 1,281 were of 17

and under" (Commons Hansard, 7th July 1817). This was taken as evidence of a youth crime problem which the Committee attributed to 'the improper conduct of parents', lack of education, lack of suitable employment, violation of the Sabbath and street gambling (The Morning Post, 14th September 1816). Delinquency was largely considered to be not the fault of the juvenile, rather of outside influences and the natural 'temptation' associated with youth.

> "Dreadful, therefore, is the situation of the young offender: he becomes the victim of circumstances over while he has no control. The laws of his country operate not to retrain, but to punish, him. The tendency of the police is to accelerate his career in crime. If, when apprehended, he has not attained the full measure of guilt, the nature of his confinement is almost sure to complete it: and discharged, as he frequently is, pennyless, without friends, character or employment, his is drive, for a subsistence, to the renewal of depredations." (Reported in The Morning Post, 18th September 1816)

The imposition of legislation to prevent children entering employment (for their own protection) had left working-class youth with a greater amount of freedom which was considered a risk to society and anxieties about 'idle and impoverished' youths became a key issue in the cities (King, 2006: 99). Potential hooliganism and delinquency were considered as the dangers of allowing youth unrestrained liberty (Humphries, 1981; Duckworth, 2002). Middle class concerns about working class youth were closely linked to more general worries about city overcrowding, slums and the fragmentation of communities and family life (Humphries, 1981). Whilst the rhetoric was sympathetic, referring to the young offenders as 'unfortunate lads' (The Morning Post, 16th October 1817), the message was the same; youths were now constructed as potentially dangerous to the social order.

2.3.3 Victorian Youth – Artful Dodgers, Scuttlers and Hooligans

The Education Act 1880 introduced compulsory schooling for all young people to secondary level, partly as a response to the great number of youths who were unemployed as a result of child labour reforms (Cunningham, 1996; Shore, 1999). Prior to this, primary education - teaching basic life skills - had been relatively common. Yet due to concerns about youth morality, the new secondary education system became structured around moral discipline and training required to prepare the adults of the future (Caron, 1997; Snell, 1999).

Education reformers such as Mary Carpenter in the mid-nineteenth century were concerned not only with the education of youth but specifically with moral and Christian education (Emsley, 2005). These Evangelical reformers placed the blame for the children of the 'dangerous classes' not with poverty but with their parents' lack of sufficient moral training (Pearson, 1983; Hendrick, 2006). The introduction of state education changed the face of youth but the move faced strong resistance from working class families who often relied on the additional income brought in by their children's wages (Muncie, 2004; Duckworth, 2002). Humphries (1981) also suggests that for many, education was a middle class institution and was viewed as a threat to working class culture. Education was largely based within strict religious principles and pupils were expected to be obedient, virtuous and pious and as Humphries' (1981) respondents illustrate, young people were largely taught through fear, strict discipline and harsh punishments.

In the Victorian era youth was conceptualised as both innocent and impressionable, vulnerable from the corrupting nature of society (Gillis, 1975). Young people were constructed as beings who required protection both from society and from the 'natural' temptations of adolescence. It was during this time that the focus on the conformity (or lack of it) of youth is evident in Victorian discourse.

> *"The model adolescent therefore became the organized youth, dependent but secure from temptation, while the independent and precocious young were stigmatized as delinquent." (Gillis, 1975: 97)*

Delinquent youth then became not only those who broke laws or created disorder, but any young person who did not conform to the societal morals and values. Youth groups such as the Boys Brigade (est. 1883), Boy Scouts (est. 1909) and Girl Guides (est. 1910) were created out of a desire to channel the energies of young people and to attempt to induce conformity through uniform and discipline (Springhall, 1977; Gillis, 1975). For those that refused to conform, HMP Parkhurst was opened as the first juvenile only prison in 1838 (Hendrick, 2006). The 1816 Commission recommended the creation of separate prisons for juvenile offenders based on the belief that youths entering prison were corrupted by those individuals (adults) already there and that prisons created much of the crime (Duckworth, 2002). The aim to permanently separate juvenile and adult offenders in prisons was discussed in 1853 in a Select Committee on Criminal and Destitute Children, and the Youthful Offenders Acts of 1854 and 1857 enacted this systematic change through

legislation which sent young people to reformatories and industrial schools rather than adult prisons (Emsley, 2005). The Children Act 1908 created separate juvenile courts with the dual purpose of attending to the welfare and punishment of children and young people (Hendrick, 2006). These measures originated from the paternalism of the 1816 Committee which sought to protect young people from older criminals, yet the result was that juvenile delinquency was confirmed as a distinct category through legislature.

The end of the nineteenth century brought new youth fears in the perceived rise of 'youth gangs'. As Pearson (1983) outlines, the late eighteenth century saw the emergence of the term 'hooligan'. Rowdy and disorderly working class youths, 'hooligan' largely described London-based youths but the character was replicated throughout the country including the 'Scuttlers' of Manchester and 'Peaky Blinders' of Birmingham (Davies, 1998; Pearson, 1983; 2006). These new youth groups, or 'gangs', created different anxieties to the traditional fears of the immorality of youth. Their apparent organisation, reflected in particular styles of dress and seemingly highly co-ordinated 'gang wars', presented a threat to the very order of society (Pearson, 1983). An editorial in The Times newspaper (30th October 1900) which asked "What are we to do with the "Hooligan"?", suggested that these youths had emerged following the end of transportation, were at the centre of societal problems at the time and would inevitably go on to become "professional criminals...or paupers". The editorial description illustrates youth discourses that are reflected in today's ASB Agenda including welfarism, children as innocents and adults as rational, the importance of discipline and education:

> *"...as to lads who are now treated as if they were capable of self-control, when in point of fact they need coercion or restraint much more than their juniors; the youths who claim all manhood's privileges and are more wayward, intractable, and unreasonable than children. With no home, or none in which there is an orderly, wholesome life the "Hooligan" finds himself at 16 or 17 his own master. He is not bound to go to school. If he works, it is but casually; and at all events the evenings are his to waste in frolics which are generally on the verge of criminality. Not much as to a lad's character can be inferred from one or two lapses – they may be the accidents which befall poverty or inexperience. But when time after time he is concerned in brutal assaults; when he is known to the police as an organizer or ringleader of bands that terrorize half-a-dozen streets, it seems a farce to give him, when brought before the magistrate, merely seven or ten days' imprisonment." (The Times, 30th October 1900)*

In this quote the distinctive 'liminality' of youth is articulated: the privileges of adulthood are sought by young people but with a childhood sense of irresponsibility.

Hendrick (1990) describes the 'youth problem' of the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries as related to working class male labour. The increase of adult-organised youth groups in the early twentieth century (Gillis, 1975) was a paternalistic response to occupy youths from all strata of society. But whereas compulsory schooling had begun to have a 'levelling-out' affect on young people of all classes, youth groups caused greater tension between classes. The groups primarily attracted the middle and rising classes with the working class youths either unable to afford the uniform and the time away from work or unwilling to ascribe to the middle class values that were the basis for most of the groups (Gillis, 1975). The uniforms of the organisations were a symbol of the chasm between the middle class youth who wore them and the working class youths who styled themselves on adults of their class. The uniforms were a symbol of conformity. William Smith, founder of the Boys Brigade, defined the purpose of the organisation as to allow 'boys to be boys' and not to rush them into adulthood (Hendrick, 1990). This illustrates that the discourse of youth within this and other similar organisations was to protect the innocence and simplicity of youth. This, no doubt, created greater divisions between middle class group members and working class youths who were often already in employment by the age of fourteen (Gillis, 1975). Constructions of youth were divided, often on class lines, into the 'good' Boys Brigaders and Boy Scouts and the 'bad' working class youth who congregated on street corners and created nuisance.

By the 1920s conceptions of juvenile delinquency had mellowed somewhat and youth was a lesser concern up to the 1940s, largely due to the two World Wars (Savage, 2007). Anxieties about youth are more prominent when society is stable and when society becomes precarious through war there are fewer concerns about youth. This is reflective of the self-protective nature of societies which to best protect the current social order only deal with one 'enemy' at a time. Clearly this decrease in social anxiety about youth also be can attributed to the fact that many of the central offenders of social morals – young, working class males – were either out of the country fighting in wars or died as a result of the war, and young women were occupied with war-work. The novel 'Brighton Rock' published in 1938 indicates that perceptions of a problem youth still existed in British society, telling the story of a young gang-leader of race-course youths running protection

rackets through fear and violence (Greene, 1938). The Children and Young Persons Act 1933 began to close the gap between juvenile offenders and neglected children (Hendrick, 2006), although it ultimately resulted in greater numbers of young people dealt with through the formal system. Evidently there were still concerns about youth; the relative affluence of young workers in poverty between the wars, the increasing independence of girls due to war work, moral anxieties surrounding dance halls and war-time promiscuity, mass youth unemployment in the 1930s and violent gangs (Savage, 2007).

2.3.4 Post-War Youth –Teenagers and Teddy Boys

The year 1945 is widely regarded as a watershed in the history of youth (Osgerby, 1998). This was the beginning of a long period during which youth developed a distinct 'youth culture'. The post-war period saw increased affluence for young people, both working class and middle class, male and female. Although not as marked an increase as some suggested at the time, youth had for the first time both money and freedom. This was quickly recognised by the consumer market which created an industry selling youth-specific goods: clothes, magazines, books and music. In 1944 the term "teenager" was first used in the United States as a marketing term to define the new mass market of those aged between thirteen and nineteen who were consumers for the first time (Savage, 2007). Teenagers were not defined as adolescents, delinquents or rebels, but simply as 'product buyers'. As has been illustrated, the focus of public concern is typically about working class youths, as is the case with youth subcultures in the twentieth century: Teddy Boys in the fifties, mods and rockers and hippies in the sixties, skinheads, punks and football hooligans in the seventies and eighties, up to the ravers of the 1990s. These groups share common qualities; distinctive styles of dress, illegal drug use, music tastes, leisure activities and often gang violence. As Pearson (1983) and Cohen (2002) have illustrated, each youth subculture brings a new wave of public concern about the decline of society and the 'problem with youth today' which are seemingly worse than ever before. An exploration of all of these cultures would easily fill a book, as has often done so in the past, therefore the analysis here focuses on the mid-20th century youth subculture of the 'Teddy Boys' as representative of those that followed.

Youth culture was by no means a new phenomenon in the post-war period but due to the marketisation of youth the 'culture' became more accessible for all young people. The

1950s brought what many consider to be the first youth subculture in Britain, the 'Teddy Boys' (Pearson, 1983; Brake, 1985; 1980; Horn, 2009; Grieves, 1982; Jefferson, 1975). Teddy boys emerged in 1952 (Horn, 2009), first appearing in the press mid-1954 following reports of fights instigated by youths in 'Edwardian style dress' (The Times, 22nd May 1954). The name came from their 'Edwardian' style of dress and their favoured activities were listening to rock and roll music, going to new cinemas, frequenting milk bars and fighting (Pearson, 1983). The adoption of upper class dress by working class youths can be seen as a form of class rebellion (Jefferson, 1975). The 'Americanisation' of British culture and the emergence of television were blamed for their 'anti-social' behaviour (Pearson, 1983; Horn, 2009). An article in The Times (31st December 1955) references a Headmaster who called for a reduction in wages for those under 21 years as a "cure" for teddy boys. He reportedly remarked that, "high wages without corresponding responsibilities were the main cause of the trouble with youngsters" and said that "It is a bad system which provides a teen-ager with the price of a strong drink and fine clothes. We could halve our difficulties if we could halve his pay" (The Times, 31st December 1955). He utilises discourses of respect and responsibility, excessive youth freedom, failings in education and employment, lack of parental and religious controls, and the increase of 'latch-key kids' whose mothers and fathers were both employed to explain this new youth problem.

The Teddy Boy phenomenon was dying down when the American film 'Rock Around the Clock' was released in September 1956 and re-invigorated the style. The style was viewed as a symbol of their class rebellion, and social control measures began to be implemented to prevent the wearing of these clothes. Specific orders from the Lieutenant General prohibited off-duty soldiers from wearing the style (The Times, 27th July 1955: 'Soldiers In "Civvies" Official Frown On Edwardian Garb'). There were reports of Teddy Boys appearing in countries all over Europe and Russia (The Times, 11th March 1957; 6th June 1957). The style, which had originated in the working classes, became commercialised and available to all. By the middle of 1958 the Teddy Boy style was dying out, with commentators' fear of these youths being replaced by an understanding of their position and the phase reconstructed as a form of class rebellion (The Times, 9th May 1958). As with other subcultures, when Teddy Boy culture became controlled largely by consumer marketers and became available to all it quickly fell out of fashion.

The ending of child labour and the imposition of compulsory education meant that the 20th century more than any other successfully separated youth from childhood and adulthood, making it for the first time a clearly distinguishable social category. As the case of the Teddy Boys illustrates, youth in the late 20th century had greater freedom and choice in their lives than their pre-war ancestors. Yet whilst the experience of youth may have changed with increased economic independence, the recurring themes of youth as undisciplined, irresponsible and having too much freedom remained. Although each era has brought with it social changes in the form of legislation, technology, employment and styles, this section has illustrated that conceptions of youth have been largely consistent over time. The specific characterisations of youth which have dominated social concerns are explored in the following section, with particular reference to the current portrayal of youth as 'anti-social'.

2.4 CONSTRUCTIONS OF YOUTH: KEY THEMES

The previous section explored the social perceptions of youth in Britain from the Middle Ages to the late twentieth century. This section specifically explores the recurring themes that have informed the reaction to and regulation of young people throughout history.

> *"Today, Britain is facing a crisis with its youth. In every town and city, boys... are failing to make the transition to manhood and a successful adult life. This has terrifying implications for us all. 'Serious youth violence,' says the head of Scotland Yard's Violent Crime directorate, Barry Norman, 'is the biggest problem we have today - with the possible exception of terrorism'... Unlike previous generations, the boys who spill out onto our streets don't quickly grow out of delinquent behaviour... Youth disorder on this scale represents a kick in the teeth to accepted conventions of respect and responsibility to others - and it's likely to carry on for generations to come... Such incidents [serious assaults] were far less frequent in the recent past. This is partly because the institutions that previously socialised and directed young men - the family, the church and school - have either lost or given up their authority." (The Daily Mail: Sergeant, 19th September 2009)*

The above quote is taken from an article entitled: 'Feral youths: How a generation of violent, illiterate young men are living outside the boundaries of civilised society'. This indicates, through the title alone, the dominant views about young people in Britain today. Young people are characterised as entirely separate from civilised society, distanced from education, socialisation and widely accepted morals and values. They are worse than ever

before and represent a challenge to the very fabric of society. As the previous section illustrated, some themes are ever-present in the characterisation of youth (although with differing dominance over time). Specifically, this section explores the themes of youth as: in need of both protection and regulation, dangerous and in danger, disrespectful and irresponsible, and non-conforming and rebellious (Muncie, 2009).

G. Stanley Hall asserted that "adolescence is pre-eminently the criminal age" (quoted in Humphries, 1981: 152). The discourse of youth as dangerous reflects both the danger of that young people *face* from the corruptions of society and the danger that youth *pose* to (typically middle class) society (MacDonald, 1997). Based within moral and religious ideals, the characterisation of youth as dangerous most often justifies the implementation of punishment measures; youths need to be protected from their own desires and society needs to be protected from them (Muncie, 2004). Reflective of Locke's (1779) "tabula rasa" (discussed on page 22), youth is embodied by *potential*: the individual is a 'blank canvas' able to be moulded positively or negatively (Synnott, 2006; Jones, 2009). Youth is therefore perceived as a source of great potential but also as a potential risk.

The construction of youth in need of protection from corruption began with the eighteenth century reformation movement, philanthropists and 'child savers' (Platt, 1969) and culminated in new systems to recognise and regulate problematic youths. The physiological changes associated with youth, particularly reaching sexual maturity, were seen to warrant measures aimed at moral protection from 'youthful temptations'; a fact that is reflected in moral panics about promiscuous youth and 'teen mothers'. Youths are no longer 'innocent' children but have not yet reached the rational state of adulthood where they will be able to make 'good' choices (Jones, 2009; Griffin, 1993). The competing discourses of young people as in need of welfare or punishment have been the foundations of the youth justice system, with the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 outlining the primary aim of the system as the 'welfare of the child' (Walsh, 1999; Muncie, 1999). The welfare principle underlined the youth justice system for much of the twentieth century until the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (discussed in more detail in chapter three). The CDA marked a significant change by replacing the welfare principle with the primary aim of "preventing future offending", and enacted this principle through risk-focused measures with a commitment to 'early intervention' (Hollingsworth, 2007; Muncie, 2009). ASB measures have further blurred the boundaries between welfare and punishment through

punitive measures introduced in the name of protection such as child curfews and Child Safety Orders which aim to protect children from both the corruptions of adult society and the neglect of their parents.

A further theme of youth evident throughout history and reflected in the ASB Agenda is the construction of youth as disrespectful and irresponsible. Pearson (1983) illustrates that this was a key concern in the 1980s:

> *"Now violence and terror lurk on the once-safe streets. The family no longer holds its proper place and parents have abandoned their responsibilities. In the classroom, where once the tidy scholars applied themselves diligently in their neat rows of desks, there is a carnival of disrespect. The police and magistrates have had their hands tied by interference of sentimentalists and do-gooders. A new generation is upon us of mindless bully boys, vandals, muggers, head-bangers, football rowdies, granny-murderers, boot boys, toughs and tearaways who laugh in the face of the law, as we stand before the rising tide of violence and disorder with a Canute-like impotence." (Pearson, 1983: 3)*

This quote, although now almost thirty years old, reflects timeless concerns about disrespectful youths and themes that have throughout history been offered as the cause of youth misbehaviour: a lack of proper and disciplined education, too much freedom, a lack of respect and not enough responsibility. Adults have long been concerned that young people have too much freedom and too few responsibilities. The theme of youth disrespect and perceptions of young people as rowdy, undisciplined, with an arrogant disrespect for authority is long-standing:

> *"Youth were never more sawcie, yea never more savagely saucie...the ancient are scorned, the honourable are contempted, the magistrate is not dreaded." (Thomas Beard, 1624, quoted in Griffiths, 1996: 111)*

The creation of the 'Respect Taskforce' in 2005 placed respect at the centre of the ASB Agenda, aimed at making people responsible for their socially unacceptable behaviour. Although not explicitly aimed at young people, the Respect Agenda (Home Office, 2008b) emerged from a perceived 'lack of respect' from young people who were believed to be unafraid of the law (Burney, 2005). Through the focus on respect and comparison to 'law-abiding citizens', young people were constructed as disrespectful (Squires and Stephen, 2006; Casciani, 2006; Jamieson, 2005). McDowell (2007) suggests that youth 'respect'

often means 'deference'. It is the physical presentation of deference that is significant: one must 'show' respect. Respect and particularly 'respectability' have long been used to divide the working classes, as is illustrated by the construction of difference between the 'respectable' and 'unrespectable' working classes, or the 'deserving and undeserving poor' (Hopkins Burke, 2003; McDowell, 2007). This was a construction aimed to create deference in a class system based on the acknowledgment of one's 'betters' (McDowell, 2007), illustrating that a working individual knew their 'place' in society. The present representations of 'yobs' and 'hoodies' portray young people as having little regard for any forms of authority, similar to the hooligan of the Victorian era (Pearson, 2009).

The 'responsibilisation' of all individuals within the ASB agenda reflects the tradition of adults trying to impose responsibilities on young people (Gaskell, 2008). Within the 'rights and responsibilities' debate (that taking on responsibilities enables an individual to 'earn' rights) young people are situated as having the benefit of rights whilst giving nothing to society in return. The tension between these two qualities means that young people are often represented as 'having an easy ride' and should be treated more harshly, a view particularly vocalised in the media. Yet, there are instances where young people have responsibilities but few rights, for example a young person in employment is expected to pay taxes from the age of sixteen yet is unable to vote on how those taxes are used until they are eighteen. The liminal characteristics of youth as neither child nor adult mean that respect and responsibility become contradictory attributes. On the one hand, young people are expected to recognise their position as less-than-adult through respecting their 'elders', yet on the other are expected to take the adult position of full personal responsibility. This is further compounded by the fact that their parents are also expected to take full responsibility for them (Goldson and Jamieson, 2002; Hollingsworth, 2007; McDowell, 2007; Holt, 2010). This conundrum reflects the longstanding ambiguous position of 'youth' as simultaneously both-and-neither adult and/or child.

> *"Are young people individuals who should be responsible for their own actions or are they instead less than individuals, not adults, and still the responsibility of their parents? Do young people, especially working class boys, deserve/have to earn/are entitled to full social citizenship or are they 'others', a thorn in the side of the responsible and responsive state, needing control and punishment or, at least, moral re-education? And if so, is it the responsibility of the state, individuals, and/or parents to undertake this moral training?" (McDowell, 2007: 1)*

In conjunction with themes of danger and disrespect, young people have throughout history been characterised as non-conforming and rebellious. Youth are viewed as a social barometer with which to predict the future health of society (Jones, 2009). They are the embodiment of social future - they will be tomorrow's adults - and thus their non-conformity to traditional social values is viewed as a threat to the wider society. This theme reflects a cultural concern, encompassing the relevance of 'style', music and leisure activities of youth, and the presence of a separate cultural system for (and by) young people which marks them as distinct from children and adults. The primary focus of this regulation of conformity has always been appearance and clothing (as illustrated in section 2.3.1). In terms of the ASB Agenda, this is most obvious in the practice of banning the wearing of hooded tops or 'hoodies' from shopping centres and as part of the restrictions outlined in individual Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) which gained support from the (then) Prime Minister (BBC News, 11th May 2005; The Times, 12th May 2005; The Independent, 15th October 2008; Metro, 22nd January 2009). Although not a new form of clothing, hoodies only began to be considered negatively in the early 2000s when it was perceived that young people were using them to hide their faces when shoplifting (The Independent on Sunday, 25th May 2003). Young people wearing hooded tops soon became the generic label 'hoodies' which has come to denote troublesome youths in general. In 21st century Britain the 'hoodie' is a sign of youth incivility and wider social disorder. This was highlighted in then Leader of the Opposition David Cameron's speech in 2006 (famously regarded as his "hug-a-hoodie" speech) which, although generally sympathetic to young people, acknowledged that hoodies were "a vivid symbol of what has gone wrong with young people in Britain today" (reported in BBC News, 10th July 2006).

The attempt to regulate contemporary youths' clothes did not end at the hoodie. Through ASBOs young people have been banned from wearing "gang colours" (BBC News, 20th November 2009), from showing gang tattoos and in one case (bizarrely) from wearing a single glove (Ward and Branigan, 5th April 2005). A recent ASBO application sought to control the height of a young man's trouser waist-band, a case that was duly reported in the Daily Mail as: "'Yob wins right to wear trousers that show his underpants after judge said Asbo ruling would 'breach human rights'' (Levy, 4th May 2010). The desire to regulate the wearing of hoodies reflects notions of conformity and the aim of adults to control rebellion to secure the reproduction of the current social order. Style is, by its very nature, a form of refusal and revolt (Hebdige 1975; 1979; Grieves, 1982).

This section has illustrated that the themes of youth as both dangerous and in danger, disrespectful and irresponsible, and non-conforming and rebellious are not only historically significant, but are also evident in both the rhetoric around contemporary youth and the social control measures introduced to regulate young people.

2.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined that youth is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood characterised by liminality, a concept that is employed throughout this thesis. It is often suggested that 'youth' was born out of the 1940s-1950s, yet as this chapter has illustrated, this was not the case. Young people's liminal position, marked by a freedom from responsibility and lack of social status, has been interpreted as a dangerous life stage for hundreds of years. This chapter has provided historical evidence to argue that the current representation of 'anti-social youth' is by no means a new phenomenon. That which is now distinguished as anti-social behaviour is much the same as the behaviour at the source of social anxieties since the Middle Ages. Youth have long been identified as troublesome by their dress, leisure pursuits and use of public spaces, with their problematic behaviour attributed to influences ranging from street gambling and 'penny dreadfuls' in the Victorian era, to dancehalls and American cinema, rock 'n' roll music to 'gangsta rap'. Social anxieties about young people have manifested in perceptions of youth as both dangerous and in danger, as rebellious and non-conforming, as disrespectful and irresponsible. These themes have been historically consistent in the construction and regulation of youth in Western society, and the present folk devil of the anti-social youth can therefore be seen as a continuation of these discourses; as this generation's 'youth problem'.

The following chapter traces the emergence of anti-social behaviour as a new category of behaviour, and the ways in which it has become synonymous with youth.

CHAPTER 3: ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR - CREATION OF A SOCIO-POLITICAL CATEGORY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

> *"Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offence does in ordinary consciousness. If, then, this society has the power to judge and punish, it will define these acts as criminal and will treat them as such. For the same reason, the perfect and upright man judges his smallest failings with the severity that the majority reserve for acts more truly in the nature of an offence."*
> *(Durkheim, 1964: 68-69)*

The previous chapter argued that the transition from childhood to adulthood – youth – has been the cause of social anxiety for hundreds of years. This chapter examines the contemporary manifestation of these concerns: youth anti-social behaviour. The primary focus of the chapter is to explore the socio-political origins of the concept of anti-social behaviour and how it subsequently entered into legislation and policy. The second part of the chapter deals with the measures introduced to regulate ASB, with particular focus on measures aimed at young people. It explores the regulation of young people as a consequence of ASB legislation and associated control measures, policies, agencies, and 'task forces' (collectively referred to as the ASB Agenda, see chapter 1.2). The final part of the chapter (section 2.4) explores the 'social types' created by the rhetoric around ASB, namely bad parents and anti-social youths. I argue that the implementation of ASB legislation and policy created new rules which re-constructed young people's behaviour as 'anti-social'. Anti-social youth is a label which is able to be applied to the majority of young people not only if they act in an anti-social manner but also through the way in which they dress, speak, spend their time or even simply where they live (as discussed by participants in this study, see chapter 6). The first task undertaken in the chapter is to outline a definition of 'anti-social behaviour' based on academic and government accounts.

3.2 DEFINING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

> *"...what may be considered anti-social behaviour to one person can be seen as acceptable behaviour to another. The subjective nature of the concept makes it difficult to identify a single definition of anti-social behaviour." (Home Office, 2004a: 3)*

The definition of ASB most referred to is from the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, of acting "...in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself;" (Home Office, 1998). This definition is in itself vague; it can potentially refer to any behaviour which offends another person whether their 'distress' is justified or not, and even allows for circumstances where no-one is offended or distressed if it can be judged that someone may *become* distressed by the behaviour. The definition of ASB used by government agencies can vary substantially (Home Office, 2004a). A simple web search brings up the following varieties of ASB definition from government websites which suggest that ASB is:

> *"... virtually any intimidating or threatening activity that scares you or damages your quality of life." (Home Office, 2009a)*

> *"...the common term used to describe incidents or actions that cause damage or affect the quality of life of people in a community." (Directgov website, 12th February 2010).*

> *"...a wide range of selfish and unacceptable activity that can blight the quality of community life. Terms such as 'nuisance', 'disorder' and 'harassment' are also used to describe some of this behaviour." (Respect Website, 16th February 2009)*

These definitions focus on the *impact* of an individual's actions rather than any particular activity. ASB is therefore not a particular action or event but the reaction to an event, and how an action is interpreted in individual situations. This indicates a shift in long-standing criminal justice principles from a focus on the act towards a focus on the reaction to that act. Burney describes ASB as: "an unspecific category defined by its effect, or potential effect, on the sensibilities of others" (Burney, 2004, p. 1). The future orientations of the government's definition implies that an action may not be anti-social or defined as anti-social but can still be targeted for enforcement if it is judged as something that may be considered as anti-social by someone in the future (Squires, 2006). Another defining factor of ASB is location. A speech by Tony Blair in 2003 (14th October 2003) and government reports outlined that ASB should be defined not strictly by the CDA definition but according to key problems and local police priorities (Home Office, 2004a; House of Commons Home

Affairs Committee, 2005). This suggests that ASB is not only defined according to the 'victim's' perception which is undoubtedly subjective, but can also be defined differently according to the geographical context of the behaviour.

Activities that come under the remit of ASB according to the Home Office website range from "rowdy, noisy...[and] yobbish" behaviour to fly-tipping and drug-dealing (Home Office, 2009b). The Research, Development and Statistics Directorate (RDS) attempts to provide a clearer typology, outlining specific activities which can universally be considered ASB, under the four headings of: 'Misuse of public space', 'Disregard for community/personal well-being', 'Acts directed at people', and 'Environmental damage' (Home Office, 2004a). The activities include begging, prostitution, verbal abuse, harassment, and many others which are equally covered by existing criminal laws. This 'blurring of the boundaries' between anti-social behaviour and crime is evident in an early government review of ASBOs which states that ASB includes "behaviour that puts people in fear of crime" (Campbell, 2002a: 1). Papps (1998) suggests that anti-social behaviour can be *both* criminal and non-criminal, and much of the behaviour dealt with through ASB procedures can be dealt with using existing criminal laws. This has left some to suggest that ASB is utilised as an 'enforcement opportunity' to secure stricter penalties for criminal behaviour – up to five years imprisonment for breach of an ASBO – than would be gained in a criminal case (Squires and Stephen, 2005a; Burney, 2002; 2005; 2007). Others have suggested that the ASBO in particular has been introduced as a social control mechanism (MacDonald, 2006). In this context, ASB measures were introduced to provide new powers to manage a plethora of behaviour ranging from the merely disrespectful to the offensive, but also to the criminal.

Millie (2007) suggests that the broad definition has resulted in ASB being over-identified, particularly in deprived areas. Through examination of BCS and other household survey data he postulates that, contrary to government rhetoric, ASB is not a serious problem for the majority of people and levels of ASB concern are strongly connected to location. The difficulty with this is that certain places, generally deprived areas and town centres, have become the target of ASB enforcement and consequently behaviour that would otherwise be considered annoying or strange has been re-defined as ASB (Millie, 2007).

"The catch all term 'antisocial behaviour' has today become so widely
used it seems strage to find it was rarely used until the 1990s. In the

[39]

> *1980s a couple of articles a year were printed in the UK discussing antisocial behaviour, wheres in January 2004 alone there were 1000 such articles. Not even the most pessimistic social critic would suggest a parellel increase in problem behaviour."* (Waiton, 2005: 23)

Notwithstanding the discussion around it, what actually constitutes ASB is still not clearly defined, leading many commentators to identify problems with the broad definition (Millie, et el., 2005; Burney, 2002; 2004; Squires, 2006; Ashworth, et al., 1995; Scott and Parkey, 1998; Carr and Cowan, 2006; Mooney and Young, 2006). The lack of clear definition of ASB has been criticised for not giving practitioners any direction in the behaviours that they are expected to address and for lacking measurability (Home Office, 2004a; Armitage, 2002). The CDA definition has been widely criticised as being open to misuse and broad to the extent that it can cover almost all behaviours (Brown, 2004). This raises problems about who is able to define behaviour as anti-social, which that in practice ASB mesaures will no doubt reflect wider power relations in society and may lead to vulnerable/powerless groups being made subject to ASB measures unfairly (Hamilton and Seymour, 2006). It is not clearly defined in law what constitutes an anti-social act and what does not, meaning that individuals may inadvertently be identified as anti-social without being aware that they are breaking any rules (if they are breaking a 'rule' at all). Carr and Cowan (2006) suggest that the power that ASB has is precisely because of its lack of defined boundaries. Thus the difficulty with the CDA definition is that the boundaries are unclear not only to commentators on the subject, policy-makers and ASB enforcers but also those who are identified as being 'anti-social' in some way.

Mack's (1962: 401) comments in an early edition of the British Journal of Criminology illustrate the extent to which the understanding of anti-social behaviour has changed over the past century:

> *"Only in the criminal law do we find the distinction between criminal and non-criminal behaviour. People are sent to prison or executed for violating a law; they are not executed or sent to prison for 'antisocial' behaviour in general."*

Currently, breaching a civil anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) can result in up to five years imprisonment – even where no crime has been committed. In order to illuminate when and how these changes have occurred it is necessary to explore the political conception of the term over the past few decades. Hall et al. (1978) in their study of 'mugging' in the

1980s highlight the significance of specific words and phrases deployed to create symbolic meanings which can be said to represent a "whole complex of social themes" (Hall et al., 1978: 19). Carr and Cowan (2006) refer to anti-social behaviour in similar terms as a 'vehicular idea'; it is not only a descriptive tool but a set of discourses which brings together ideas about crime, morality, society and acceptable standards of behaviour. Terms used interchangeably with ASB include deviance, disorder, incivility, delinquency, crime, nuisance and many others. Thus, it is necessary to understand how the phrase has come to be understood in the specific terms which connect all of these ideas.

Prior to the CDA 'antisocial' described an aversion to sociality, an anti-social person was one who shied away from social interaction. 'Antisocial behaviour' on the other hand typically described the manifestation of a psychological disorder. In particular, Anti-social Personality Disorder (ASPD) which is a psychological condition characterised by behaviour which illustrates a disregard for the accepted social norms and values and a disregard for the rights and values of other people (NICE, 2007). Characteristics associated with ASPD are outlined by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2007) as: social impairment, increased risk of substance abuse, and extremely deviant behaviour with no evidence of delusions, hallucinations or other cognitive symptoms. Sometimes referred to as psychopathy ASPD is an uncontrolled psychological condition which begins in childhood and continues into adulthood, and is considered to overlap with the criminal personality (Meyer, et al., 1994; Moffitt, 1990; Millie, 2009). This definition of anti-social behaviour remains in use in the psychological sciences and was often the context that the phrase was used in parliamentary debate pre-1990s. However, this definition has been replaced in political discourse with a meaning tied up with ideas of crime and disorder.

A search on the 'UK Statute Law Database' (Ministry of Justice, 2008) reveals that the phrase 'anti-social behaviour' has appeared in 192 pieces of legislation (when enacted, discounting later amendments), only 9 of which were before 1998, and all of these are either Patent or Housing-related. The phrase 'anti-social behaviour' first appears in the Patents Act 1977, presented in the following context:

> *"(2) (b) the publication or exploitation of which would in his opinion be generally expected to encourage offensive, immoral or anti-social behaviour." (Home Office, 1977, p. Section 16)*

It next appears in the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 in relation to secure tenancies as "nuisance and anti-social behaviour" (Home Office, 1983: P. II, S. 28). The context of ASB in these cases is based around morality and petty annoyances (repeated in subsequent Housing Acts in this context). Official provisions to regulate anti-social behaviour specifically were first introduced with the Public Order Act 1986. A newspaper report in 1985 reflecting on the Public Order Bill which would later become the Act outlined the new offence of 'disorderly conduct' and suggested that the offence would: *"…be used to control rowdy and anti-social behaviour which causes alarm, harassment or distress" (Dow Jones Factiva, 12th October 1985).* Although anti-social behaviour was not referred to directly, 'harassment, alarm or distress' was made criminal with the 1986 Public Order Act (s. 5. 1):

> *"A person is guilty of an offence if he- (a) uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour, or (b) displays any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting, within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby."*

The origins of the specific term "anti-social behaviour" and its acceptance into common dialogue can be illustrated by an examination of political debate over the last century. An analysis of the written records of Parliamentary debates shows a dramatic increase in use of the term "anti-social behaviour"[3] from the 1803 to 2005 (Hansard, 2010). First appearing in the 1930s, usage slowly increased until the 1990s when a dramatic upward trend is evident around 1996. This marks the entrance of 'anti-social behaviour' into common political dialogue. In the first five years of the 2000s the term was used 1,843 times in Parliament, a staggering increase when compared to the 115 mentions across whole of the 1980s. During the 2000s the phrase "anti-social behaviour" had become commonplace in political debate. Part of the increase in the frequency of the term's use in Parliament can be attributed to discussion of the Crime and Disorder Bill 1998 and the Anti-social Behaviour Bill 2003, but by 2005 the term had moved into regular use. The beginning of acceptance of the term into common (if not daily) political dialogue can be

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[3] Different search criteria bear slightly different results. The latter (b.) are considered more representative as this function returns results of all occurrences of "anti-social" immediately followed by "behaviour"
http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/search)

	Search term/Decade	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	00-05	Total
a.	"antisocial behaviour"	1	0	20	52	89	130	901	3706	4899
b.	anti-social+behaviour	1	0	19	50	78	115	695	1843	2801

traced to the early 1990s and the battle for power between the two main political parties in the 1992 national election.

3.3 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Millie's (2009: 3-4) assertion that "it is unlikely that politicians have been quite as calculating" as to 'invent' anti-social behaviour for political purposes can be questioned through an examination of the early years of ASB discourse. The phrase emerged almost entirely from New Labour rhetoric, although it has been attributed to Conservatives due to the 1996 Public Order Bill (Millie, 2009; Waiton, 2008). Tony Blair reported having first used the phrase in an article for The Times newspaper in 1988 (Blair, 23rd June 2006; Blair, 12th April 1988), but the Labour party did not begin to talk about anti-social behaviour as a central part of their agenda until after their defeat in the 1992 general election (Blunkett, 19th April 1992; The Guardian, 7th May 1992; Wintour, 12th September 1992). Following their election defeat and the resignation of leader Neil Kinnock in April 1992, members were keen to show the public that they were revitalising the Labour party. At this time, an article in The Observer newspaper by David Blunkett closed with the sentiment: "In short, we must tackle anti-social behaviour and promote self-reliance, while embracing the essential interdependence which makes us a community." (Blunkett, 19th April 1992). This focus on the new category of anti-social behaviour was restated in a later article which outlined Labour's approach and stated:

> *"Fear of Labour depends on whether the bulk of people feel that Labour is behind them or whether it tolerates the intolerable - anti-social behaviour, freeloaders and the like from whatever layer of society."*
> *(David Blunkett, cited in The Guardian, 18th June 1992).*

Tony Blair, as the shadow Home Secretary, in 1993 announced that the party would henceforth be focusing on law and order (previously a 'Conservative' area) as a central tenet of the Labour agenda (Sherman, 6th February 1993). Blair was keen to show that the Labour party would be 'tough' on crime and youth disorder in particular became a central foundation of their strategy (Pitts, 2001).

In a speech made to the press in the aftermath of the murder of toddler James Bulger by two 10 year old boys, Blair used the case to criticise the Conservative government's record on crime control and to again to restate the Labour focus on ASB:

> *"In particular there are a small number of young people in each community, indulging in grossly anti-social behaviour" (Tony Blair reported in Woodward, 22th February 1993)*

The moral panic created by the Bulger case created a 'crisis of childhood', constructing youths as 'demons' and fuelling public fears of children and young people (Jenks, 1996; Muncie, 2004; Cohen, 2002; Thompson, 1998). This was in spite of the fact that, at the time, youth crime was decreasing and did so throughout the 1990s which also saw a 15% reduction in victimisation reported in the BCS (NACRO, July 2001). Only a few years previously, newspapers had reported that young people and children were now *rejecting* anti-social behaviours (The Financial Times, 21st August 1990: 'Survey finds teenagers embracing traditional values; The Guardian, 8th April 1991: 'Children register disapproval of drugs, alcohol and vandalism'). Yet, youth 'anti-social behaviour' began to be presented as the 'thin end of the wedge' in relation to persistent young offenders such as the case of 'Ratboy' (Worrall, 2004). The Bulger case overwhelmingly affected public opinion about children and young people and: "…commentaries also proclaimed [the perpetrators] as evidence of a shift in the nature of childhood characterized by loss of innocence, earlier maturation, increased violence, and antisocial behaviour." (Haydon and Scraton, 2000: 423).

Tony Blair became leader of the Labour party in 1994 and soon announced that the party would be moving away from aspects of traditional Labour policy and would be reborn as "New" Labour (Wheatley, 29th April 1995). The issue of anti-social behaviour became part of a moral agenda, taken as an illustration of the degradation of traditional British values and entwined with discourses of responsibility, problems of social housing, parenting, community and the underclass (Flint, 2004). Young offenders became central in a panic about the breakdown of law and order in British society and this was utilized to justify a moralistic response relating to troublesome children and their families:

> *"Crime is anti-social behaviour, breaking the rules of good conduct necessary for individuals to live in peace. The family is the first place we learn such rules. The characteristics of any good family life are the giving and receiving of affection, respecting and being respected by others, learning the subtle process of negotiation around which family life is built and sustained, and understanding that life is impossible if anyone systematically starts to ignore the rights of the rest of the family" (Tony Blair reported in White, 26th June 1993)*

[44]

'Problem families' were constructed as the cause of anti-social behaviour, and by 1995 political rhetoric centred on problems with social housing on deprived estates, and particularly the 'nuisance' or 'noisy neighbour' (The Scotsman, 28th October 1993; Byrne, 21st April 1993). New Labour reacted to these concerns in a document entitled: "Safer Communities, Safer Britain" which outlined plans to deal with anti-social neighbours (Travis and Wintour, 12th June 1995). ASB was presented as a quality of life issue, the control of which related to a strengthening of community and family values (Flint and Nixon, 2006; Flint, 2006; 2004).

The White paper 'A Quiet Life: Tough Action on Criminal Neighbours' (Labour Party, 1995) aimed to address this perceived increase in neighbourhood problems and community breakdown. Burney (1999) suggests that this was partly a response to a lobbying group, the 'Local Authority Working Group on Anti-Social Behaviour', set up at the 1995 Chartered Institute on Housing conference. The White Paper proposed a new measure to address the problem of 'neighbours from hell', the Community Safety Order (which would later become the Anti-Social Behaviour Order) (Burney, 2005). ASB had become largely a social-housing related problem (Flint, 2006). An example often cited by Labour was the case of "Family X" in Jack Straw's constituency of Blackburn (Travis, 20th June 1995). The family were presented as an illustration of all that was wrong with Britain in the 1990s; intimidating members of the community, frightening older residents, and committing low-level crimes but escaping prison. Overall, they were represented as a blight on the neighbourhood and were seen to be "working the system" with little recourse from official agencies. The first legislation to explicitly include ASB was the Housing Act 1996, introduced by the Conservative government (Millie, 2009). Although the Conservative government at the time were beginning to acknowledge the 'anti-social behaviour issue' (such as the 1996 Noise Act which made it an offence to create undue noise from a dwelling at night and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 which allowed an individual to obtain a court order against another person for harassment), ASB was largely a Labour-headed campaign (Routledge, 18th June 1995: 'Labour's noise crusade'). The following section outlines the measures introduced by the Labour government's ASB Agenda.

3.4 INTERVENING IN ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

After winning the 1997 general election, the New Labour government's flagship piece of legislation was the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act which promised to revolutionise the criminal justice system, and particularly youth justice. The measures in the Act aimed to deal with the cumulative impact of behaviour which was not able to be fully addressed through traditional criminal justice powers. This 'justice gap' (Squires and Stephen, 2005a: 3) reflected the impotence of the law against certain crimes or certain offenders who were widely believed to be 'getting away with it' by falling through the cracks of the criminal justice system. Crime and disorder by young people was viewed as particularly problematic, as the police and courts were seen to be impotent against young criminals who "know their rights" and repeatedly escaped punishment (Campbell, 2002a). The old system was suggested to "give young offenders the impression that they can offend with impunity" (Home Office, 1997a). The Act was based on a number of reports and papers including 'Tackling Youth Crime' (Home Office, 1997a), 'No More Excuses: A New Approach to Tackling Youth Crime' (Home Office, 1997b) and the Audit Commission report (1996) "Misspent Youth: Young People and Crime" which stated that:

> "The current system for dealing with youth crime is inefficient and expensive, while little is done to deal effectively with juvenile nuisance. The present arrangements are failing the young people who are not being guided away from offending to constructive activities. (Audit Commission, 1996: 96).

Anti-social behaviour was constructed as the first step on the path to criminality, based within discourses of risk (Feeley and Simon, 1992). Young people were believed to be 'at risk' of becoming anti-social or criminal, with the papers utilizing phrases such as 'drift into' or 'drawn into' crime, and proposed that ASB measures would prevent this occurring. Measures such as the Anti-social Behaviour Order and child curfews were therefore presented as a way in which to 'protect' children from an otherwise inevitable slide into criminality.

The CDA introduced a number of new measures to deal with ASB, many of which were aimed at children and young people (Home Office, 1997a; 1997b; 1998; Crime Reduction Website, accessed 12th February 2010). The most widely debated measure – Anti-social Behaviour Orders – could be used against individuals aged ten and over who had engaged

in ASB. They marked a significant change in criminal justice practice as civil orders in principle but with non-compliance a criminal offence. The ASBO was made up of a list of prohibitions aimed at preventing future ASB, with a minimum 2 year term and the facility to be imposed indefinitely. Measures specifically aimed at children and young people (aged 10-17 or below) included: Child Curfew Schemes (under 10s), which allowed children to be removed to their homes by a police officer if on the streets after 9pm. Child Safety Orders (under 10s) were introduced for children who had committed crime and/or ASB (or were 'at risk' of doing so) to prevent further crime and/or ASB through support and prohibitions (non-compliance could lead to care proceedings). Action Plan Orders (10-17 years), 3-month intensive programmes supervised by new Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), combined punishment, treatment and reparation to prevent further crime or ASB. Reparation Orders required young people (10-17 years) make reparation to their victim (or the community) through activities outlined by the court to encourage them to take responsibility for their previous actions. The Act made changes to the traditional police 'caution' system, replacing cautions with 'final warnings' for young people aged 10-19. This restricted the number of times that cautions could be given, introducing a two-tiered system before criminal proceedings are sought. Detention and Training Orders were a new custodial sentence introduced for children and young people aged 10-17. The Act for the first time allowed parents to be punished as well as their children through Parenting Orders. These applied to parents of children who had committed crime, ASB or truancy and involved attendance at parental guidance sessions in addition to further conditions (such as ensuring a child goes to school). Non-compliance could result in a fine of up to £1000 (Home Office, 1998). In proceedings for any child under 16 who is given an ASBO the law states that the judge must consider whether it is also appropriate to make the child/young person's parent the subject of a parenting order in conjunction with the ASBO (Home Office, 1998).

Although not an exhaustive list, the measures outlined above indicate that the CDA placed young people squarely at the centre of the ASB debate. The measures aimed to control the 'risky' behaviours of youth through punitive means. The new measures sought to 'responsibilise' children and young people (and their parents) based on notions of future 'risk' (Burney, 2005; Armstrong, 2004). Rose (1996a; 1996b; 2000) suggests the trend towards 'responsibilisation' marks a move away from governing 'the social' in an era of neo-liberalism, and towards government through communities and through the self.

Individuals are now expected to be "active in their own government" (Rose, 1996a, p. 330), being made accountable for themselves and those around them. Through ASB legislation the responsibility for ASB has been shifted to individuals and communities and away from the government (Flint and Nixon, 2006).

> *"…here the State, allying itself with a range of other groups and forces, has sought to set up…chains of enrolment, "responsibilization" and "empowerment" to sectors and agencies distant from the centre, yet tied to it through a complex of alignments and translations" (Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996, pp. 11-12)*

Young people are made accountable for their behaviour through ASB measures, parents are made accountable for the actions of their children through Parenting Orders, and communities are made responsible for its members through reporting ASB and policing ASBO breaches (Walters and Woodward, 2007; Burney, 2005; Nixon and Hunter, 2009). The trend towards 'responsibilisation' is a way in which governments can govern 'by proxy' without being accountable (Burney, 2002; Garland, 2001). And yet, as illustrated in chapter two, the theme of responsibilisation of young people has long existed: adults have always sought to impose responsibility on youth.

The measures in the CDA (particularly the ASBO) were received with cynicism from the media, practitioners and the general public. The take up of ASBOs was much slower than the government had expected (Burney, 2005; Donoghue, 2006; Jamieson, 2005), and where implemented were often ridiculed in the media with headlines such as: 'Suicide woman banned from rivers' (BBC News, 25th February 2005) and 'Music banned for Dolly Parton fan' (BBC News, 20th August 2007). Local authorities and police were cautious about using ASBOs due to the accompanying controversy about human rights (Donoghue, 2006) and due to bureaucratic difficulties of time and cost (Campbell, 2002b). The government response to the slow up-take was to active encourage local authorities use ASBOs, with Home Secretary David Blunkett famously declaring that those who did not use the powers should be sacked (Burney, 2005: 38). A 'reform' of the measures culminated in further legislation, the Anti-Social behaviour Act 2003 (ASBA), which aimed to encourage the use of existing ASB powers by making it easier for authorities to secure an ASBO. The Act introduced interim-ASBOs to bridge the gap between ASBO application and court hearing; increased the number of authorities that could apply for an ASBO (including Registered Social Landlords and the British Transport Police); and introduced Fixed Penalty

Notices (FPN) for ASB (Home Office, 2003a). The success of ASB strategies was highly significant for New Labour as it represented a central pillar of their agenda. By making the process as easy as possible for the agencies involved and offering the revenue of FPNs as a financial incentive (Burney, 2005), the government hoped to encourage use of the measures which would in turn justify their ASB stance and illustrate that they were successfully dealing with the issue.

The ASBA also broadened the existing measures regarding young people and children. Child curfews were expanded to include all children and young people under 16 (rather than 10), allowing the police to take young people home if they are on the streets between 9pm and 6am in designated areas (Walsh, 2002). Dispersal orders were introduced to give police the power to separate and disperse groups of two or more people from a specified area for 24 hours. This power allowed police to act not only if groups are acting in an anti-social manner but also if there is a risk that a member of the public *may* find their behaviour alarming, distressing or intimidating in the future (Smithson and Flint, 2006; Walsh, 2003, Crawford, 2009). In broadening ASB measures for young people the Act provided authorities with more enforcement opportunities and thus a greater chance of success. Burney (2005) suggests that the youth-targeted measures in the ASBA were introduced partly to encourage courts, police and councils to utilize the ASBO which previously had not been taken up at the rates that had been expected. This marked a turnaround for the government who originally stated that the orders would only be used for children and young people in 'exceptional circumstances' (Home Office, 1998b). Yet, some have argued that young people represent an 'easy target' for legislators as they are a relatively powerless group whose existence is defined by others (Goldsmith, 2008): a view reflected by the young people in this study (in chapter 6).

> *"Rules are made for young people by their elders...adolescents find themselves surrounded by rules about these matters which have been made by older and more settled people. It is considered legitimate to do this, for youngsters are considered neither wise enough nor responsible enough to make proper rules for themselves." (Becker, 1963: 17)*

The changes introduced by the ASBA broadened the definition of ASB to the extent that there need be no specific individual anti-social act or person for ASB measures to be enforced (Stone, 2005). The creation of child curfews and blanket dispersal orders which

largely or entirely target children and young people, reinforces the presumption that all young people are potentially anti-social. Dispersals allow police to target individuals when no ASB has been committed (Stone, 2005; Crawford, 2009; Walsh, 2003) and curfews imply that all young people under 16 years are innately anti-social (Walsh, 2002; 1999). The ASBA confirmed and reconstructed the discourse around young people and ASB, placing young people as the primary perpetrators of ASB. It marked a change in attitudes to teenagers' leisure activities which constructed their behaviour, and even their mere *presence* in public spaces, as problematic and a signifier of wider moral and social decline.

The CDA led to the creation of (largely youth-focused) new agencies including the Youth Justice Board (YJB), Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), Respect Taskforce, the Youth Task Force, Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs) and Youth Inclusion Projects (YIPs), and a plethora of local interventions and programmes. YOTs and the YJB were created as new bodies to regulate and manage young offenders and young people identified as anti-social. The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit was set up in 2003 headed by Louise Casey, and was followed soon after by the Respect Taskforce in September 2005 (Garrett, 2007; Jamieson, 2005). The 'Respect Agenda' further blurred the definition of ASB, suggesting that AS individuals are not only those who undertake behaviour which can 'cause distress or alarm', but anyone whose behaviour can be considered 'disrespectful' (Millie, 2007). With statements such as: "the only person who can start the cycle of respect is you" and "respect cannot be learned, purchased or acquired it can only be earned" (Respect Website, accessed 12th September 2008) the language and rhetoric used within the Respect Action Plan (2006) constructed ASB squarely as an issue of individual choice and personal motivation.

The 'Respect' Task force was replaced by the 'Youth' Task force in March 2008, confirming that the ASB problem was actually a 'youth' problem. A change in rhetoric occurred at this time when the then Children's Secretary Ed Balls announced that an ASBO should be seen as a failure rather than a success (Branigan, 28th July 2007). An ASBO was reconceptualised as the end-stage in the management of ASB, and therefore indicated that previous prevention measures (such as Anti-social Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) – largely the same as an ASBO but agreed outside of court and without the punitive breach conditions), had been unsuccessful. The Youth Task Force Action Plan (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008) outlined a 'triple-track' response to youth ASB based on tough

enforcement, support (non-negotiable) and prevention. ASB and youth crime remained at the top of Labour's priorities, illustrated by a Press Release from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in which the Home Secretary Alan Johnson stated:

> *"We are determined to tackle youth crime and drive down anti-social behaviour which ruins lives and damages our communities and I'm pleased our work is having an impact in the 69 intensive Youth Crime Action Plan areas." (DCSF, 6th January 2010)*

The result of these official and non-official ASB 'experts' is that the volume of agencies able to create an AS label has increased, with each agency bringing their own agenda for the labelling process. The construction of a lucrative 'industry' around ASB through these new experts and agencies ensures that ASB remains an issue at the forefront of the public and political agenda: "In order to respond to ASB, all these people need to 'find' ASB" (Millie, 2007, p. 614). The agencies empowered with finding, managing and controlling ASB are tasked with on the one hand proving that they are successfully dealing with ASB, whilst on the other hand showing that the problem of ASB still remains, in order to ensure the security of their roles and thus their employment (Burney, 2005).

The next section examines the focus of the ASB Agenda on young people and their parents, and their construction as anti-social 'types'.

3.5 DEALING WITH ANTI-SOCIAL TYPES

> *"The Government will continue to address anti-social behaviour by ensuring young people are given opportunities and by challenging 'problem families' to accept support to change their behaviour." (Home Office, 2009a)*

In February 2010 the Home Office Anti-social Behaviour website carried the above quote as the first discussion of ASB perpetrators, illustrating the continuing focus on young people (and their families) of the ASB Agenda. Cohen (2002) suggests that when a new social phenomenon emerges it is categorised by new 'social types'. These 'folk devils' provide a context in which other society members can judge which roles should be avoided; they are "visible reminders of what we should not be" (Cohen, 2002: 2). Klapp (1954) illustrates the significance of 'social types' as symbols which provide an important collective function to

society with regards to social control. The creation of stereotypical 'baddies' facilitates consensus within society and defines social roles.

The way in which young people in contemporary society are viewed has been identified as problematic by academics (Scraton, 1997; Muncie, 2006; Squires and Stephen, 2005a; 2006b; Stone, 2005), charities (Barnardo's, 2008c; 2008c; The Children's Society, 2004), the government (The Guardian, 16th May 2007), and the media (BBC News, 9th June 2008). The 2009 British Crime Survey (Walker, 2009) found that almost of third of people cited 'youths hanging around' as an issue they were concerned about, making it the primary ASB concern for respondents; a finding reflected in other research (Audit Commission, 2009; Smithson and Flint, 2006; Campbell, 2002b; Budd and Simms, 2001). The CDA created new rules and in doing so confirmed the newly constructed symbolic category of ASB and consequently the idea of an identifiable 'anti-social individual' as a normative category. ASB measures were initially presented as a tool for managing nuisance neighbours and community problems, yet the folk devils that have been constructed within and as a result of the ASB Agenda are 'anti-social youths' and 'bad parents'.

> *"Most mums and dads do a great job – but there are those who let their kids run riot and I'm not prepared to accept it as simply part of life...And we have said that every time a young person breaches an ASBO, there will be an order, not just on them but on their parents, and if that is broken they will pay the price. Because whenever and wherever there is antisocial behaviour, we will be there to fight it. We will never allow teenage tearaways or anybody else to turn our town centres into no go areas at night times." (Gordon Brown reported in The Guardian, 29th September 2009)*

The anti-social 'bad parent' was constructed through the introduction of Parenting Orders and measures in the CDA aimed at making parents responsible for the behaviour of their children (Walters and Woodward, 2007; Muncie, 2006; Tidsall, 2006; Cleland and Tidsall, 2005). ASB measures not only punish young people for their own behaviour, but also punish their parents for some actions through measures such as parenting orders, parenting contracts and fines (Muncie, 2006). The basis for these measures was presented as twofold: to make neglectful parents responsible for their children and to help incompetent parents who had lost control of their children. These dual themes of enforcement and support are ones which are at the very heart of the government's ASB rhetoric. The government's Respect website cites parenting first in a list of factors causal

for ASB, particularly: "Poor parenting skills, a weak parent/child relationship and a family history of problem behaviour" (Respect Website, 16th February 2009). The primary cause of ASB is typically outlined as 'irresponsible parenting' and although poverty, poor education, poor housing and socio-economic deprivation have consistently been identified as contributing factors to youth ASB, the enforcement policies are nevertheless aimed at reforming or punishing 'bad parents' rather than attempting to engage socio-economic change (Hollingsworth, 2007). The folk devil of the bad parent further reinforces the notion that young people are responsible for the majority of ASB: the bad parent is only identified through the behaviour of their children coming to the attention of authorities for either crime or ASB.

The CDA had dual purposes of creating measures to deal with anti-social behaviour, and changing the youth justice system. In placing these two issues within the same framework ASB and youth crime were situated within the same discourse. The Act is heavily weighted towards measures which target children and young people, and as a result some have suggested that the title is misleading. Piper (1999) writing soon after the introduction of the Act suggests that:

> *"...an Act entitled 'Crime and Disorder' which concentrates to the extent this Act does on children and young persons [sic] is clearly endorsing those political and social ideas which emphasise the 'danger' of young people's behaviour – the perceived threat from children 'out of control' and the potential threat to society if children are not guided into responsible and law-abiding adulthood." (Piper, 1999: 399)*

A sentiment reiterated by Muncie:

> *"...many of [the CDA's] provisions are explicitly directed not only at young offenders, but at young people in general." (Muncie, 1999: 147)*

Beginning with the CDA, the ASB Agenda has sought to control the activities of young people in general, not only those who have acted anti-socially (if that can ever be clearly defined). One of the central aims of the ASB agenda is "keeping young people off the streets" (DCSF Press Release, 6th January 2010). This is fulfilled in one of two ways: either through encouraging young people to join youth clubs and other extra-curricular activities (discussed in chapter 6.4.1), or through enforcement measures such as child curfews or dispersal powers. This reinforces the perception that the presence of young people on the

streets is somehow dangerous; both for members of the community who may be the target of youth ASB as well as for the young people themselves who may become criminal as a result of their ASB. Youths hanging around on the streets "have become the universal symbol of disorder and, increasingly, menace" (Burney, 2002: 73). This problematisation of youth on the streets is further explored in chapter 6.4. Much of the discourse justifying ASB measures targeted at young people and children is based on the premise that ASB leads to crime (usually based on 'broken window' theory, see: Wilson and Kelling, 1982) and that children and young people who undertake ASB even at a low level are at risk of becoming criminals (Home Office, 1997b, 1998). Thus, ASB enforcement measures are restructured as positive interventions to 'nip it in the bud' (Home Office, 1997b), and members of the public are also encouraged to view all levels of ASB as unacceptable and report it to the authorities.

The political rhetoric and legislation of the ASB Agenda has created a recognisable folk devil in the anti-social youth. Pre-existing social types such as 'yob', 'hooligan' and 'thug' have been absorbed into ASB discourse at the same time as newer concepts of the 'chav' (discussed further in chapter 4.6.4) and 'hoodie'. In particular the 'hoodie', a young person who wears hooded jumpers or jackets with the hood over their heads seemingly for the purpose of acting in a menacing way, has become shorthand for anti-social young people. Events widely reported in the media such as the banning of 'hoodies' from shopping centres: "Torquay hoodie ban for Asbo teenagers" (The Independent, 15th October 2008) and "'Mall bans shoppers' hooded tops" (BBC News, 11th May 2005) serve to create an association between the action (wearing a hoodie) and a whole class of individuals (teenagers). Attempts to challenge these stereotypes are further hindered when politicians join the debate to confirm the stereotypes: "Blair backs ban on hooded sweatshirts" (The Times, 12th May 2005). Thus the picture of the anti-social youth is confirmed and through this process the folk devil is created and maintained.

Cohen (2002) suggests that the mass media have adopted the role of moral guardians, indicating to citizens the accepted morals and values of society. Competing and contradictory discourses can be identified in the media representations of ASB. When first introduced, ASB measures were presented as weak, poorly enforced and often ridiculous. The early media coverage of ASBOs in particular focused on cases which targeted powerless/blameless individuals – prostitutes, beggars, the mentally ill, innocent children

and other vulnerable groups (MacDonald, 2006). This reflects derision aimed at the government towards a new measure that was considered 'too soft' but equally was too harsh for the behaviour for which it was introduced. The notion that an individual could be sent to prison for five years for being sarcastic (BBC News, 20th October 2004) was presented as targeting the very people – middle England – that it was aimed at protecting. ASB perpetrators are classified in the media as either valid or invalid recipients of ASB measures, and those who are invalid are those for which an ASBO is considered a gross over-punishment. This category includes the vulnerable groups mentioned above, those who are presented as usually law-abiding victims and for 'silly' reasons such as saying the word "grass", showing tattoos or wearing one golfing glove (Ford, 6th April 2006).

> *"Anti-social acts are described in emotive terms as 'blighting lives', 'destroying families', 'shattering communities', and those responsible for such behaviour are constructed as a dangerous minority who ruin the lives of the decent law-abiding majority." (Nixon and Parr, 2006: 79)*

Individuals presented as valid targets of anti-social behaviour measures inhabit a different discourse within the media, one which is juxtaposed with the individuals and communities who are victims of ASB: 'Thugs made me a prisoner behind my own curtains' (Stead, 20th August 2005), 'ASBOs 'too soft' for street yobs' (The Sun, 5th Nov 2009). These are the individuals for which the ASBO is considered too lenient a punishment, a discourse which has recently been confirmed with the case of Fiona Pilkington who killed herself and her disabled daughter in 2007. The case was widely reported as an ASB issue, and the deaths a result of a campaign of ASB and abuse from a gang of youths in the local area which was ignored for years by authorities (BBC News, 24th September 2009; 29th September 2009; The Guardian 30th September 2009). This case and the failure of authorities to act, has reignited the issue of youth ASB and the impotence of the government to control it.

> *"Particular target populations, for example, young people who are described as 'feral', 'yobs' and 'louts', and lone-parent families who are deemed to be 'dysfunctional', are singled out as being responsible for 'terrorising' decent, hard-working citizens, and making life a misery for innocent people living in the same community." (Nixon and Parr, 2006: 79)*

Young people are represented in the media overwhelmingly in negative terms (Bridges and Osei-Armah, 2006). Research by MORI found in 2004 that 71% of stories in newspapers

about young people were negative, and only 14% were positive (Ipsos MORI, 2006). The conceptualisation of childhood, and particularly youth, as dangerous and a threat to society is something which has been encouraged by the ASB agenda (Gaskell, 2008), with research finding that ASB is most often associated with young people (Millie, et al, 2005). Bawdon (2009) found that newspaper descriptions of male teenagers included terms such as: *"thugs, yobs, hoodies, feral, evil, lout, monsters, brutes, scum, menace, heartless, sick, menacing and inhuman".* Young people are presented as not only having these attributes but also being proud of them in some way. Many commentators, particularly in the popular press, have suggested that young people view ASBOs as a "badge of honour":

BBC News (26th January 2006) 'Asbos street cred 'not worth it''.

The Mail on Sunday (12th March 2006) 'Asbos don't work 'because thugs think they're cool'.

The Sunday Times (30th July 2006) 'Asbos treated as "badge of honour"'.

The Daily Telegraph (1st August 2006) 'Asbos - a rite of passage for young rebels'.

Barkham (4th August 2006) '"It's all about reputation"', The Guardian.

Travis (2nd November 2006) 'Teenagers see Asbos as badge of honour', The Guardian.

BBC News (2nd November 2006) 'Asbos viewed as 'badge of honour''.

The original source of this claim was an attitude poll by the television network MTV of 16–24 year olds (The Sunday Times, 30th July 2006). The claim was further confirmed upon publication of a Youth Justice Board study (Solanki, et al., 2006) which was reported in the media as having 'found' that young people view ASBOs as kudos. The findings of the study in fact illustrated that adults in the youth justice system (local councillors, judges and parents) believed that young people viewed ASBOs as kudos, but there was no evidence from the youth respondents that this was the case. Nevertheless, the belief that ASBOs are a 'badge of honour' for young people has become a key part of the anti-social youth discourse despite the fact that there is little evidence from young people that they adhere to this view. The idea has undoubtedly persisted because it supports the stereotype of young people as uncaring, lawless, selfish and beyond moral reintegration. Through the media reporting, young people have been constructed within a discourse of ASB. Discourses of ASB in the media overlap with discourses of 'youth' (discussed in more detail

in chapter 3), with the result that the two concepts cannot be easily disentangled. Young people are anti-social and anti-social people are young.

3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has explored the socio-political creation of anti-social behaviour. It has been an excavation exercise to uncover the origins of the term and trace its ascendance into political debate and public consciousness. The chapter has described the emergence of anti-social behaviour as a 'new' category of unacceptable behaviour, and how it has become synonymous with youth. The ASB agenda is responsible for constructing a new category of folk devil, most notably 'anti-social youths'. As the evidence has shown, these individuals can be characterized by their actions, dress and activities but primarily by their age. Much of the existing empirical examination has been of young people who have been made subject to these measures, typically the ASBO. Yet, as the chapter has outlined, the youth ASB category covers potentially all young people, sometimes regardless of whether they have been proven to have undertaken ASB or not. This opens up questions of what the consequences for young people who are on the peripheries of ASB may be. Those young people who may be made affected by the anti-social label but who are not identified for official action. It is these young people, those on the edges of ASB, that are the subject of this empirical study.

The following chapter presents the key concepts which have been used to understand and analyse the empirical data in this study.

CHAPTER 4: NEGOTIATING DEVIANT IDENTITIES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

> *"The first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters."*
> *(Blumer, 1969: 2)*

The previous chapter argued that the ASB Agenda has created the new folk devil of 'anti-social youths'. This chapter explores the potential ramifications that this characterisation may have for the identity construction of young people. In doing so, it provides the framework that has informed the empirical study and analysis undertaken in this research. The first task undertaken in the chapter is an outline of the concept of identity that is utilised in the thesis: that identity is constructed through and within social interaction. The next two sections (4.3 and 4.4) examine the concepts of stigma and labelling, outlining the ways in which a deviant or stigmatising identity may impact on an individual's identity construction. Section 4.5 examines the ways in which young people have been stigmatised through the ASB Agenda. It explores the impact on individual young people of the problematisation of young people in public spaces, and particularly the impact of curfews and dispersals introduced as ASB control measures. The final section of the chapter explores the ways in which young people may reject, negotiate or manage the anti-social youth label. It outlines ways in which the young people may reject or manage the anti-social youth label, drawing on theories of the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959), of managing stigma (Crocker, 1999; Crocker and Major, 1989), techniques of neutralisation and 'drift' (Sykes and Matza, 1957; Matza, 1964), and processes of 'othering'. It is postulated that the specificities of the anti-social youth label – that it is often broadly applied to all young people through blanket measures – means that young people have more space to negotiate the stigma. The chapter sets out the key concepts that have informed the empirical study.

The following section briefly outlines how identity is understood in this study.

4.2 DEFINING IDENTITY

This study is concerned with analysing the ways in which youths are stigmatised through ASB policy and what effects this stigmatisation has on young people, particularly in terms of their identity construction. Yet before exploring the ramifications for young people's identity, it is necessary to clarify what is meant here by identity. Identity, considered as the concept of 'self' (referred to interchangeably in the thesis as 'identity', 'selfhood', 'sense of self, or 'myself'), has been understood in many different ways.

> *"[identity is]...the idea of 'person' (personne), the idea of 'self' (moi)"*
> *(Mauss, 2000, p. 327)*

> *"[the self is] all that which is consciously ours rather than otherwise"*
> *(Luckman, 1983, p. 67)*

> *"Identity is the name we call ourselves, and usually it is the name we announce to others that we are as we act in situations" (Charon, 1998: 86)*

Identity can be defined as our "internal environment" (Charon, 1998: 72) but conceptions of how this environment arises and where it comes from has been conceived of in different ways. This research is based on the premise that one's 'self' or identity is socially constructed and therefore cannot be described as an 'essential' identity; the notion that individuals possess some 'essence' within themselves which remains fixed and constant throughout their lives is largely a philosophical idea. The conception of identity as essential is based on the premise that identity is physiologically innate in the individual, beginning at birth and existing throughout their lifetime (Luckman, 1983). This presupposes a stable, core internal force which remains the same (as itself) linked by certain traits and characteristics; what some people would consider as "the real 'me'". This implies that an individual can fulfil different social roles (such as 'adult', 'parent', 'office worker' and so forth) but these are not his/her 'essence' or true identity. Their 'true' identity exists as a constant in the background behind all other social roles (Deschamps and Devos, 1998). The primary difficulty with the notion of an essential identity is that it renders the driving force behind individual human action as fundamentally unknowable. It proposes that identity is primarily linked to the physical being and unaffected by factors outside of the individual such as social class, education or race; therefore making it inaccessible for study. Thus

utilizing an essential view of identity renders any attempt to understand the impact of an anti-social label on young people's self-concept as pointless; they will 'be' who they always were and the label should have no impact on this. Consequently, the perspective that is employed in this thesis is that an individual's 'self' is something constructed within and from the social world:

> "The self has a character which is different from that of the physiological organism proper. The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process." (Mead, 1934: 135)

George Herbert Mead (1934) was concerned with exploring the ways in which the human 'self' arises through social processes. Mead suggested that human thinking and actions could only be understood in the context of the social, and considered 'the self' as something created inside *social interaction* rather than inside the individual alone. This approach, more commonly referred to as 'symbolic interactionism', perceives human interactions as the central site through which individuals create social meanings. Reality only exists through social interaction as the site through which humans create and attach meaning to objects and therefore develop their understanding of the world (Blumer, 1969).

Interaction with others through conversations, gestures and expression allows people to indicate who they are, to see themselves as others see them, and to develop and work on their 'selves' (Mead, 1934). Identity is a 'process' rather than a fixed constant within each individual; the 'self' is an object, something that can be moulded and re-moulded, rather than an entity which is internal and untouchable. It is constantly changing and responsive to social situations, defined and redefined through each interaction; it is a life-long process (Cohen, 1966). A 'sense of self' is created through imagining oneself in the eyes of others according to these meanings and acting appropriately in different social situations (Blumer, 1966; Mead, 1934; Becker, 1963). The self is also developed through imagined interactions when individuals are alone; constructing their thoughts, feelings and actions through "self-talk" and imagining how their actions will be reacted to (Charon, 1998). This develops from reflecting on one's self, a process that cannot be employed objectively as it is an integral part of the individual so must take place through interactions with others. In the same way that an individual cannot look their own eyes or nose without a mirror, so the 'self'

perception comes from reflecting on responses from others. Cooley (1902) referred to this as 'the looking glass self', a process of identity construction based on what an individual finds is reflected back to them from other people.

> *"The individual experiences himself, as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs" (Mead, 1934: 138)*

By taking the "role of the 'other'" individuals undertake self-objectification which is essential to self-realisation and the confirmation of identity (Mead, 1934, pp. 160-161). The following section explores the concept of stigma and how it can adversely affect an individual's sense of self.

4.3 STIGMA

Goffman (1963) suggests that people categorize others according to certain symbols, and these symbols are utilised to recognise the status of that person and interact with them accordingly. He utilises the term 'stigma' to refer to the attachment of symbols which have negative meanings.

> *"While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind – in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive; sometimes it is called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap." (Goffman, 1963: 12)*

Stigma is a characteristic which marks individuals as different from the majority. It can be attributed to an individual through symbolic recognition of physical qualities, personal traits or 'tribal stigmas' which relate to ways in which individuals are different from a specific group. Goffman (1963: 14) refers to these as 1) abominations of the body, 2) blemishes of individual character and 3) tribal stigma of race, nation or religion. Research with young people suggests that they feel stigmatized or labelled as a consequence of the anti-social behaviour agenda (Scottish Executive, 2003; Solanki, et al., 2006). Young people report that they feel that they are classed as 'anti-social' simply by virtue of being young

and by their activities, particularly hanging around with groups of friends on the streets (a finding reflected in this study: chapter 7).

> *"The young people consulted generally felt that … they were vilified and stereotyped by society as a significant problem. This was particularly linked to common social activities like hanging around in groups which were seen as responses to boredom and a general lack of facilities. In general the proposals were widely seen as promoting the further criminalisation and negative stereotyping of young people rather than dealing with a set of linked social problems to which anti-social behaviour was often an outcome." (Scottish Executive, 2003)*

Barnardo's (2008b) found nearly 40% of young people felt that the police pre-judged young people in negative ways. An 'anti-social' label is a form of stigma; individual attributes of the individual, particularly certain types of clothing like hoodies, are recognised and the individual is treated in accordance with the qualities that an anti-social person is expected to have (Goffman, 1963). 'Anti-social' is a stigmatizing identity because it defines the individual as 'against society', and because ASB commentary is particularly moralistic, it defines the individual as morally reprehensible, something which is closely linked to stigma (Yang, et al., 2007). The discourses of anti-social youth (discussed in chapters 2 and 3) inform the understanding and social meanings of the symbols which define an anti-social youth. It is a label which encompasses a variety of negative stigmas such as nuisance, deviant, criminal, and delinquent. Crawford's (2009) research of dispersal powers found that young people's experiences of the police often involved 'stereotyping' based on clothing:

> *"It's like stereotyping that if they [the police] saw you probably in like sportswear, like in trackies, they'd probably stop and ask you what you're doing. Whereas if you were wearing something different maybe not, but it is about stereotyping." (Young person quoted in Crawford, 2009: 17)*

It can be argued that these young people occupy a 'tribal out-group' status, categorised as a homogenous group outside of normal society (Goffman, 1963). Link and Phelan (2001) identify four components involved in the process of stigmatization; distinguishing and labelling differences, associating those differences with negative attributes, separating 'us' from 'them', and finally status loss and discrimination. These four stages can be identified in the stigmatization of anti-social youths, firstly that young people who dress in a certain manner and spend leisure time on the streets are can be distinguished from the majority

and are homogenised as 'anti-social youth'. Secondly, anti-social youth is associated with negative attributes such as lack of respect, selfishness and dangerousness. Those young people are then labelled as anti-social constructed as outsiders, preying on the 'law-abiding majority' (Millie, et al., 2005) and lacking any form of morals. Anti-social youths are often represented as less than human, frequently referred to in the media as 'yobs', 'hoodlums' and 'feral', and often described using animalistic language to further define their sub-human status/social identity.

> *"A person who is stigmatized is a person whose social identity, or membership in some social category, calls into question his or her full humanity—the person is devalued, spoiled, or flawed in the eyes of others" (Crocker, 1999: 89)*

In reference to the final stage outlined by Link and Phelan (2001), young people stigmatized as anti-social are not considered full members of society. As evidenced by the youth-targeted ASB measures, young people labelled as anti-social are consequently subject to stricter rules over which they have limited control which serve to marginalise them further. They have lost their status as insiders and are discriminated against within their social interactions as a consequence.

> *"Amy, 14: Is so insulting. I hate the teenage stereotype, but its [sic] got to the point where security guards follow any teens wearing hoodies. Get rid of it now. Its agism [sic] if you ask me. (Quoted on 11 Million Website, accessed 20th December 2009)*

Becker (1963) developed the idea of social stigma through an exploration of the processes through which an individual becomes stigmatized (or 'labelled') and the impact that this has for their future in society.

4.4 LABELLING

Labelling theory aims specifically to identify how certain individuals come to be perceived as 'deviant' through examining the sources of those labels and how they are applied (Lemert, 1951). Whereas stigma is explored as an attribute that the individual *has*, deviance can be explained as something that the individual *does*. Deviant behaviour is: "behaviour which is said to violate important social rules and which is therefore strongly disapproved of" (Loftland, 1969: 1), and "...should be considered as banned or controlled

behaviour which is likely to attract punishment or disapproval" (Downes and Rock, 2003: 24). In order to highlight their distinction in meaning, it is necessary to separate the two concepts of 'deviance' and 'deviants'. A 'deviant' individual is someone who has been labelled as such in accordance with the morals and values of a society or group. An act of deviance is a separate thing, and does not automatically make the individual who committed the act a deviant (Cohen, 1966). For example, congregating in a group is not inherently anti-social, yet if the group is defined as 'intimidating' by others then those in the group may be labelled as anti-social;

> *"Very often young people are vilified literally just for hanging out in large groups: people expect the worst." (Quote from a community development worker in Millie, et al., 2005: 25).*

Both deviance and deviants are labels constructed as a result of an interpretation process between the individual and those around them, but the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. Anti-social behaviour is broadly what leads the individual to adopt an anti-social identity (whether they have engaged in it or not), but the labelling process can occur in different ways. An individual who commits an act considered to be anti-social such as graffiti may evade detection and thus official punishment so avoid being labelled as anti-social (Loftland, 1969). In this way an act can be anti-social but the person who committed does not adopt an anti-social identity as they have not been labelled as such; they are "secret deviants" (Becker, 1963). Yet, if the individual avoided detection but later reflected on what they had done (taking the role of the 'other') they may reinterpret the act as 'wrong' in the eyes of society and perceive themselves as anti-social (Lemert, 1951). In the same way, a deviant does not have to commit a deviant act to be labelled; a young person walking down the street wearing a 'hoodie' may be labelled as anti-social by others because of the stigma attached to the type of clothing regardless of their actions. Becker refers to these individuals as "falsely accused" (Becker, 1963: 20). ASB measures such as dispersals and child curfews are based on the anti-social label rather than anti-social behaviour itself. Thus, young people targeted by these blanket measures and labelled as anti-social youths may consider themselves falsely accused.

A deviant label (such as anti-social) signifies wider meanings which are attached to the individual and may come to be recognised as part of their character (Becker, 1963). An identification as anti-social may mean that the individual is regarded as disrespectful,

selfish, and to be avoided as someone who is somehow different from ordinary members of society. This identification as 'different' has the potential to affect the individual's sense of identity through a process of stigmatization: the individual internalizes the stigma, begins to behave according to the label, and then finally the label becomes part of their identity (Lemert, 1972). The act of being labelled may lead the individual to adopt the lifestyle associated with that label through loss of contact with non-deviant members of society, and through losing the right to socially accepted roles and activities such as education or employment; so the label becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Becker, 1963). A young person with an ASBO may find that they are not accepted into a school because a consequence of their anti-social label is that they are seen as troublesome; they cannot get a job due to their age, so consequently spend their days hanging around on the streets causing further nuisance. Hudson (2005) refers to this type of label as a 'social identity', one that is constructed from outside sources, attributed value and ascribed to individuals. When a social identity is internalised by an individual this becomes an 'extended social identity', making the individual unable to separate their individual sense of self from what outside sources ascribe to them, and thus the social identity becomes an extension of who they are (Hudson, 2005; Becker, 1963).

The next section examines in more detail the specific 'anti-social youth' label and how this has been applied to young people.

4.5 ANTI-SOCIAL YOUTH 'LABEL'

> *"We are a group of 14-year-old boys from the Reclaim project; since the project started, we have been approached by so many different newspapers, magazines and TV companies, most of who want to talk to us about guns and knives and gangs. We keep trying to explain that we are not involved in gangs and crime; we're doing positive things in this area – and then journalists go away, as they tell us that's not the story people are interested in…" Open letter from Manchester-based Reclaim in The Guardian (Allison, 25th August 2008).*

This letter indicates that the discourses of youth crime and anti-social behaviour impacts on the social interactions of young people the way in which they are treated in society. It indicates that the anti-social label is a stigmatizing one which affects the way people respond them; they are reacted to in accordance with the negative connotations of the deviant label. These young people are identified primarily as troublesome with any

positive behaviour sidelined. The quote suggests that young people feel that their positive behaviour is silenced, and this leads to young people increasingly feeling disengaged from society and from their communities (Sweeney, 2008).

The issue of anti-social behaviour and young people is closely linked to ideas of 'space'; control of public spaces, problematisation of spaces where young people 'hang out' and the designation of spaces to different groups - adults or children. Sadler's (2008) account of policing ASB on a large housing estate presents another facet to the increased control of young people's space, providing accounts from young people that the ASB policing agenda meant that they were not only subject to police attention on the streets but also on the balcony-landings of the housing blocks where they lived: their private spaces. Much of the government rhetoric about youth ASB suggests that young people 'don't have anything better to do' (Audit Commission, 2009) and therefore the governmental discourse typically relates to providing specific youth provisions to divert them from ASB and 'get them off the streets (young people's responses to this are explored in chapter 6.4). However, research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Sutton, et al., 2007) suggests that street play is vitally important to young people and children, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. They found that although young people's presence on the streets is often interpreted as troublesome and a mark of bad parenting, spending time on the streets was an important site of social interaction for children from poorer households as their access to organised activities was limited, often financially. They also found that, contrary to commonly held beliefs, parents did enact control of children outside of the home through boundaries, curfews and support from others in the community. The exclusion of young people from public and commercial spaces often results in youth feeling isolation, with 'nowhere to go', and are restricted from having choices over their own leisure time, i.e. preventing them from hanging around with friends (Robinson, 2000; Evans, 2008).

Curfews were introduced along with dispersal powers and allow police officers to remove to their home address any under 16s who are on the streets after 9pm without an adult (Home Office, 2003a). When introduced originally in the CDA (and then furthered in the ASBA) curfew powers were challenged by many on human rights grounds (Walsh, 2002) yet the government responded by clarifying that:

"It is not intended to affect children who are going about their legitimate business such as coming home from a youth club unless there is evidence that they are at risk." (Home Office, 2001: 4).

Research with young people however has suggested that children and young people are being targeted for dispersal or curfew simply because of their age rather than being a reflection of their behaviour (Flint and Smithson, 2007). The impact of dispersal and curfew powers is that young people are being ejected from public places, particularly at night, and are being marginalised and isolated in their own communities.

"Curfews tell young people that they are not welcome and do not have a place in our society, that adults expect them to cause trouble and are afraid of them. Such messages cause many problems, especially since young people tend to act in ways that are expected of them. Curfews encourage people to interpret young people's behaviour negatively and assume the worst. How can we expect young people to take their places as responsible members of our community if we send them this kind of message?" (Kaseman and Kaseman, 1999: 3)

Curfews have an element of 'blame' in them, and enforce the image that young people are at the root of community problems when, as one young person rightly points out, the majority of ASB and crime is committed by adults:

"Curfews don't work. They were created because all children are being stereotyped as thugs, muggers and vandals. This is wrong: official statistics prove that it's adults who commit most of the serious crime. So why doesn't someone introduce curfews for adults?" (Alexander Dowty, 12, quoted on Headliners Website, 2001)

Becker (1963) proposes that rather than being inherent to the action (or actor) itself, deviance is simply attributed to the action (and/or actor) through the labelling process. Hence, an act is only deviant if it is interpreted as such either by an 'audience' or by the individual themselves, and this interpretation is specific to the particular context and circumstances in which it occurs (Becker, 1963). This is particularly relevant to ASB as it is defined by the victim. This raises questions about who has the power to impose an anti-social youth label. Identity in this context is seen as a consequence of societal reaction as opposed to individual action (Lemert, 1951; Schur, 1980).

An individual is likely to be identified as deviant if they act or appear to be outside of common rules and norms, and are thus labelled as 'outsiders' by the rest of society (Becker,

1963). The labelling process begins when a social group comes to define an action or behaviour as unacceptable and subsequently creates rules to identify occurrences of the action and punish individuals who commit the action. When an individual is identified as having committed the action, they are apprehended, identified to all and labelled as 'deviant' through an official process (Becker, 1963). ASB presents a different challenge: the behaviour is not clearly defined and therefore is therefore not an agreed-upon rule by society. This again raises questions about who is able to define ASB.

The anti-social youth label is less clearly defined than others such as 'criminal'. Whereas the deviant label (outlined by Becker) is ascribed to individuals by authorities (by being criminalised for drug use, for example), the anti-social label is judged and ascribed first by victims if they consider behaviour as alarming or distressing. If a drug user is arrested for drugs but are found not guilty (regardless of whether they are), then they are not ascribed a deviant label. Whereas if a young person is identified as causing alarm or distress, they are treated by the authorities *as if they are anti-social* – the judgement is made by the victim at the early stage (rather than a judge) and that in itself is considered to be justification for ASB control measures. Therefore, the process of labelling an individual as anti-social and consequently treating them as such is less dependent on the imposition of an official label, an ASBO for example.

Police officers target often target young people who fit a certain 'suspicious' appearance including hoodies and baseball caps (Quinton, et al., 2000). Young people who dress in this way are more likely to be perceived as threatening to communities and therefore be the target of ASB measures (Crawford and Lister, 2007). Bland and Read (2000) found that police often viewed ASB as a 'youth' issue (see also Sadler, 2008). Negative contact with the police can have up to fourteen times greater an impact than positive encounters for young people (Skogan, 2006). Crawford and Lister (2007) found that young people felt dispersal orders negatively affected their relations with the police, half felt that the police did not listen to them, and some reported that the process of having been dispersed had actually decreased their confidence in the police. Two-fifths of young people reported that dispersal orders increased tensions between young people in the community and adults (Crawford and Lister, 2007). Smithson and Flint (2006; 2007) similarly found that dispersal powers had the effect of creating a more adversarial relationship between young people and the police in their research of a dispersal scheme in Manchester. They suggest that

this may be attributed at least in part to the priority attached to the opinions of adult residents regarding the success of the scheme, whilst neglecting to consult with the young people affected to gain their input.

Dispersal powers were introduced in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 to allow police officers to 'disperse' groups of 2 or more people, and have most commonly been used to deal with perceived 'youth' problems in certain areas (Crawford, 2009). As with other ASB measures, the subjective nature of dispersal powers and police discretion results in often inconsistent use of the measures. This can lead to feelings of unfairness among young people, particularly if they feel that they have been specifically targeted through having seen measures used in one situation or against one group, and not used against another (Crawford and Lister, 2007). Young people whose appearance fit that of the anti-social 'type' reported that they were more likely to be moved on or dispersed by the police in situations where they are 'doing nothing wrong' specifically because of the stereotypes attached to this appearance:

> *"... sometimes it can be a bad thing because other friends who don't actually do things wrong get moved on because people take one look at them and assume they're doing something wrong. So, there's two sides of the story." (Young person quoted in Crawford and Lister, 2007: 66).*

Although dispersal powers are promoted as making the streets safer for residents, the responses of young people show that the reality of the powers for them is that they feel less safe:

> *"...you see on the news or tv after there's been a rape or a murder all you see on the news yeah is if you're going out go with a friend never be on your own, that's one thing I don't understand. The police must want people to be murdered or raped" (Young person quoted in Flint and Smithson, 2007: 177)*

Young people choose to hang around in groups because it makes them feel safer (Audit Commission, 2009), so the action of dispersing a group can mean that young people are faced with walking home alone, something which many young people found worrying, especially girls (Crawford and Lister, 2007). There is evidence to suggest that, rather than stopping young people being anti-social, the dispersal measures can *create* deviance by re-defining previously acceptable behaviour youth behaviours as anti-social:

> *"If they didn't have a dispersal order, we wouldn't look as rebellious because we are just sat chilling, but if they split us up then we meet up again, so it makes us look like we are troublemakers." (15-year-old male quoted in Crawford and Lister, 2007)*

Crawford and Lister's (2007) research indicates that the young people felt that the dispersal orders were unfairly targeted at young people, and indicate that dispersal orders may have a 'function creep' effect whereby police are utilizing dispersal powers not only to disperse but additionally to identify young people to be drawn into the official system (either criminal justice or otherwise); the impact of this on young people is that they may be drawn into the criminal justice system when they would not have otherwise.

> *"Home visits were made to inform the parents of young people dispersed. Some young people were referred to other interventions or diversionary schemes... Police mainly used the dispersal powers informally; to facilitate dialogue with young people" (Crawford and Lister, 2007: x)*

Similarly by using the powers to collect further intelligence on young people such as names and addresses (discussed by the participants in this study in chapter 6.5.2) this leads to an erosion of young people's anonymity and a more subtle control of their lives, evidenced by a quote from a police officer in Smithson and Flint's research: "we know who the young people are now, and where they live. There is no point in them running away" (2006: 36). Any form of labelling or 'deviantization' is reflective of the socio-structural context in which it is constructed:

> *"...since both the deviantizing of individuals and the collective definition of deviance amount to put-downs of some persons by others, they necessarily involve the exercise of power, reflect pre-existing power differentials, and influence the subsequent distribution of power." (Schur, 1980: 228)*

Deviancy then is a consequence rather than the cause of social control (Lemert, 1951), thus anti-social behaviour is defined by the measures introduced to control it. In some cases the measures can in themselves 'create' deviance as reflected in the use of dispersal orders; young people's gatherings were defined as problematic *because* they are in dispersal zones). This presents the notion that an individual's identity can be constructed by specific processes of social control, that anti-social behaviour measures have 'created' anti-social

young people. In the same way that deviance is socially defined, so is conformity (Cohen, 1966), and some suggest that the imposition of rules is also a way in which to ensure that the non-deviants are sufficiently controlled (Schur, 1980; Matza, 1964). Those who continue to deviate accept that their behaviour will be perceived as deviant and try attempt to conceal their true 'self' to those non-deviants who may label him/her if they uncover it (Becker, 1963). Young people may attempt to hide their anti-social behaviour, such as smoking, from their parents despite the fact that they do not consider smoking to be anti-social. In this case they act according to societal reaction but do not internalize the identity as deviant.

Deviants are social 'outsiders', thus for young people the competing discourses which construct them dually as 'dangerous' and 'in danger' (discussed in chapter 2.4) raises questions about the extent of their 'outsider' status. Young people are one the one hand dangerous and labelled anti-social but on the other hand considered too immature to be socially responsible so are afforded certain 'protections' in society. In practice, this contradiction may be resolved depending on how strongly the deviant label has been applied; if the young person has been officially labelled as anti-social through an ASBO then the welfare discourse which allows for youthful immaturity may be lost. Whether young people can avoid the meanings attached to the anti-social label may depend on how far they view themselves as 'outsiders', yet the particular issue of anti-social behaviour tends to be applied to the majority of young people, suggesting that the inside/outside issue may be less relevant.

> *"The deviant person is one whose role, status, function and self-definition are importantly shaped by how much deviation he engages in, by the degree of its social visibility, by the particular exposure he has to the societal reaction, and by the nature and strength of the societal reaction." (Lemert., 1951, p. 23)*

Whether an individual accepts the deviant label and the way in which they are able to deviate are both related to wider social factors which mean that some individuals and groups are more likely to be made subject to rules (Schur, 1980). Lemert (1951) refers to these as 'external limits' and to 'internal limits' as aspects of the individual's personality and physicality which make him/her amiable to certain deviances or not. Certain labels (such as sex offender) have the potential to become a 'master status', taking precedent over all other labels an individual may have (Becker, 1963). The result is that the individual

is always recognised and classified by the master status. Labelling an individual as 'deviant' often leads to greater occurrence of deviant behaviour; young people who are officially labelled were more likely to go on to offend (Gold, 1970; Farrington, 1977; McAra and McVie, 2007). This is accepted as a factor to be taken into account by the criminal justice system when dealing with young people:

> *"The stigma of conviction can cause irreparable harm to the future*
> *prospects of a young adult, and careful consideration should be given*
> *to the possibility of dealing with him or her by means of a caution."*
> *(Crown Prosecution Service, 1988: para 8(iii)).*

Goffman (1963) suggests that individuals deal differently with stigma. The question then is: how do young people deal with the stigma of the anti-social label? Do they try and pass themselves off as 'normals'? Or do they confront the stigma within the situation? The next section goes on to examine young people's responses to the anti-social label.

4.6 RECONCILING A DEVIANT LABEL

In conjunction with official ASB measures, private organisations and individuals are increasingly adopting strategies and technologies in the name of dealing with ASB, and particularly with 'youth nuisance'. Walsh (2008) explores a new device referred to as a 'mosquito'[4], which emits a high frequency sound which is only usually audible to individuals younger than 20 years. The device is specifically marketed to deal with 'youths' and effectively results in the immediate removal of young people from the surrounding area as they are unable to tolerate the sound for any length of time. Websites selling the device are filled with testimonials from people who have bought it, and refer to the device as a 'teen repellent' (Mosquito Northern Ireland, accessed 17th December 2009; Compound Security Systems, accessed 20th December 2009). The young people targeted by the device suggest that the sound emitted is unbearable for young people and yet they have no power to challenge the implementation of the measures:

> *"Eddie, 9: police mosquito's hurt your ears and stop you playing"*
> *(Quoted on 11 Million Website, accessed 20th December 2009)*

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[4] A 'mosquito' device had been installed in SmallTown a few months prior to the interviews.

Whilst concerns have been raised as to the human rights aspects of the device (Walsh, 2008) and the Children's Commissioner for England is part of the 'Buzz Off' Campaign (11 Million Website, accessed 20th December 2009), the government has not made any moves to makes the devices illegal or regulate them in any way. The fact that some teenagers are now reportedly using the noise from the mosquito as a mobile phone ring tone as it cannot be detected by teachers (Walsh, 2008) can be seen as a manifestation of resistance to the anti-social label. Yet the primary processes through which young people manage the stigma of the anti-social label are often not as outwardly identifiable. Individuals ascribed an anti-social label may not necessarily adopt that label, thus it is necessary to explore the internal identity processes employed by young people may (or are able to) resist internalizing the label.

> "...the greater the consistency, duration and intensity with which a definition is promoted by Others about an Actor, the greater the likelihood that an Actor will embrace the definition as truly applicable to himself" (Loftland, 1969: 121)

A societal reaction does not automatically lead to a change in an individual's identity (Cohen, 2002). The first deviant/labelling incident (primary deviance) does not generally lead to the individual adopting the label as their identity; it is more often a process of progression through increasingly deviant behaviour in response to increasingly punitive societal reaction. Secondary deviance occurs when the individual has accepted the deviant label as part of their self-image, thus seeing themselves as deviant and acting within the boundaries of the deviant label which has been attached to them (Lemert, 1951).

The focus on many youth activities as anti-social raises the question of whether Lemert's process occurs when the label is so broad; if all young people who hang around on the streets are considered anti-social then are they able to justify this as 'normal' according to their social status as teenagers? The specificities associated to the anti-social label are important here. Becker (1963) and Lemert (1951) reference more specific types of behaviour such as drug-taking and prostitution that can be easily identified as they have definite boundaries, whereas anti-social behaviour covers a very broad range of activities which at certain times and for certain people can be considered acceptable. Anti-social behaviour is subjectively defined within each situation; young people may behave in a manner which is largely acceptable to the majority of people, yet the interpretation of one

person of that behaviour as anti-social can result in enforcement measures. This is indicative of the reconstruction of nuisance behaviours historically dealt with informally as 'anti-social behaviour'. The consequence for the individual may be that the interpretive nature of the anti-social label means that it does not define them as 'different' in the traditional understanding of labelling. If their behaviour is considered by the majority (including their parents, family and friends) as acceptable then the label has potentially little stigmatizing effect, it may even define the accuser as an outsider.

> "...juvenile's perception of self as delinquent is significantly related to his or her perception of the anticipations that peers, parents, and teachers have that he or she will engage in future delinquent behaviour." (Hepburn, 1977: 166)

Thus if the individual has a social group in which their (deviant) behaviour is considered acceptable, they may reject the label imposed on them by the accusers. The ways in which the young people in this study constructed and understood their anti-social label is explored in chapter 7 (section 3). The following section explores Goffman's (1963) concept of 'stigma management'.

4.6.1 Stigma Management

Stigma can adversely affect an individual's sense of self or self esteem. This has been tied up with notions of labelling, self-fulfilling prophecies and symbolic interactionism (Becker, 1963; Cohen, 2002). However, Goffman (1963) suggests that stigma does not necessarily adversely affect self-esteem as it can be 'managed' by individuals depending on a variety of factors including the social context of the interaction. Thus, deviant or negative labelling does not necessarily create a negative self-image. Crocker and Quinn (2001) suggest that self-esteem is only related to stigma in the sense that people bring certain meanings about their stigma to each situation, and it is only within the situation that the self-esteem is affected or not. Individuals are active participants in their own identity construction; they are not just passive recipients of stigma (Mead, 1934; Cooley, 1902).

> "The stigmatization process is relational, dynamic, and complex. How people cope with stigma significantly influences the effects of that spoiled identity" (Trautner and Collett, 2010: 259)

The impact of stigma is based on the context in which it is applied. In their research, Trautner and Collett (2010) found that strippers who are also students take their self-identity from the more positive role (student) that they play. Negative stigma and reflection on the self of the deviant 'stripper' identity is mediated by other positive identities (the participants discuss this aspect of their stigma management in chapter 7.4.2). As long as individuals have one socially-acceptable identity they can mediate other negative stigmatizing identities which they can define as transient or temporary.

> *""Student" is a socially acceptable identity to share in routine social interactions and helps student strippers frame dancing as a transient occupation, offering them an opportunity to maintain a positive sense of self while buffering them from some of the negative effects of stripping." (2010: 1)*

Crocker's (1999; Crocker and Major, 1989) research found that black students were more likely to relate negative comments to racist prejudice rather than attributing it to them individually, and therefore their individual self-esteem is not affected. Because the black students viewed racist prejudice as a collective representation associated with them and they enter into social situations aware of this, they attribute negative comments to this prejudice and thus do not take it personally. This raises the possibility that young people associate negative reactions from individuals outside of their inner circle with a general perception of all youths as anti-social. This relates particularly to group situations, whereby young people can attribute any stigma to the *group*, but it raises questions regarding the affect of negative stereotyping when young people are alone.

Yet, Crocker (1999) found that overweight women are more likely to attribute rejection to their weight and this *does* have adverse effect on self-esteem. This indicates that the meaning of the Black students' collective representations about race/racism is different than the collective representations of overweight women about their stigma which Crocker suggests may be related to controllability; being overweight is widely perceived as a result of poor willpower therefore the women feel that they *deserve* to be rejected. Thus, if young people are able to control the response to them through undertaking different activities and changing to a more socially-acceptable appearance it would suggest that they have an amount of control over their marginalisation and it follows that negative stereotyping will affect their self-esteem. However, many young people view the anti-social label as something which they are unable to control: "They all see us in a bad light."

(quote from young person in Audit Commission, 2009: 15). The conclusion that can be drawn here is that the affect on the individual young person's self esteem is related to how they view their situation and to what extent they feel they have control over it.

4.6.2 Presentation of Self

The way in which individuals manage identity can be through the management of how they present themselves to others. Goffman (1959) employs the concept of 'dramaturgy' (an acting metaphor) to explain this process, suggesting that individuals 'play character roles' to allow them to protect their identity from fully exposure in interaction. An individual prepares for social interaction by getting into character. They then project a chosen image of their 'self' that is performed for others in interaction whilst they keep their true identity safely 'backstage'. This strategy is defined as 'impression management' (Goffman, 1959). This suggests that young people can play an anti-social role but this may not be a reflection of their self-concept. It also suggests that the stigma of an anti-social label may be managed by the individual through attributing it to one of their character roles rather than viewing it as a negative reflection of their self-concept.

Through appearance and dress (or 'costume': Goffman, 1959) young people express their identity, both individual and collective (McCulloch, et al., 2006). Nayak's (2003) research in the North-East of England around youth cultures and identities suggests that clothing and style represent not only class markers, but are also "indicative of the micro-politics of the street" (p: 89). Nayak suggests that the style associated with 'charvers' (chavs), largely sportswear, expresses a symbolic connection to strength, power, sporting prowess and survival. As the mods' tailored clothing has been taken to symbolise a challenge to class divisions (Hebdige, 1975), so the style widely associated with the chav, particularly the 'hijacking' of the designer Burberry label, has been interpreted as representing a challenge to consumer class culture (Martin, 2009). Yet, the most important aspect of clothing and style in questions of identity is that it identifies an individual as part of a larger group, and through identification with that group the individual is 'performing' a group-member role to others.

> *"The school is a site where young people can both see and be seen. It is a space where people from different areas can challenge each others' respect. The ways in which young people choose to present themselves*

*in school is vital to their ability to adapt to life in and out of school,
simply because of the degree of respect, status and self-esteem that
they are able to accrue, and are afforded by their peers."* (Gaskell,
2008: 235)

The impact of the anti-social label in the context of a dramaturgical approach implies that young people may be able to avoid internalising the negative identity because 'anti-social' is merely a label attached to one of many roles that they play. Thus, reverting to other roles such as daughter or son, student or worker, may allow them to negate the consequences of the anti-social label (Trautner and Collett, 2010). It may be useful to bring back the concept of liminality here, as the notion that young people can opt in and out of roles/identities is something which is characteristic of a liminal position. Because they are in a liminal position, which is characterised by its fluidity and indeterminacy, are these young people are more able to opt in and out of the anti-social label? If they view the negative label as something attached to their status as 'teenager' (or one of the roles that they are able to play out as a result of this status) it is therefore not necessarily a permanent label attached to them individually but rather a stigma attached to their position in society. Consequently, the way in which they view the anti-social label may be an acknowledgment of the fact that they will be able to shed the stigma upon entering adulthood and adopting their adult status. This is explored in greater detail in chapter 8 in the participants' accounts of what they consider to be 'normal' youth (section 8.3.2). Young people, therefore, may mediate the stigma of an anti-social identity. The following section examines the particular techniques that young people employ to justify their delinquent behaviour.

4.6.3 Techniques of Neutralization and 'Drift'

Sykes and Matza (1957; Matza, 1964) suggests that delinquents defined as deviant are able to 'drift' in and out of delinquency rather than internalising the deviant label as a primary definer. They reject the notion that delinquents have an alternative value structure than the rest of society, suggesting instead that those who commit deviant behaviour do not reject accepted social morals and values, but they do adopt 'subterranean values' which allow them to justify an occasional circumvention of common values (Matza, 1961; Matza and Sykes, 1961). Matza (1964) suggests that all individuals are aware of, and largely adhere to, the law and morals of society, and therefore when breaching these codes they

have to internally justify it to themselves. This is reflected in young people's self-reporting of anti-social behaviour:

> "Young people see themselves and their friends as less antisocial than their peers. More than a quarter say young people are often or always anti-social, compared with only 5% saying themselves or their friends are anti-social" (Wisniewska, et al., 2006: 10)

Evidence suggests that young people, on the whole, adhere to wider social morals and values (Audit Commission, 2009), but around a quarter admitted to having committed some form of ASB (excluding 'hanging around') in the previous year (Roe and Ashe, 2007). Sykes and Matza (1957) suggest that individuals are able to undertake deviant behaviour whilst avoiding internalizing a deviant label, finding that people who undertake deviant (or 'anti-social') activities justify their behaviour to themselves and others through a variety of techniques in relation to their activities. These are outlined as; a 'denial of responsibility' (this generally manifests as "it wasn't my fault"), a 'denial of the victim' ("it didn't hurt anyone"), a 'condemnation of the condemners' ("they have it in for me, they're hypocrites, they've done it before"), an 'appeal to higher loyalties' ("I was helping out a friend"), the 'dispersment of blame' ("it wasn't only me, I wasn't acting alone"), 'dehumanisation of victim ("they're only 'pigs'"), and finally the 'misrepresentation of consequences' ("it didn't do any harm, nobody would even notice"). This type of response can be seen in research with young people undertaken by the Audit Commission:

> "When I did it, I didn't think it was that bad..."
> "It's hard to stay away from it [anti-social behaviour] if your mates do it. They'd turn against you if you didn't do it."
> "...there's nothing to do..."
> "All young people out to have a good time are treated as yobs."
> "People take photos of us hanging around. You know if you do that you're going to end up with a brick through your window. They shouldn't be taking photos." (Quotes from young people in Audit Commission, 2009).

Although an acknowledgement of these techniques is useful as evidence of techniques that young people use to avoid the anti-social label, they need to be understood in the social and cultural context of those young people in order to give a better understanding of the effects of the label (see chapter 7.3 for a discussion about the techniques used by the young people in this study to mediate their ASB).

4.6.4 Othering

A further concept explored in this study (and discussed in chapter 7) is the notion of 'othering'. The process of 'othering' is a technique employed to distance oneself from those we perceive to be different from us. It is the "projection of negative values onto others" (Skeggs, 2005: 977). MacDonald and Marsh (2005) in their research with young people in the North East found that wider stereotypes of the underclass, in particular the concept of 'dole wallahs' (a derogatory term used to describe young people on the dole), were utilised by unemployed young people to distinguish themselves from those who were worse or 'lower' than themselves. In this way young people both engage in a process of 'othering' their peers, and at the same time are 'othered' themselves. In research with parents made subject to parenting orders, Holt (2008; 2009; 2010) identifies othering as a process which was utilised by the respondents to deflect their own label as 'bad parent' onto those who they defined as 'worse' than them. This process allowed the participants to maintain their existing moral identity and avoid internalising the 'bad parent' stigma. The participants drew on existing discourses of bad parents to construct themselves as distinct from this category of individual:

> *"This process of 'othering' drew on three discursive constructions of 'bad parents'. Firstly, 'bad parents' were those who were recalcitrant, who 'don't care' (Katy)...Secondly, 'bad parents' were those who were in greater 'need' than themselves...Thirdly, 'bad parents' were constructed in terms of those parents whose child's behaviour was 'worse' than their own child's behaviour." (Holt, 2009: 145-6)*

Trautner and Collett (2010) similarly suggest that young women working as strippers whilst also in education use othering techniques to distance themselves from the widely accepted stereotypes of strippers. They suggest that this is made possible because the participants could revert to their 'student' identities which marked them as distinct from the 'usual types'.

In terms of anti-social youth stigma, 'hoodie' and 'chav' are derogatory terms often used to describe the characteristics of an anti-social young person (Bawdon, 2009; Martin, 2009; Nayak, 2003). The characteristics and qualities (as well as dress) of an 'anti-social person' often overlap with those associated with the 'chav'. A 'chav' is a negative characterisation (or caricature) of a lower working class, usually white, young person. There is little

evidence that chav is a label that young people ascribe to themselves[5], or that it is any kind of subculture (as often suggested in the media), but instead it is a discursive tool to represent the 'lowest' class of youths (Hollingworth and Williams, 2009). Whilst McCulloch et al (2006: 539) state that their study "shows that young people labelled as 'Chavs' or 'Charvas' should be understood as a subcultural group with specific social class affiliations", in actual fact they found that the title of 'chav' was typically "used as [an] 'othering' label, and only rarely as a self-identifying label" (2006: 547). This illustrates that young people themselves do not define as chavs, but that chav is in fact a folk devil used to represent 'bad' youths, similar to the derogatory depiction of the American underclass as "white trash" (Preston, 2007).

Hollingworth and Williams (2009: 472) suggest that the stereotype of the 'chav' is utilised by young people in a process of othering: "charvers [chavs] are a constitutive 'Other', against which the middle class constitutes the self as respectable". The 'othering' of the working-classes against middle-class ideals (Lawler, 2005) is evident in representations of the 'chav'. Some have suggested that labelling people as 'chavs' is a new form of classism whereby middle and upper class people view working class people in derogatory terms (Hayward and Yar, 2006). Shildrick et al. (2009) suggest that the discursive construction of the chav is made possible because it draws on recognised historical discourses of the white working class as feckless, welfare dependent, and morally degenerate.

> *"Othering enables the middle classes to focus on aspects of their identities which they wish to hold up as defining their groups' characteristics (e.g. middle class taste, intelligence, refinement), while denying these characteristic to the working class Other" (Holt and Griffin, 2005: 248).*

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It is not clear whether the discursive tool of the 'chav other' is available to working class young people, although MacDonald and Marsh's (2005) research would suggest that these young people can access and utilise stereotypes of the underclass 'other' to define themselves as 'respectable' working class. Similarly, Holt's (2009) research indicates that this form of othering is possible in conjunction with other factors. She suggest that as long as the individual contests their attributed status and can 'de-authorize' the credibility of

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[5] Nayak (2006: 822) does suggests that a minority of individuals self-identify as 'charvers' (the name used to describe chavs in the North-East) but states that they "keenly contest" the negative stereotypes surrounding the label.

those responsible for their labelling, they could access discourses of 'bad parents'. Through re-conceptualising the discourses that were attached to them, Holt illustrates that these parents were actually reinforcing the 'bad parent' discourses, limiting the possibility of social or political change.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined the key concepts of identity and deviant identity negotiation that have informed the empirical study. The construction of anti-social behaviour as a youth issue has been examined in this chapter in terms of the impact this may have on young people's identity construction processes. The stigmatizing nature of being defined as an anti-social youth has been explored and the chapter has discussed the effect that this can have for young people's self esteem or self concept. The chapter has discussed the effects young people's daily lives through controlling their use of space, their leisure time and their association with other young people. The chapter has set out a framework for understanding young people's experiences of the ASB agenda and the ramifications that this may have for their sense of identity. Through understanding the anti-social label as a form of stigma we can begin to unravel what it means to young people to be labelled as anti-social. It has been argued that ASB measures such as curfews and dispersal orders, which target young people based on their age (rather than their activities), are stigmatising for individuals who are, as a consequence, identified as anti-social youths. Young people can be identified as anti-social through simply hanging around on the streets. As is discussed in chapter six (section 6.5.1), the participants in this study were regularly identified for police action by their community for hanging around in public places, and although they were not made subject to *formal* sanctions they were often 'moved on' as a result. In this way young people can be identified as anti-social youths whilst not being formally labelled through the criminal justice system.

The concepts outlined in this chapter for understanding how these young people may reconcile their anti-social label are used to analyse the data in this study, particularly in chapter 7. The following section of the thesis presents the empirical research which was informed by the conceptual framework outlined in this chapter.

PART II

The first part of this thesis has outlined some of the ways in which youth ASB has been made sense of in academic discourse. It has been argued that youth is perceived as a problematic time of a person's life, both for the dangers it poses to the individual and the risks that this raises for society. Members of the public commonly state that 'anti-social youths' are among their worst fears in modern society (Audit Commission, 2009; Walsh, 2002). The British Crime Survey confirms this year after year as 'youths hanging around' continues to be ranked as one of the public's primary concerns (Home Office, 2004a; Walker, July 2009; Wood, 2004; Budd and Simms, 2001). Government legislation and local strategies have placed young people at the heart of anti-social behaviour policy (Burney, 2005; Squires and Stephen, 2005; Crawford, 2008), and similarly placed anti-social behaviour at the heart of youth policy (Yates, 2009). The review of the literature around youth anti-social behaviour raises a question which is addressed in the following chapters, namely: how are young people impacted by the policies and rhetoric of the ASB Agenda?

The second part of the thesis presents the empirical study exploring how young people make sense of youth anti-social behaviour in the context set out in Part One, and utilises the key concepts raised about identity and youth. It shows how the participants construct ASB and anti-social 'types', how they reconcile their own informal label as anti-social, and finally outlines the ways in which the participants view ASB as a part of youth.

The next chapter outlines the methodology adopted in this research to best address these questions, and provides a narrative of the research undertaken.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Part One of the thesis I described how anti-social behaviour emerged as a socio-political category and how it has come to represent young people. In this chapter I outline the purpose of this study and how it was conducted. I begin by describing the primary research aim and the specific research questions that informed the study. I then go on to illustrate the research design and describe the research process from refining the research questions at the start of the process, gaining access to the research site and participants, and the early stages of the research. I outline and explain semi-structured interviews as the principle method of data collection and provide a narrative of the interview process. In section 5.8 I discuss the ethical issues that were encountered, with particular reference to the ethics involved in researching with young people. In section 5.9 I provide some reflections on my role as a researcher, with particular reference to my multiple roles and the experience of 'being a native' in the research area. Finally I provide a short biography for each of the participants and a brief description of the area in which the research was conducted.

The following section outlines the key questions which informed the collection and analysis of the data.

5.2 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The participants in this study were eighteen young people (10 male and 8 female) aged between 13 and 19. The research was conducted in a small rural market town in the North of England and the participants were all white British and largely working class (although one was middle class)[6]. The participants were selected because they had undertaken anti-social behaviour but were not officially labelled as anti-social through any individual ASB measures. These young people were accessed through a youth club where I was

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[6] As mentioned in chapter 1.4, the stated social class of participants describes their socio-economic position based on the researcher's existing knowledge of the geographical area and the family backgrounds of the participants. It has been included as part of the contextual information for the study.

volunteering as a youth worker. In the interests of confidentiality the people and places referred to in the study have been given pseudonyms. The town will be referred to hereafter as "SmallTown" and the youth club as "YC".

The research set out to explore the ramifications of the ASB agenda for young people through an understanding of their experiences. The primary aim of the study was to explore how young people made sense of youth anti-social behaviour. In particular, the following research aims provided a focus for the study:

1. To investigate, describe and analyse the specific ways in which some young people come to be understood as anti-social and the impact that this has on their everyday lives.

2. To explore, describe and analyse the ways in which young people make sense of their own and others' anti-social behaviour

3. To explore, describe and analyse the relation between the representation of young people as anti-social and individual young people's construction of identity.

4. To investigate, analyse and describe how young people make sense of the association between ASB and youth.

5.3 REFINING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

At the outset of the research, whilst I had the above stated research questions in mind, I had no notion of where this research would be conducted or who with. I took a broad approach and emailed Youth Offending Team Managers (via contact details provided on the Youth Justice Board website) within a seventy-five mile proximity of my home. Originally emailing 28 people I received three positive responses and had informal meetings with three practitioners: one ASB Co-ordinator and two Preventions Team Managers from different regions in the North of England. These meetings served two purposes, both to provide me with a better understanding of the field of youth ASB management from a practitioner point of view, and to explore potential research sites. At the same time I became a volunteer youth worker in my hometown; in part to gain

experience of engaging with young people but within a wider personal context of attempting to 'give back' to the community in which I live.

The original research focus was to be the experiences of young people *officially* labelled as anti-social through individual measures such as ASBOs and ABCs. Yet through the course of the preliminary stages of the research this focus changed to *informally* labelled young people. By 'informally labelled' I am referring to young people whose behaviour is interpreted as anti-social by people in their communities and by agents of anti-social control (such as police officers), but who have not been subjected to any individual anti-social behaviour measures. These young people may be targeted for local initiatives, informal dispersals and curfews but are not officially in the criminal justice system. The change in my focus occurred for two reasons: practical problems in accessing young people in the criminal justice system, and (primarily) to address gaps in the literature about anti-social youths.

In my early meetings with practitioners two factors drove me to the conclusion that researching young people and anti-social behaviour *within* the criminal justice system would be problematic. Namely, that it would limit my research aims and also that these young people were usually already criminalised. Access to young people in the system would involve working within the framework of, and being accountable to, one or more organisations charged with managing these young people (for example YOTs, Preventions or ASB Teams). In discussions with practitioners in these areas it became clear that the focus of my research would be limited in some (or most) ways according to the interests of the organisation rather than my own research questions. In one potential research site the key practitioner was keen to be involved in the project and happy to allow access to young people in his institute, but wanted the focus of the research to be young people's experiences of anti-social behaviour *victimisation*. Whilst this may have been a useful area of study (for the institution if not for me) I felt that it was too great a change in focus to provide the answers that I set out to explore.

The second issue highlighted by my practitioner meetings was that young people in these organisations had often reached these organisations after a history of criminal and anti-social behaviours and contact with the authorities. The problem that this raised was that it limited the extent to which I could explore the impact specifically of the ASB agenda (rather

than the youth justice system). The 'criminal' label is a 'master status' (Lemert, 1967) and would therefore obscure the effect of the 'anti-social' label on the young people involved. With this in mind, I excluded from the study young people who had been in prison and those who had experienced individual criminal justice measures such as ASBOs or YOT contact. This was judged on the information the young people gave me, although it later became apparent that some of the participants had received fines due to vandalism. But as this is considered an anti-social behaviour (outlined as such by the Home Office, 2009b) I felt that this would not affect the anti-social behaviour focus of data.

The second factor which redefined the research questions emerged from a review of the new and existing literature about youth anti-social behaviour. As a relatively new concept with constantly emerging regulation, legislation and policy in the mid-2000s (when this research began), the field of literature on anti-social behaviour developed quickly at the beginning of the research. The research questions thus developed according to gaps in the literature which became apparent through the initial literature review. In particular, whilst talking about ASB measures many commentators suggested that 'normal' young people would be adversely affected by the new measures. Yet, none of the literature about youth ASB actually focused on *these* young people, instead focusing on the effect of ASBOs and other official measures on (often already criminalised) young people. This highlighted a gap in the literature involving the impact of the ASB measures on 'normal' young people, or those that would be informally labelled through curfews, dispersals and so forth. Thus the research questions were reformulated to explore the impact of informal labelling of anti-social youths and the affect that this has on their experiences and identity formation. At the same time I was viewing the impacts of this firsthand in my volunteer work at the YC with young people who were often targeted by police for anti-social behaviour. Once this became apparent I approached the YC Management Committee and County Council with a proposal to use the YC as a research site.

5.4 GETTING IN

The YC was established in 2001 by a small committee of local people with the aim to provide support for local young people aged between 13 and 25, partly in response to young people hanging around the town centre on an evening. It provided two-hour sessions three evenings per week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) and was staffed by

two youth workers provided by the local County Council. The YC building was situated in the centre of SmallTown and provided facilities including a pool table, three computers with speakers and internet access, areas of comfortable seating and two televisions, a computer games console and games, kitchen facilities run by the staff providing hot and cold drinks, and sexual health advice including anonymous Chlamydia testing and free condoms.

The youngest attendee of the club during my time there was 13 years old, and oldest regular members were around 21 years old. The youth workers maintained good relationships with the attendees. The young people who attended the club primarily resided in the social housing area of town, East Park, although some came from other areas of SmallTown or surrounding villages. YC attracted an average of 15-20 young people per session. The attendees were young people who would otherwise be hanging around on the streets. Most were involved with illicit activities such as underage smoking, drinking and illegal drug-taking (although none of these activities were allowed at YC). The young people were often alienated within or from education, and some had been in trouble with the police or authorities. YC provided these young people with a safe, warm place where they could access support and guidance, or just hang around with friends and use the facilities. It also occasionally provided day trips to places such as theme parks, football matches and outdoor activity centres.

I began volunteering at the YC in early 2008 but did not at first consider it as a research site because I live in SmallTown. Having attended the local secondary school and worked at many local establishments, I felt that conducting research in my hometown may be too close to my personal life to allow the necessary 'distance' for research. Yet, at the same time I had begun to build meaningful relationships with the young people at the YC and it became apparent that the opportunity to undertake research with these young people may provide a depth and understanding to my research that would not otherwise be possible. From the beginning of my time as a volunteer I had been open about my research and my academic interests so the transition from volunteer to researcher was relatively simple, both with the young people and the staff. Due to my role as a volunteer youth worker at the YC and because I held the position of Secretary for the YC Committee, access was relatively easy to secure. I simultaneously approached the County Council Youth Manager and the YC Management Committee with my intentions, and when both agreed the use of

YC as a fieldwork site in principle I provided details of the proposed research which were accepted. They also agreed to allow me access to the YC building for the interviews and I was given a set of keys. I am aware that this is a relatively rare occurrence in research, particularly in projects that involve young people, but I think that the trusted positions that I already held (youth worker, YC Committee member and manager in the local Community Care Association), the training that I had received as a volunteer and my connections within the community provided the gatekeepers with confidence that I had accountability.

Once access had been agreed for the research by the gatekeepers, I began to approach the young people at the club about my research to gauge interest. The age of those who took part in the research was defined largely by the age of those who attended the YC, thus the participants ranged in age from 13 to 19 years. The facility is primarily a drop-in centre, which meant that the role of volunteer largely involved simply 'hanging around' in the club and chatting with the young people rather than any structured activity. The first deliberate action I took to engage the young people with the project involved taking a list that I had printed from the Home Office website of 'anti-social behaviours' (see Appendix I) along with an invitation to attend a focus group about ASB (see Appendix III). I asked the young people who came in if they would like to fill in the list and tick every activity that they had undertaken in the previous 6 months. Rather than refusing to admit to activities (some on the list were criminal) the young people turned it into a competition with each competing to see who had the most 'ticks'. Taking into account that this may have led to some false 'ticks' or admissions to ASB, all of the young people found some activities which they admitted to having undertaken. This was a useful way to broach the subject of my research, to explain what I was interested in doing and to provide a context for the young people to ask questions. Almost by accident I found that one of the best times to talk to the young people alone, and particularly those who may have previously given me a wide berth, was outside the club having a cigarette. Because I smoked, it meant that I was often able to strike up conversations with the young people who were similarly outside 'having a fag' on a one-to-one basis[7] - the majority of the attendees at the time smoked. The fact that I smoked was also something which highlighted my difference from the youth workers and situated me as a less authoritative figure, allowing me to adopt a 'least-adult' role (Mandell, 1988; Hadley, 2007).

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[7] Once I had received my paperwork as a youth worker from the County Council I was no longer allowed to smoke during YC hours or during youth club activities.

Participants taking part in qualitative research need to feel a level of trust with the researcher before they will feel comfortable providing their stories (Arksey and Knight, 1999). I believe that my position as someone who had gone to the same school as the participants, had hung around the same places that they did and who had many of the things that they were doing *in the same place* was invaluable. Although I was clearly not the same as the young people who participated, we had some shared experiences because of the place that we all lived in. A further significant issue in gaining the trust of the participants was that my younger sister, who was 17 at the time access was negotiated, was friends with some of the young people at YC (and known by the rest). I feel that this was significant in marking me as 'ok' in the eyes of the participants. Due to this and my volunteering experience, I had the benefit of being able to build a rapport with the participants before the interview and found that they trusted me. I found that trust also had a snowball effect – the more young people I interviewed and showed that I would maintain confidentiality (including a few of the young people 'testing' me by trying to gain information about others), the greater number of young people agreed to take part. The young people who took part in the early stages were typically those who I had already built good relationships with through volunteering at the club, or those who knew my sister. Those who were interviewed later in the process either asked to take part because their friends had been interviewed and they wanted to 'join in', or because I had invited them and the earlier interviewees had 'vouched' for me.

I considered at the beginning of the research process that the participants may have felt some obligation to take part because of their relationship to my sister, but found that I developed relationships with the young people at the club independently of other influences as my sister moved away from her relationships with those at YC as she left education and gained employment in another town. I think that my pre-existing positions as SmallTown resident, friend's older sister and volunteer youth worker all worked together to develop a good rapport with the young people, something which created a greater depth to the research overall. I reflect further on the relationship between these roles in section 5.9.

5.5 PILOT FOCUS GROUP AND ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION

Early on in the research process, I conducted a focus group with eight young people from the YC aged between 15 and 19. Focus groups are useful because they are flexible and they allow the researcher to gather a large amount of information with multiple participants in a short space of time (Wilkinson, 2004). The focus group I conducted served the dual purposes of both gathering information to inform the one-to-one interviews and providing a more accessible route into the research for the young people who may have been intimidated by an individual interview. Focus groups are useful in research with 'hard to reach groups', particularly in the setting of their community or their own 'turf' as they may feel more comfortable discussing a subject with their peers than with a sole interviewer (Plaut, et al., 1993: 216). Thus it was felt that a focus group would be an appropriate way in which to engage the young people in the research and allow them to understand the purpose of the study before the individual interviews.

I handed out invitations to the focus group and information sheets (Appendices II and III) during YC sessions and answered questions about my research to those who were interested. I explained that I would be showing them a short film and then asking them about their own experiences around ASB and perceptions of young people, and would provide refreshments. The focus group was held immediately after the usual YC session at 9pm to make it easier for the young people to attend (they were already attending the club) and to provide an environment where they felt safe and comfortable. The film shown was a 20-minute dramatization (*That's Entertainment*, 2006) produced by Sunderland Youth Offending Service (YOS) given to me during an earlier informal meeting. Casted by young people involved with the YOS, the synopsis states:

> *"Developed by and starring a young cast from the Sunderland area,*
> *'That's Entertainment' takes darkly humorous look at issues around*
> *anti-social behaviour and young people" (Sunderland Youth Offending*
> *Service, 2006)*

The purpose of showing the film was to focus the group on the topic of ASB, encourage discussion and to provide points of reference to use in the group discussions (if necessary) or if the young people did not want to talk directly about their own lives (Allen, 2008). On

reflection, the film was a useful tool (although one girl stated that she did not see the point in watching it) as it broke the ice and sparked a discussion. It also marked a clear distinction between the earlier YC session and the focus group. I found that the participants didn't need to refer to the film as they were happy to talk about their own experiences and largely led the discussion. However, it was difficult to get them to speak in turn and they were at times difficult to keep on track. I had been advised by my supervisor to record the group using a video camera (rather than tape recorder) and this was useful upon analysis to allow me to recognise and follow who was speaking during the conversations. The camera, which at first made the participants nervous, also served an unforeseen purpose when I decided to allow the young people to pass the camera around and film each other because it allowed the participants to feel more in control of the situation (there was a marked relaxation when it began being passed around). On reflection, at times I felt I struggled to hear everything that was being said in each conversation throughout the group, and would probably aim for a group smaller than eight in the future. However, the themes and questions that arose from the focus group discussion were invaluable in shaping the structure for the individual interviews which were the primary method of data collection.

5.6 METHODOLOGY FOR INTERVIEWS

> *"…we must simply listen to what young people themselves have to say*
>
> *when making sense of their own lives" (Stephen and Squires, 2003: 161)*

The interpretive focus of the study, concerned with uncovering the meanings and understanding that young people ascribe to ASB, was the primary reason for employing qualitative interviewing to gather the data. Interviews emphasise narrative forms of meaning and allow participants to tell stories on their own terms (Byrne, 2004). The research was also concerned with providing young people with a 'voice' in the literature about youth ASB, thus semi-structured interviews provided an environment in which the young people could voice their opinions on their own terms and enabled the production of rich and detailed data (Heath, et al., 2009).

The informal observation I undertook at the youth club during my time as a volunteer was used to develop an understanding of the research situation, although this was not utilised

to provide data. By this I mean that I did not keep notes during or after my hours as a youth worker (other than if a particularly interesting conversation had taken place). This was a deliberate decision, taken primarily because in a busy youth club it would have been difficult to manoeuvre the delicate issue of consent for the large number of young people who dropped-in during my time there. Had I asked, those that regularly attended the club may have consented but judging the boundaries of this, their understanding of the implications of allowing access to all their actions within the club and the impact that this may have on them would have been very problematic (Wiles, et al., 2005). I felt it was important to allow the young people to decide when and how they wanted to take part in the research (Heath, et al., 2009). Hence, conducting in-depth interviews in the context of my time as a volunteer and the understandings that this gave me was felt to be the best course of action. Through volunteering at the club I was able to, "spend prolonged, or repeated, periods with [the young people] in order to get to know them beyond a one-off interview and to gain a greater understanding of their views and experiences" (Punch, 2002: 322). The combination of informal observation and semi-structured interviews allowed contextual issues such as group 'slang' to be examined through observation and then inform the interviews (Becker and Geer, 2004).

Oakley suggests that a research interview should be a "situation in which the interviewer is more than an instrument of data collection" (1981: 48) and I was keen to ensure that my interviews were not solely a data-collection exercise. My approach in the interviews therefore was to engage in reciprocal story-sharing, positive enforcement of the young people (particularly those who displayed poor self-esteem) and gave my own opinion if asked (Abell, et al., 2006). This was made easier because of my prior acquaintance with the participants and shared knowledge of the area and people discussed. For some participants it was the first time that they were given a platform to speak about their opinions in a meaningful way (Curtis, et al. 2004). This meant that some of the young people were at first less forthcoming about their own opinions (saying what they thought I wanted to hear), but by the end of the interviews the participants were generally relaxed and spoke freely. The result was some of the interviews felt like a cathartic exercise between myself and the participant. I tried to close each interview on a positive note, for example by discussing with the participants where they saw themselves in the future or by providing a positive reflection on the participant's contribution to the research and as a person (a strategy better suited to the individual interviews). In this way I hope that the

participants gained in some way from the interview experience, through confirming them as valued individuals whose opinions and experiences were significant (Heath, et al., 2009; Best, 2007).

Some researchers have suggested that studies with young people based on researcher-defined methods and research questions creates a power differential between the participant and researcher (Beer, 1996; Alderson, 2000). However, Allen (2008) argues that even participatory methods can have these issues; power relationships between young researchers and young participants for example (Christensen and James, 2000; Christensen, 2004). Allen suggests that the fact that young participants provide consent to become a 'research participant', this does not necessarily mean that they are disempowered. In fact, this presumption can underestimate the understanding of the young people who agree to participate in research.

> *"It is somewhat paradoxical that within the new sociology of childhood many of those who call for the use of innovative or adapted research techniques with children, are also those who emphasise the competence of children. If children [and young people] are competent social actors, why are special 'child-friendly' methods needed to communicate with them?" (Punch, 2002: 321)*

In this study, qualitative interviews were employed as "...a young person-friendly strategy, providing opportunities for young people to talk about their own lives on their own terms." (Heath, et al., 2009: 79). The next section provides a narrative of the interview processes.

5.7 The Interviews

Of the eighteen young people who took part in interviews, eight were interviewed in pairs and the remainder were interviewed individually, with one young man interviewed twice (in a pair and alone). The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to over two hours. The interviews were based on a set of themes rather than specific questions, although I began all of the interviews by asking the participant if they could define ASB. This was partly to determine their understanding and ensure that they comprehended the subject of the interview, and partly to provide them with examples if they were unsure of the meaning and to provide a context for them to refer to. The themes were based around perceptions of young people, identity in a broad sense and their experiences.

I invited all of the young people from the focus group to participate in individual interviews and some went on the second stage. The rest of the participants were young people I had approached at the club and others that had approached me and asked to be involved, but the majority were friends of the earlier participants. At first I found it difficult to 'get the ball rolling' as many people agreed in principle to take part but all were reluctant to be the first interviewee. I knew that if I got one of the more influential young people at the club (Alfie) to take part then this would show the others that it was 'ok' to be involved. With that in mind, for the first interview I offered to speak to Alfie and Dylan together. In this way I was able to start the interview process whilst at the same time allowing them to take part on their own terms in a way which was non-threatening to them. The first interview was therefore conducted with two participants who were friends, and this meant that it worked well.

I began each of the interviews by providing the participant with a consent form (Appendix IV) and an information sheet (Appendix II), both of which I read aloud to the participants. I did this both to ensure that they fully understood what they were consenting to and because I was aware that some of the young people had difficulty with reading and wanted to avoid any anxiety. I then explained the principles of anonymity and the limitations of confidentiality (explained in more detail in section 5.8 of this chapter). I provided each participant with an interview guide with a list of possible questions (Appendix V) which I also made available to those who were considering taking part as well as those in interviews. The list of questions served to help the young people understand what the interviews were for and to allow them to prepare themselves for questions they might be asked if they were nervous. I usually began the interview with the some of the questions on the list so that the participants could feel they knew what to expect but tended to follow the general themes for the bulk of the interview. Some of the participants referred to the lists in their interviews, either through pre-empting a line of questioning or by telling me that I had 'missed out' a question. I felt that this partly confirmed that the participants felt more in control of the discussion through prior knowledge and ensuring that they knew that I wouldn't ask any questions that they did not understand (Heath, et al., 2003).

In line with a grounded approach (Cresswell, 1998), through the course of the interviews I continued to revise the interview questions, discarding those that halted discussion and

adding in new questions as themes emerged from previous interviews. Although the interviews based on my loose themes of youth ASB and identity, the participants were encouraged to lead discussions which often raised interesting issues I had not predicted. Thus, some interviews were largely about fighting, others about sex, and one about drugs, dependent on what the participant wanted discuss. I did try to encourage them to talk about themselves through the use of questions such as: "How do you think that your friends/family/workmates would describe you?".

If the participant wanted a break or had to take a phone call (which was common) the interview was paused and then resumed. Although participants taking telephone calls during a research interview may be seen as an affront to the researcher, Graton and Copland (2010) suggest that in acquaintance interviews it can be interpreted as an illustration of the informal, balanced nature of the participant-interviewer relationship. I found that it only affected the interview once, when one participant continued to get calls from her boyfriend (which she ceased to answer). While a little frustrating at the time, it actually opened up new areas of discussion within the interview about relationships. During the fieldwork I took the decision to take the participant's mobile numbers and to allow those who agreed to be interviewed to have mine. This was partly because one of the first participants failed to turn up on two occasions and then asked if I could send him a text to remind him the third time. I was a little wary about giving my personal mobile number at first (largely because I thought I may receive 'prank calls') but for practical reasons it made contacting the participants easier; most of them asked to be reminded by text about the meeting. Also because they trusted me with their personal information I felt that it was appropriate to reciprocate. The only time that I received calls from participants was when they were letting me know that they would be late for a meeting[8].

The participants were each given a £10 'high-street' voucher for participating in the interviews. This was in line with the research literature that suggests that young people, as adults, should be compensated for their time (Sime, 2008). It was also felt that this way a way in which to show the young people that their time and opinions were valued (Heath, et al., 2009). I was surprised at the response to the vouchers as most of the young people showed real gratitude to the gesture - one girl even offered to give me it back as she

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[8] And on one occasion when one of the participants left her bag at YC after a youth club session and called to arrange to collect it.

thought I had used my own money. The reaction highlighted the fact that many of the participants were unused to feeling that their opinions was valued, and I felt honoured to have allowed them to recognise that they, and what they had to say, were important.

The interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder and transcribed alongside the data collection. The data was managed and analysis facilitated by use of the data analysis software package NVivo in the context of a grounded approach (Bazeley, 2007; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory approach outlines that theory emerges from data, and that the research process should not be a task in proving a hypothesis. This approach comprised a systematic inductive approach to the data for the purpose of "constructing theory" (Charmaz and Bryant, 2010: 1). In this way theory is constructed through the analysis of the available data from the 'ground up'. An important aspect of a grounded approach is that data is analysed and theory redefined throughout the research process rather than simply at its end (Cresswell, 1998). Charmaz and Bryant (2010: 1) describe this process as going 'back and forth' between data collection and analysis, and in doing so this improves the validity of results through tightening the focus of research questions and aims in accordance with the theory that emerges.

The process of analysis was conducted throughout the data collection; thus each stage of analysis informed the following stages. The focus group and interviews provided gaps in the process which were utilised to define and redefine the research focus and questions. The experiences of each interview informed the next. The NVivo software package, itself based within grounded theory (Gibbs, 2004) was employed to collect and organise the data thematically. All of the interview data was stored together and it allowed lines to be drawn between interviews and themes both through coding (marking themes) and retrieval (collecting and comparing themes) (Bryman, 2001). The functionality of NVivo allows the researcher to code large data sets in an accessible and straightforward manner. The coding phase involved examining and constantly revisiting the interview transcripts to identify thematic categories (Cresswell, 1998). Glaser and Strauss (1967) identify three stages of coding: open, axial and selective. Open coding was utilised as the first stage of analysis where general themes were identified from the data. This involved often a sentence-by-sentence categorisation of themes (Cresswell, 1998). Axial coding involved making and identifying connections between categories in order to build a network of relational factors. The final stage was selective coding; revisiting and re-shaping the central themes

in accordance with the emergent theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Whilst grounded theorists have disagreed over how to put the approach into practice (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006), the general principle of allowing the data to present theory was employed in this study. In addition, the use of NVivo allowed a flexibility and greater detail of analysis than may have been possible otherwise.

5.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are specific ethical issues to be considered when researching with young people (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). This section describes the approach I took to the primary issues of parental and informed consent, and the strategies I employed to limit harm being caused to the young people during the research process.

In research with young people aged under 16 (sometimes 18) it is usually expected that the researcher will seek parental consent for the young person to take part (David, et al., 2001). Many researchers have found it difficult or impossible to conduct research with individuals aged under 16 without first seeking the consent of their parents or another gatekeeper such as a teacher (Allen, 2008; 2009; Heath et al., 2007). In this study I felt that it was necessary to pursue this issue and allow the young people to consent for themselves rather than insisting that parental consent was given. This was done for a three primary reasons:

i. The research process can be empowering for young people. To allow young people to consent for themselves is an acknowledgment that social research can be a process which empowers young people as active agents and decision-makers in their own lives, rather than simply viewing them as objects of research (Heath, et al., 2009; Toner and Schwartz, 2003; Curtis, et al., 2004).

ii. All participants in research should be allowed to decide *for themselves* whether to take part in research about them. To request a parent/guardian consent in research gives parents the power to decide whether young people can participate in that research regardless of the young person's wishes (Toner and Schwartz, 2003). If parents are able to give consent on behalf of their children this raises questions of power and whether the young person is fully consenting to the research.

iii. With regards to this particular study – broadly concerned with youth anti-social behaviour - the young people may not have wanted to make their parents aware that they were involved in ASB. For most of the participants, their parents were unaware of the illicit activities they engaged in while away from home. Seeking consent from parents in these circumstances may have resulted in some young people excluding themselves from the research because they were unwilling to raise the subject with their parents for fear of reprisal, because of difficult parent-child relationships, or even shame (D'Augelli and Hershberger, 1993; Taylor, 2008). Alternatively, if parental consent was sought it may have been refused for these reasons and the young person punished as a consequence.

For these reasons, I felt that the young people who took part in this research should be allowed to provide consent for themselves. The interviews were judged to be low-risk, thus it was decided that parental consent would not be sought. I clarified with all participants that they were free to inform their parents of their involvement in the research and that I would happily answer any questions, but also that if they decided not to inform their parents then I would respect their privacy (Medical Research Council, 2004: 27). In the remainder of this section I explain the approach I took to ensure that the young people's consent was 'informed' and the strategies I employed to protect them from harm.

There are few age-specific guidelines to informed consent in social research (an area where maturity may not match age), and most guidelines simply state that special consideration should be taken in research with young people[9] (British Society of Criminology, Feb 2006; Social Research Association, 2003; Sanci, et al., 2004). As with all research, care needs to be taken to ensure that the participants fully understand the research, its process and potential consequences. The British Educational Research Association guidelines (2004) state:

> *"14. ...children who are capable of forming their own views should be*
> *granted the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting*

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[9] Although the US Marketing Research Association considers parental consent only for young people under the age of 13 in research based on the 1998 U.S. Children's Online Privacy Act which defines a child as under the age of 13 years (Market Research Association, March 2007; Federal Trade Commission, 1998).

them, commensurate with their age and maturity. Children should
therefore be facilitated to give fully information consent."

The issue of informed consent is central in research with young people and is typically

judged according to the 'competence' of the young person (France, 2004; Alderson and

Morrow, 2004). In 1985, the House of Lords make a ruling that young people under the

age of 16, if competent to understand the process and its consequences, can access

contraception without their parent's consent and without their parents being informed

(Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Authority). In 2002 the House of Lords

confirmed that the ruling could be considered more widely, stating:

> *"...that children who have sufficient understanding and intelligence to*
> *enable them to understand fully what is involved in a proposed*
> *intervention will also have the capacity to consent to that*
> *intervention.... it sets a general principle which would be applicable to*
> *consent for treatment in areas of treatment other than abortion and*
> *family planning services." (Lord Hunt, 7th Nov 2002)*

This principle is referred to as 'Gillick competence' and is commonly accepted in the

medical field as a tool by which to judge whether young people under the age of 16 are

able to provide *informed* consent to medical procedures concerning them (Medical

Research Council, 2004). If judged sufficiently competent, a young person is able to

provide full informed consent, parental consent is thus not legally required, and a parent

does not have the right to override their child's wishes (Wiles, et al., 2005).

I worked with the young people at the YC on a weekly basis for a number of months, and

thus felt that with guidance from the youth workers and the County Council youth worker

guidelines I was able to judge the competence of young people under 16 to take part in this

study. Consent was viewed as a continuous process and was negotiated throughout, and I

followed the British Sociological Association ethical guidelines which state that:

> *"Researchers should use their skills to provide information that could be*
> *understood by the child, and their judgement to decide on the child's*
> *capacity to understand what is being proposed" (British Sociological*
> *Association, March 2002)*

Care was taken to ensure that the participants were provided information in a way that

they could understand, and consent was only accepted when I believed they fully

comprehended the ramifications of their involvement in the research. In light of this, informed consent from all participants aged 13-19 years was considered sufficient to fulfil ethical considerations. This approach was accepted by the Durham University School of Applied Social Sciences Ethical Committee.

In any research with young people, the researcher has an obligation to protect young people from harm (France, 2004; Banks, 2010). My position as a volunteer youth worker required that I undertake a Basic Child Protection course and complete a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. I was also provided with youth work guidelines to ensure that I knew how to manage any child/youth protection issues if they arose. In my youth work capacity I had the support of the youth workers if I ever needed to ask a question or required any support. This followed through to my researcher role, and I additionally had the support of my supervisor who advised that should I encounter anything that I was unsure how to proceed with that I could telephone her at any time during my fieldwork.

A central part of protecting participants from harm in the research process is the recognition by the researcher and participants that confidentiality has limits (France, 2004). This was something which I clearly outlined to the participants at the beginning of the interview as well as in all of the information that I provided, including a paragraph on the consent form which stated:

> *I understand that if I disclose something for the first time which means*
> *that myself, another young person or a vulnerable adult is at risk of*
> *serious harm, then Vici will have to report this to another person who*
> *can deal with it properly.*

To ensure that this point was clearly understood by each participant before the interview I opened by explaining that everything we talked about would be private but that I may have to tell someone if they told me that they (or someone else) was in danger. I gave examples in each case such as "if you tell me that your dad is hitting your little sister and you haven't told anyone else before". The caveat of "...for the first time..." was added to acknowledge that I was aware that some of the young people were already known to social services and the educational authorities due to family issues including domestic abuse and neglect.

Thus, I explained that I would have to break confidence only if they raised an issue (that put them at risk of harm) that they had not discussed with anyone else.

There was one occasion where I contemplated breaking confidence. A young woman (aged 15) discussed risky sexual behaviour which worried me during the interview. I had previous knowledge through Erin, the lead youth worker at YC, that the girl had a history with the educational authorities and social services but not necessarily around the issue of sex. I made the decision to mention her behaviour to Erin but, keen not to break confidence unless necessary, referred to conversations that had taken place during YC hours (rather than details that had come up at interview). I felt that this would be the best way in which to broach the subject initially, to find out whether this issue was already known by the relevant agencies. I stated to Erin: "it was quite worrying what X said tonight about...", and Erin confirmed that this was something which she and other workers were aware of and were dealing with in conjunction with support at the school. On reflection, I feel that this approach enabled me to respect the confidence of the young woman whilst at the same time ensuring her safety as paramount. This issue highlights a benefit of my separate role as a youth worker as it afforded me prior knowledge of the participants' circumstances (which allowed me to maintain confidentiality), and also that I had the support of an experienced youth worker in Erin.

In the following section I briefly reflect on my roles within the research, and the experience of being a 'native' (rather than 'going native').

5.9 RESEARCH REALITIES

An interesting methodological issue I encountered during the study was what role I should adopt and therefore what relationship I should establish with the participants. In undertaking this study, I found I fulfilled a number of different roles including: researcher, youth worker, SmallTown resident, student, and (friend's) older-sister. Due to my age (27) at the time of the fieldwork, I did not attempt to join the participants' social group or try to become their friend, but sought to (as far as possible) avoid a hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Oakley, 1981). It could be argued that my role as a volunteer youth worker situated me as an authority over the young people, yet I feel my position was a supportive 'least-adult' role (Mandell, 1988) at the club as the employed

youth workers undertook any necessary disciplining (I also chose not to wear the uniform T-Shirt provided to me by the Council). My non-authoritative role was confirmed to me on one occasion when I asked one of the young people repeatedly to turn down music they were playing in the absence of the youth workers and was wilfully ignored! I took this as an illustration that the young people knew that I would not (or thought that I *could* not) discipline them in any way, thus confirming my non-authoritative stance.

Also, because many of the young people knew my younger sister (who was 17 at the time) and I knew many of the participants' older siblings from my time at school, I think that I was viewed as a not-quite-adult. Many of the participants (I later found out) thought that I was younger than I was and were shocked when they found out I was recently married. Similarly, my casual 'rocker' style of dress, piercings and tattoos, marked me as somewhat of a curiosity as it was starkly different to the style of the young people and youth workers at YC. On reflection, I think mine was an 'older sister' type role with the young people. This allowed me to 'have a laugh' with the young people, but also allowed me to offer guidance and advice.

From a researcher perspective I was also a 'native' (Davies, 1999) in terms of having spent half my life living in the area, in addition to having prior relationships with the participants which put me in the role of 'acquaintance' in the interviews (Garton and Copland, 2010). This 'insider' status (Mercer, 2007) undoubtedly benefitted the interviews; the interviews were able to be less formal, and shared implicit knowledge about the area avoided long explanations of details. However, throughout all stages of the study from the data collection and analysis to writing up, this 'native' role meant that I often had to take a step back from the research to ensure that I avoided the "general danger of over-reliance upon one's previous insider experience as the basis for such a perspective" (Hodkinson, 2005: 145). At the same time, there were sufficient differences between myself and the participants that the insider status related largely to local context rather than specific experiences and meaning construction. I feel that the age difference between myself and the participants was a factor which allowed me to gain a sense of perspective from the young people's accounts and maintain a reflexive approach (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009).

A limitation of the insider position of a researcher can be a difficulty in viewing the 'bigger picture' due to a high level of common understanding between the researcher and participants. Whilst I strived to engage my 'sociological imagination' (Mills, 1959), it became apparent that the concept of place, specifically the theme of rurality, was identified later in the research process than I would have liked. If the project were to be completed again, rurality is an issue which I would have included as a category of analysis from the outset of the interviews. On reflection, I feel that my position as an 'insider' meant that the significance of the rural location did not become apparent until the latter stages of data analysis – because I was from the area and understood the participants' position and reflections on the place in which they lived, I did not in the early stages of data collection identify the extent to which this area was a meaningful aspect of the young people's experiences.

As is discussed in the following section, a further consequence of 'being native' is the maintenance of relationships with participants after the research has concluded.

5.10 LEAVING THE FIELD

Leaving the field in the way usually described in research was not possible for me because I lived in the area where the study was conducted. It was decided at the outset of the fieldwork that I would cease data collection when I had interviewed 20 young people. However, the end of the data collection period coincided with the school summer holidays and a refurbishment of the YC building which meant that the YC was closed for two months. Hence, I made the decision to end the fieldwork after interviews with 18 young people and take the opportunity to gain some distance from the research site while YC was closed to begin analysing the data. When the YC re-opened I resumed my youth worker role but for only one evening per week (rather than the two or three evenings per week whilst collecting data). The break also meant that some of the older attendees had drifted away from the YC and were replaced by a younger group of teenagers. Most of the young people who participated in the study were part of the older departing group, and this meant that my contact with them after the research became only occasional at the YC. However, I have found that since the research I often see the participants in the local pubs – at first a strange experience for me as I struggled again to know what role to adopt; youth

worker? researcher? friend?. Ultimately I found that I maintained my older-sister role with some but became an acquaintance to others.

I feel that the relationship I now have with the participants is different than the relationship I have with other ex-YC members. The young people I bump into often ask about how my research is progressing, and I find that they are keen to tell me of their accomplishments – having children, getting a car, a new job, or attending college – which makes me reflect that their participation in my research was meaningful to them. These encounters make me reflect that researching in my hometown has allowed me to (and I hope will continue to allow me to) shed a light on the experiences of a group of young people that would otherwise be academically invisible.

5.11 EIGHTEEN YOUNG PEOPLE: A PROFILE

Eighteen young people took part in the interview-phase of the study, and below is a short biography for each participant with more recent updates to their circumstances (where known):

Alfie (aged 19 at the time of interview) was the first participant to agree to be interviewed and was interviewed twice – firstly with Dylan and then alone in a follow-up interview. He lived with his mother, step-father and six brothers and sisters, and had not had contact with his biological father since he was 4 years old (and did not want to). Alfie had spent most of his life in SmallTown after his family moved to the area from MidTown, a larger town 15 miles away, when he was primary school aged. He gained good GCSEs and began A-Level study but opted to leave school and enter full time employment. At the time of interview Alfie was working full-time in a warehouse. He considered himself a hard-worker had been in employment since he was 14, often having more than one job at the same time. Outspoken, confident and boisterous Alfie was considered by the other participants as one of the leaders in terms of trouble-making, and some of the younger participants found him intimidating. Alfie was known to the local police and had committed some low-level offences (largely vandalism as far as I was made aware). Alfie is currently (September 20111) working at the same warehouse and shares a local authority flat with Ethan.

Dylan (17), originally from BigCity, was interviewed at the YC with Alfie. His immediate family lived in BigCity (mother and two younger siblings) and he had moved to SmallTown in an attempt to stop getting into trouble and to deal with his Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). At the time of interview he lived with his Aunt and her family and his grandparents also lived in SmallTown. He was known to the police in SmallTown but, as far as I was made aware, did not have a criminal record. His younger siblings in BigCity also had a history of contact with the police, and he explained that both had been given ASBOs. He was refused entry to SmallTown School so attended a pupil referral unit for the final part of his secondary education. After the fieldwork Dylan left the area and returned to BigCity. He then worked abroad for a time but as of September 2011 lives back in SmallTown and is currently unemployed.

Grace (18) lived in a village approx. 15 miles away from SmallTown. Originally from NorthCity, she then lived in Wales before moving to the research area. Grace lived with her father and step-mother who she did not get on with. During the fieldwork she was training to be a hairdresser at college and was working part time in a restaurant/cafe. She was good friends with Jack and in a relationship with his older brother Sam. In the months after interview Grace dropped out of college and moved in with Sam, Jack and their mother. Grace gave birth to a baby girl in February 2010 and now has a flat with Sam and works in a local pub.

Jack (18) lived at home with his mother and older brother, as his father had died. From a working class background, at the time of interview he was not in employment or education and was receiving Job Seekers Allowance. Jack considered himself to be 'thick' and was bullied at school which has left him with low self-esteem. His immediate and extended family have a reputation locally for being 'tough'. Jack had been in trouble with the police when he was younger but not in the months prior to interview. After the fieldwork period, Jack gained employment a groundskeeper at a local golf club and is still working there now (September 2011) whilst attending a day-release programme at college.

Amelia (17) was the younger sister of Alfie who also took part in the research. At the time of interview she had recently found out that she was pregnant, she was no longer in a relationship with the father of the child and they were not on good terms. She lived at home with her mother and step-father (who recently married) and six brothers and sisters,

some of whom are step-siblings. She was training to be a hairdresser at college and working part-time at a take-away restaurant in MidTown where her mum also worked. She was good friends with Jasmine. Amelia gave birth to a baby girl in 2009.

Josh (19) lived at home with his mother, father and older brother and worked in a warehouse (with his father). At the time of interview he was in a relationship with a younger girl who sometimes attended the club and was good friends with her brother. A promising footballer, he attended a football academy for a time when he was younger but gave it up when he reached his teens. Josh had been in trouble with the police for vandalism and criminal damage, typically with Alfie, and was known for fighting. He had a driving license and his own car. After the fieldwork period Josh, as one of the older participants, stopped attending YC but I often see him in the local pub.

Ethan (19) was considered as the 'sensible' member of the group and had not been in trouble with the police. He enjoyed sports, particularly Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and saved up the money to attend an MMA training camp in the USA just prior to the interviews. He worked in a local supermarket and was continuing to save money for further travels. Ethan lived with his mother, step-father and younger sister Ruby who also took part in the research. He described a difficult relationship with his step-father and had not seen his biological father since he was a young child. He also had an older sister who lives in SmallTown with her partner and two children. Ethan is currently sharing a flat with Alfie and has works as a retain fire-fighter in addition to working at the supermarket.

Jamie (19) lived in a small local village with his mum, step-dad and younger siblings: two brothers and a sister. His father and step-father were violent, and he attended anger management classes to curb his own violence, particularly against his younger brothers. Jamie was good friends with Jack, although he was often bullied by the rest of the group (both younger and older than him). At the time of interview he was unemployed, spending one day a week at a youth training facility undertaking Maths and English courses with one day in anger management classes. He maintained that he did not get on well with most of his close family, and other participants suggested that his mother was overbearing.

Joseph (13) was one of the few participants who came from a middle class background. He lived at home with his mother, father and older sister who attended a private secondary

school. His father was a property developer and the family owned a large house in the middle-class area of SmallTown. It was well known at YC that his family owned a helicopter. At the time of interview, Joseph was attending SmallTown School although he had experienced a number of short-term exclusions for bad behaviour (such as swearing at teachers, smoking and being disruptive). In the period after the fieldwork, Joseph was sent to a pupil referral unit (not permanently). Small for his age, at time of interview he wanted to be a jockey. After the interview his attendance at YC was less regular and he has become involved with drugs.

Sophie (17) lived at home with her mother, father and younger sister. She had always lived in the area but between the ages of 12 and 17 had divided her time between SmallTown and EastCity where she had an older boyfriend. He was a drug-dealer and committed suicide in 2007. Sophie had been involved with drugs when she was younger but had ceased drug-taking at the time of interview. She had never been in trouble with the police. Sophie worked full time at a local nursery as an assistant and really enjoyed this.

Simon (16) was studying to be a motor mechanic at college alongside his twin brother, both of whom lived at home with their mother and father. He had a history of some contact with the police but had not been convicted of any offences. Simon owned a moped and was interested in cars. He did not live in SmallTown so travelled to the YC from a local village.

Jasmine (17) worked in a bakery and was best friends with Amelia. She lived at home with her mother and had two older sisters (who lived away from home), one of whom had a child. Although not living at the same residence, she had regular contact with her father. He was Lebanese and this ethnic background was very important to her. She was bullied for a time at school and had a history of fighting with both males and females although at the time of interview suggested that she had ceased this behaviour. She intended to enlist in the Army.

Jayden (14) lived at home with mother, older brother and older sister. Other (step) siblings had left home. He was a heavy marijuana user and was interested in drum and bass music, and did some MC-ing. He had ADHD and had a poor relationship with his father as far as I can understand. Jayden was excluded from SmallTown School and sent to a pupil-referral

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unit where he was also excluded for fighting. However, at the time of interview he was keen to be accepted back at SmallTown School considering himself to have matured, and he had re-discovered an interest in skateboarding.

Olivia (14) lived at home with her mother, father and younger siblings. At the time of interview she was in a relationship with Harvey Roberts, 14 which was often volatile. She smokes, drinks alcohol and sometimes smokes marijuana (her use became heavier after interview). Olivia's wider family was well-known in the area for being 'tough'. Some of her wider family had a history of criminality and her father had spent time in prison. During interview, she outlined her future ambition as being a mother.

William (16) lived at home with his mother, step-father and 2 younger step-brothers. He saw his father bi-monthly but wanted greater contact with him. He had step-siblings from both parents. At the time of interview William was studying to be a motor mechanic at college and was in a relationship with Ruby.

Ruby (14), as previously mentioned, was the (step) sister of Ethan and was at the time of interview in a relationship with William. She attended SmallTown School and lived at home with her mother, father and Ethan. She also had an older step-sister who had two children. She smoked and drank alcohol, and had poor attendance at school.

Lily (18) moved to SmallTown from BigCity and lived with her mother. At interview, she worked at a local nursing home as a care assistant. Her step-father still lived in BigCity with her younger brother Reece (16), and she sometimes stayed with them. At the time of interview Reece was having serious medical problems. Lily wanted to be a professional singer and was good friends with Ella.

Ella (15) dropped out of school a few months prior to interview due to bullying and non-attendance so at the time of interview was actively looking for a job. She had a somewhat troubled home life because her father was an alcoholic and her mother had mental health issues so she spent a lot of time with her grandparents. Her family was known to social services and educational authorities. As a result of her history, Ella had poor self-esteem. After the fieldwork Ella was given a housing association flat in BigTown and moved there to find a job.

5.12 SMALLTOWN: A PROFILE

In order to provide a context in which the young people's accounts can be understood this section will briefly outline the demographic characteristics of SmallTown. SmallTown is a rural market town with approximately 4500 residents. The nearest city is around 15 miles away and is served by a bus service which is limited, particularly in the evenings. The bus journey into SmallCity can take over an hour as the route also services the surrounding villages. This means that the young people who live in SmallTown are often 'stuck' spending their social time in the town until they or one of their friends learns to drive. As such, many of the young people in the town (particularly the males) learn to drive as soon as they reach the legal age limit of seventeen and often spend much of their money and/or earnings on new cars.

As with many rural areas, there are higher than average property prices in SmallTown. It is generally a middle class area, comprising largely of privately owned detached homes (43%, almost double the national average), and with a higher than national average percentage of people with the highest educational qualifications (Home Office, 2001). There are socio-demographic distinctions between different areas of the town, with two areas largely dedicated to social housing (East Park and Willow Park) but most homes are privately owned. SmallTown is served by a large co-education comprehensive secondary school which includes a number of surrounding villages in the catchment areas, catering for around 150 square miles and around 1500 pupils (SmallTown School website, accessed 2nd March 2010).

The mean age of residents in SmallTown is 45 years, and Census data (Home Office, 2001) reflects the town's large proportion of retired inhabitants (around 20% of the population) which is 7% higher than the national average. Young people (aged 10-24 years) account for 14% of the population of the town, and people aged 60 years and over account for over 30% of the population. The town has more married people and fewer single people than the national average and more widowed people. The town has a larger proportion of working lone parents, particularly male lone parents (60% in full time and 30% in part-time employment compared to 56% and 7% respectively), than the UK average. The ethnicity of the population of SmallTown is 99.43% white and over 97% of the population is UK born.

While nearly 30% have no qualifications (in line with the national average), over 23% of residents have qualifications in the highest bracket, which is nearly 4% higher than the national average. The overwhelming majority of residents are Christian (over 84%), with 10 % stating 'no religion'. Males working full-time at 49 hours per week or more is significantly higher than the national average (32% compared to 24%), which may be accounted for by the type of occupation related to the place which is farming. Men work more hours than the national average whereas women work fewer hours than the national average, something which may reflect the more traditional values of the town (Home Office, 2001).

The Census data illustrates that SmallTown town is a traditional north of England agricultural market town. The small number of residents and lack of religious or ethnic diversity indicates that SmallTown is mono- rather than multi-cultural. In short, SmallTown is largely a white, middle-class, Christian town with a high proportion of elderly residents and a relatively small population of young people.

5.13 SUMMARY

Chapter 5 has described the method for analysis of the empirical findings that are adopted in this thesis and introduced the empirical data. The following chapter moves the analysis forward by detailing the socio-structural context within which the respondents engaged in made sense of anti-social behaviour.

CHAPTER 6: BEING IDENTIFIED AS AN ANTI-SOCIAL YOUTH

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter five described the way in which this study was carried out. This chapter and the two subsequent chapters present the empirical data and analysis of this study. This chapter focuses on the participants' accounts of their own and other people's ASB and their identification as anti-social youths. The chapter is organised around the four main themes raised by the participants during the interviews which were: the family, education, hanging around on the streets in groups, and interactions with the police. Through examination of these themes the chapter examines the factors that the participants viewed as significant in their own identification as anti-social, and also indicates the ways in which they constructed the ASB of others. The chapter explores how the wider characterisation of anti-social youth (discussed in chapter 3.5) affects the interactions that young people have with key agents of formal and informal ASB control such as police officers, teachers and business owners. The first section outlines the respondents' view of family as a central factor in both causing and preventing youth ASB. The next section (6.3) presents the participants' accounts of education, and in particular how school exclusion contributes to their being identified as anti-social 'outsiders'. The last two sections in the chapter deal with the participants' experiences of ASB control. Section four deals with the participants' principle leisure activity that is hanging around with their friends in groups in public places. It explores the ways in which the young people made sense of this behaviour, how they considered it was problematised by their communities, and how they viewed their rural location as a factor in constructing them as anti-social. The final section in the chapter (6.5) describes how these young people felt they were targeted by police, how they were regularly 'moved on' (section 6.5.1) and had their personal details recorded (section 6.5.2), in the name of ASB control. The young people were largely negative in their discussions of the police and felt that they were targeted as anti-social primarily because of their age and because they were unable to 'fight back'. The chapter explores both the practical realities that the participants experience as a consequence of the anti-social behaviour agenda, as well as their own constructions of 'anti-social youths' and the contradictions this entails.

The first section in this chapter deals with the participants' reflections on the family as a factor that influences youth ASB.

6.2 FAMILY

The family is a factor which has been constructed as the site of delinquency for almost a century (Mooney, 2003). The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 ensured that the influence of the family has been placed at the heart of anti-social behaviour policy (Goldson and Jamieson, 2002; Jamieson, 2005). The 1996 'Misspent Youth' report by the Audit Commission which was a precursor to the subsequent legislation outlines that:

> *Where parents fail to socialise their children adequately, schools end up coping with bad behaviour among their pupils. Young people who are excluded from school or who truant are more likely to offend (Audit Commission, 1996: 6)*

The notion that 'inadequate parenting' is a central cause of youth crime and anti-social behaviour also underpinned the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which introduced measures targeted at punishing or 'training' the parents of young people who commit crime or anti-social behaviour. The introduction of Parenting Orders indicates that anti-social behaviour by young people is considered as, at least in part, a reflection of family background.

Family was a key theme raised by the respondents in the interviews. None of the young people who engaged in the research had been made subject to formal anti-social behaviour measures relating to their parent/s (such as Parenting Orders) but family was discussed in the interviews as an important factor in making sense of their and others' anti-social behaviour experiences. The living circumstances of the participants at the time of interview were varied. Six of the eighteen participants (Ruby, Sophie, Simon, Ella, Joseph and Joshua) lived with both of their biological parents. These relationships were described positively by all except Ella who described her father as an alcoholic and her mother as having mental health problems. Of the others: Olivia's father was in prison at the time of interview but lived with her and her mother the rest of the time; Grace lived with her father and step-mother (shortly after interview she moved in with her boyfriend's family); Jack lived with his mother (his father had died); Jasmine and William saw their fathers regularly, Dylan lived with his aunt and uncle or grandparents for most of the time, sometimes going back to his mother's home in BigCity; and the remaining six (Amelia, Alfie, Ethan, Jamie, Lilly, Jayden) lived with their mothers alone or with step-fathers and had little

or no contact with their biological fathers. Those who had little or no contact with their biological fathers predominantly explained the absence as the result of previous domestic violence, although this was not the case for Ethan. All of the participants had siblings and half had siblings with different biological fathers or mothers (or both), apart from Ella who was an only child.

Over two-thirds of the participants had experienced some form of family disruption or breakdown at some point in their lives. Many of these family circumstances were considered by the participants as influencing factors in producing anti-social youths, reflecting that the young people's attitudes often mirrored government and political rhetoric. Although the focus on the family within ASB policies and political rhetoric is based on the gender neutral term 'parent', the measures are imposed far more frequently on mothers than on fathers or both parents (Holt, 2008; Holt, 2010). The respondents commonly identified three young men in the local area as the typical 'anti-social youth'. These three had spent time in prison and had a long history of criminal and anti-social behaviour. Ethan postulated that 'bad dads' were at the origin of the crime and anti-social behaviour of these well-known 'troublesome youths':

> *If you think of the main people around SmallTown that cause trouble and fight...They've all got dads who are just the same, like 'alpha males', don't take any shit, into all sorts of dodgy business ...you've got Finlay Reid's dad everyone says is this crazy hard man and "you don't mess with him, he doesn't mess around". And Matthew Taylor's dad is just an alcoholic drunk knobhead who just goes round causing trouble, you just say his name and he'll come and ask for a reason why you mentioned it sort've thing. And yeah, they idolise that and they try and follow in their footsteps, without sort've noticing - Ethan*

Ethan's view was that these young men were looked to their fathers as role models and imitated their fathers' anti-social behaviours. Ethan felt that fathers should 'set an example' to their children. In this way, he considered that anti-social youths made the choice about whether to become anti-social. Thus in Ethan's view, the blame for anti-social activity ultimately lies with the individual but may be attributed to the influence of others. The individualisation of responsibility for anti-social behaviour was a common theme in the respondents' constructions of anti-social people and can be seen as a reflection of the rhetoric at the heart of anti-social behaviour policy which seeks to 'responsibilise' people for their behaviour (Burney, 2002; Crawford, 2008).

Jamie, Lilly and Alfie in particular spoke in the interviews about their own biological fathers as abusive and violent.

> *Nope. I don't really want to [meet him] cos he like, tried killing me when I was little. So. Don't want to meet the bastard. Just want to spit in his eye. – Lilly*

> *My real dad, I don't like very much. Cos he used to kick the shit outta me when I were younger...and me step-dad, he can be violent sometimes. - Jamie*

Whilst these experiences were not typical of all of the respondents, they are significant in providing an understanding of the context in which the young people constructed their views of their own and others' ASB. For the most part the respondents felt that their own absent fathers were a benchmark of how not to behave.

> *I wouldn't say I've been brought up bad. No, cos my mum's like, a nice person and that. My dad's a bit of a cock but fair enough. I don't know. It's how you choose your standard. – Jayden*

Alfie clearly aligned his past anti-social behaviour, particularly getting into fights and general aggression, as a result of resentment towards his biological father. Although he had a step-father who had been a stable influence in his life since a young age and whom he loved and considered to be his 'real dad', the effect of his early experiences with his biological father had made a huge impact on his life.

> *Nope [I don't see my biological father]. Never seen him. Could walk past him, wouldn't know him. He left, left us when we were three, well no, had an argument with my mum, my mum told him to fuck off when I was three. Caitlin will have been five and Amelia will have been one, she'll have only been a tiny baby. Mum walking round the streets, for hours on end, cos we couldn't get into Granddad's house, cos he'd been out on't lash, an alcoholic. So we couldn't get into the house and mum was walking round the streets with a pram and three babies, well like... Got picked up by the police, and got put in foster care. Because of him. Being a cunt. ...I don't know how long we was in foster care for. Nearly lost one of my thumbs in foster care. Cos I tried going out or summat and big metal door, and my thumb got caught in it, one of 'em. So they're both different. They don't match. - Alfie*

Conversely, Ethan talked extensively about his poor relationship with his step-father (who was his sister Ruby's biological father) describing the situation as: "I've just got a step-dad who's hated me forever and I've hated him since I was one". He perceived that his step-father treated him differently to his biological child (Ruby) and that he had always resented him. In relation to fathers being role models for their sons, Ethan reflected that his dislike of his step-dad could have influenced his behaviour to the extent that he consciously acts in a *non*-troublesome way so as to 'prove him wrong'. Thus, he postulated that his step-father did have an influence on his behaviour but not because his step-father was a role model.

> *Dylan: [ASB] It's getting worse...I blame it all on parents. ...I blame it all on parents. ...I blame it all on everyone's parents.*

Upbringing generally was considered by the participants to be an important factor in the production of anti-social young people, and a minority even suggested that anti-social or criminal behaviour may be hereditary. Yet there was a clear distinction for the respondents' between what they saw as the causes of their own ASB and what they considered to be the causes of others' ASB. Whereas parental inadequacies were constructed as a cause of other people's ASB (reflecting the 'bad parent' discourse outlined in chapter 3.5), some of the young people saw their own behaviour as a rebellion against good parenting. Ellie's home life was atypical in the group of respondents in that her father was an alcoholic and her mother was mentally-ill. Ellie felt that because of this she had few boundaries and could "get away with murder" after largely bringing herself up. The majority of the respondents constructed their biological parent/s at home (as opposed to absent parents) as responsible, loving and as preventing their ASB:

> *It's sort of the way they've been brought up, I think. Like, their parents well, don't really give a damn about them, let them stay out 'til the early hours of the morning getting pissed, then they're obviously gonna turn out like that. But if they have like, times to come in...like I have to go in most nights at half nine, then, they won't really have a chance to do owt will they? - Joseph*

> *I was lucky that my family gave a shit about my problem, and they got me help about it. Otherwise I'd be like, I mean, I bet a lot of other kids that have got HDA [ADHD] but their parents think "Fuck it. Let them have what they want", they think "oh well, [if] he gets arrested he gets arrested. I couldn't give a fuck." – Dylan*

Around half of the respondents suggested in discussion that individuals who had been "brought up well" were from financially richer families. The explanation of their anti-social behaviour was attributed to rebellion or peer pressure. Jasmine considers that a young person's anti-social behaviour may be a rebellion against a good upbringing:

> *Probably because their parents think "well they're not like that" [anti-social], so they think "I'm sick of being a golden child, I'm sick of being like this, why can't I be like that?" so they'll probably go out and do it. Like, one of my friends, she was very well brought up, she goes out and does it all... - Jasmine*

Sophie suggested that peer pressure may be an explanation for the ASB of people that come from good families, and others suggested that middle class children and young people could be 'led-astray' by badly brought-up young people. This reflects that the participants viewed ASB partly as a class issue. They considered ASB almost to be expected in lower socio-economic circumstances *unless* the parenting is of high quality, but middle-class families are automatically presumed to be good environments.

> *It depends on how you've been fucking brought up and all that though innit. If you're, a little mug...Well if you've been brought up ... like a spoilt little shit, you're gonna be fucking, a goody two shoes aren't ya really? - Jack*

Jack suggested that middle class or 'spoilt' young people were less likely to be anti-social because they had more opportunities in life. The participants on the whole came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and Joseph was the only young person whose parents were considered to be 'rich' by the other participants. He acknowledged in his interview that he probably had better life chances as a result of this, stating that he would: "*Probably get like, more of a chance than them, like, deciding what I wanna do, instead of a lot of people*". Joshua postulated that his own anti-social behaviour may be a rebellion against his parents' attempts to control his life (good parenting) rather than being a result of bad parenting. Jack and Jasmine both considered swearing to be anti-social and swore at home, but maintained that this was in spite of their mothers' protesting rather than it being considered acceptable. Jack viewed his anti-social behaviour as a choice rather than a result of his family, stating that: "It's your own doing. Well it was mine anyway". Where similarities were evident between a respondent and their parents' behaviour, this was more likely to be attributed to genetics than to bad parenting:

[When] I've been drinking I get wound up. Dad used to be like it when he was younger, used to tell me stories and that, when he used to go out and, pick people off one by one [laugh]. Not because he could, cos they'd done something to him like, so he used to go em. I dunno, it might be in the genes and that. Definitely getting wound up and getting aggressive is in the genes, cos my dad does quite easily. – Joshua

Joshua's account illustrates that he views 'anti-social behaviour' and fighting as different things. As discussed in chapter four, the connotations associated with anti-social behaviour centre on selfishness, lack of care and lack of respect/ability. Joshua presents his father's aggression as 'manly' quality rather than a quality associated with bad parenting, and redefined as not anti-social because it was justified rather than simply reckless violence. The importance of 'toughness', both for males and females, was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. Although not all of the participants had been in physical fights, fighting was accepted as part of life, and as a way in which it could be proven that you were not to be "messed with". This acceptance of physical violence was reflected by Dylan and Alfie in their interview. They postulated that a lack of discipline, and particularly physical disciplining, was to blame for what they considered to be an increase in youth anti-social behaviour:

Alfie: Well yeah, it's the laws...cos your parents can't do nowt. If your parent hits you, they get done for child abuse. But I always got brought up, if I ever did summat wrong you get a clip round the fucking head. End of....Your kid does summat fucking wrong, you fucking punish them. Otherwise they don't learn like we said before, if you do summat, your parents aren't gonna do owt cos they'll get done for child abuse so the kids get away with it, they're gonna do it again. They don't know when they've done wrong.
Dylan: I used to get brayed and all sorts.

The acceptance of physical punishments was common amongst the participants, although to differing extents. Sophie referred to having been smacked if she had misbehaved when she was younger, and considered this an acceptable method of discipline. Jamie spoke about a history of violent behaviour within his family which may account for his notion that he sometimes 'deserved' to be hit by his step-father.

As discussed in chapter three, the vague definition of anti-social behaviour and the reliance on the victim or police in defining the behaviour results in confusion for young people

about what actually constitutes socially acceptable or socially unacceptable behaviour. The discussion regarding family illustrates further that the young people were unsure of where these boundaries lay. Most of the participants discussed contradictions between activities that are allowed at home but may be considered as anti-social elsewhere. Olivia and Jayden (both aged 14) talked about being allowed to smoke cigarettes at home but acknowledged that smoking before the legal cigarette purchasing age of eighteen was generally considered to be anti-social. Olivia also outlined that her mother actively discouraged her from drinking alcohol but was more permissive regarding cannabis use: *"My mum said she'd rather me come in every day stoned than be pissed every time, every day. Cos that's killing your liver and everything innit?"*. The level of acceptability of both drugs and violence was often presented as a contradiction between home and wider society. Alfie talked about the acceptability of bad behaviour at home:

> *Alfie: Cos he [Alfie's younger brother] was put on bail and all that lot and my dad says "yeah, I know but I can't really have a go because I did it when I were a kid". So my dad seems...not acceptable but sort of, if you know what I mean. So it's partially acceptable because...you can't really say owt cos he's done it before. So it's not as if he's done anything REALLY really bad. D'ya know what I mean? So it'd be like he was having a go at himself.*

The difficulty here is that the young people and their friends and families defined a particular behaviour as acceptable and those who had the power to define anti-social behaviour deemed that behaviour unacceptable. The result was that some young people felt that the boundaries of anti-social behaviour were never clearly defined, and they were labelled as anti-social because of that. As Alfie outlined earlier, if young people were able to do things which are considered by society as 'anti-social' and their parents did not punish them, "They don't know when they've done wrong".

All of the respondents viewed upbringing as a central factor in explaining why some people are anti-social and others are not, yet they consistently constructed an anti-social person as one who ultimately makes a choice to act in that way notwithstanding other factors. This 'pathologisation' of anti-social behaviour to individuals and families appears to ignore the influence of any structural factors and mirrors the discourses which are characteristic of wider anti-social behaviour polices (Gillies, 2005; Goldson and Jamieson, 2005; Burney, 2002; Koffman, 2008). The participants' characterisation of anti-social 'types' is explored further in chapter 7.2.

Section 6.3 examines the participants' experiences of education in the context of their ASB, and particularly how educational exclusions characterised them as 'outsiders'.

6.3 EDUCATION

This section explores the respondents' experiences within education, focusing largely on those who have experienced disrupted schooling or exclusions. School is arguably the most influential institution in the lives of young people after their family. It is where they spend much of their time and where they gain skills, experiences and friends that they take with them into adult life. For those young people that have had bad experiences or difficulties at school, the ramifications of their school life can be significant in other aspects of their lives as well as in their future.

At the time of interview seven respondents were in full or part-time work (Dylan, Alfie, Ethan, Lilly, Jasmine, Sophie, Josh), three were attending secondary school (Olivia, Ruby, Joseph), five were attending college or other training (William, Simon, Grace, Amelia, Jamie - some of whom also had part-time jobs), two were not in education, employment or training (Jack and Ella) and one was receiving home tuition after being excluded from school (Jayden). A minority of the young people had experienced education outside of normal secondary school at some point. This was sometimes due to temporary or permanent exclusions, but also due to bullying and aggression. The female respondents were more likely to report that they had truanted whereas the male respondents were more likely to report confrontations with other pupils and teachers. Around half of the respondents suggested that they had 'anger problems' and attributed their problems at school to this.

Some of the young people in the research had been excluded from school either formally or through 'dropping out' and their experiences highlight some of the wider social exclusion that they experienced as a result. Grace, Jayden, Joseph and Dylan had all been excluded from school for anti-social behaviour. This included violence towards other students as well as teachers, swearing at teachers and smoking. Grace, Dylan and Jayden had all attended a pupil referral unit (PRU) in place of regular secondary school and talked about their experiences at the PRU as negative due to disruption from other pupils,

separation from their friends and limited access to the curriculum. For Grace it was less significant as she was there for a short time to complete her GCSEs. Ella had chosen to 'drop out' of school as a result of bullying at the age of fifteen and had not received any formal education since then. Jasmine also reported that she had been bullied. Although he had attended the local secondary school, Jack's experiences of being bullied and being placed in what he described as the 'remedial' stream at school left him with a sense of exclusion from the system and other pupils. Dylan and Jamie had both spent time in anger management classes or counselling during their time at school. Ella, Sophie and Ruby discussed regularly truanting from school. The remainder of the participants either reported good experiences or did not discuss their schooling experiences during the interview.

In terms of the effect of their 'exclusionary experiences' within education (formal exclusion, bullying, 'alternative' courses) the participants discussed exclusion from friendship groups and from their peer group, from the full academic process and from the appropriate educational attainment. The process of formal exclusion for Jayden in particular reflected Becker's (1963) process of 'becoming an outsider'. The process begins when the pupil is identified as disruptive by the school and labelled as problematic, they are then categorised accordingly within the school and are made subject to rules to control their behaviour such as special classes, detentions and short-term suspensions. If further disruptive behaviour occurs (secondary deviance) the student is permanently removed from the school and placed in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) with other excluded young people. For Jayden, who was 14 years old and at the time of interview and permanently excluded from SmallTown School, his removal to the Pupil Referral Unit confirmed that he was no longer part of normal society. He described his status as an 'outsider':

> *Yeah, I feel like an outsider. And, I feel like an idiot like, if I go watch my mates off to school, I don't know, I'm just like, stood there. ...I just wanna go back to school and just like prove, prove not just to teachers but to most people that I've changed. – Jayden*

Jayden had also been removed from the PRU due to fighting and was, at the time of interview, receiving home tuition. In this way, it was often the case that the respondents' school exclusion came to be symbolic of their removal from 'normal' life. Jayden illustrated that he was making a conscious effort to be re-accepted by the school so that he could be considered 'normal' again.

I want to go back to proper school with just like, and see all my old mates and that and just chill out and have a good time. - Jayden

The irony is that those respondents who were excluded from mainstream education were, by definition, excluded from the possibility of high levels of educational attainment. The respondents who were excluded from mainstream education illustrated that not only did exclusion remove them from school but also from educational attainment. The limitations placed on their studies occurred in a number of ways, including physically and through their access to the curriculum. The young people who spent time at the PRU outlined that they were unable to study the subjects they had taken at their previous school due to restrictions on pupil movement and lack of resources. Grace's experiences were that she was not allowed to enter SmallTown School when she moved to the area based on her previous record at other schools. She had spent time in a number of schools after moving home following the divorce of her parents. Although she only had a short time remaining of her formal schooling, the PRU she attended ran a limited curriculum which prevented her from completing the GCSEs which she had been working towards.

And then I had to do all my coursework again and I did my GCSEs there [at the PRU]. I only did three like. ...Cos my course, which I took in fucking, is it year ten that you choose? Or year nine? I can't even remember...I took PE and we couldn't do it, I took food, we couldn't do it. What else did I take? History and geography. So I only did my like, English, Maths and Science. - Grace

In addition to interrupting the curriculum, the alternatives to secondary school were also physically disruptive. The vocational scheme that Jayden attended on a part-time basis was regularly disrupted by other pupils, he suggested, who messed about, swore and threw objects around. The respondents who went to a PRU suggested that the atmosphere was disruptive there which made it more difficult for them to work:

I was fine about going there [the PRU] because there was less of us, but it was harder because everyone used to just play up and shit. Like, there was only about ten, eleven of us and like, they used to just kick off and everything like that. Like the first day I went one of my friends at the time, she got a mug chucked at her head and it was well close to getting chucked at me. I was just sat there and was like, "yeah, nice one" [sarcastic]. I was thinking should I come back tomorrow or not?! [laugh] - Grace

These examples suggest that the measures employed to attempt to discourage bad behaviour and encourage positive academic practices in reality can have the opposite effect (MacRae et al., 2003). Although not officially excluded from school, Jack's experience of being in what he described as the 'retard' form at school had left him feeling excluded and with the belief that he was stupid. This can be considered as a form of exclusion from mainstream education, as Jack was entered for an ASDAN Award[10] in place of GCSEs.

> Jack: Well [my highest grades were] two Bs but I didn't do an exam for them…I was like, given them. If you know what I mean? That challenge thing. ASBAN [sic], for all the retards. This fucking thing, what you do, at school. It's for all the retards. But like, if you complete it in like two years you get two Bs. Like GCSE but you don't do the fucking, exam for it. If you know what I mean. It's called ASBAN [sic] or summat. …[We did] loads of shit. Like, you had to do all these fucking like, challenge…like, task things and that. It were quite crap to be honest. …
> I got put in it. Well, with the rest of the remmies. [remedial class]

Bullying is a factor traditionally attributed to anti-social individuals (Home Office, 2004b), yet three respondents reported that they were victims of bullies rather than the perpetrators. Jack, Jasmine and Ella reported experiences of being bullied at school, but responded to this in different ways. Ella had been bullied since primary school and with little support from her parents, when her best friend became ill and left school Ella simply stopped attending. Whilst Ella retreated from school and isolated herself from the education process, Jack and Jasmine responded by sticking up for themselves and becoming aggressive, even bullies, themselves. For them, their subsequent aggression was a response to the bullying they had experienced.

> I used to think that if I went and told someone it'd all come back on me and fucking, it'd all get worse and all that shit… [It stopped] About year…year eight in fucking, secondary school. Year eight or year nine. When I just thought "fuck it" and flipped. Then become a little fucker. – Jack

> I got bullied for seven years, I just couldn't handle it so I turned into a, when I got bullied for that many years I turned into a little…honestly, I turned into the worst person you could meet. - Jasmine

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[10] ASDAN is an alternative education provider. These awards are typically life skills centred rather than academic. They focus on areas such as citizenship and personal and social development (ASDAN Website, 20th February 2011).

Howarth (2004) in her research with black pupils and school exclusion illustrates how young people who are already marginalised due to factors such as race (although other marginalising factors such as socio-economic status, family background and behavioural conditions also apply), are more likely to be excluded from school and further marginalised as a result. This was reflected by Dylan who had ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and Jayden who was diagnosed with dyspraxia, both of which are conditions associated with disruptive behaviour. Dylan attended special classes at school to manage his ADHD, but Jayden considered that his dyspraxia was a contributing factor in his permanent exclusion from school:

> *I've got dyspraxia and I have to like, fiddle, like when I'm listening. And some people think "oh, he's not listening" but I do... That's why I always fucked up the lessons. [In] Maths, I think about my English test, "Maths...fuck's sake!" like that, and they'll [the teacher] be like "get out!", [J] "fuck off!". [teacher] "That's isolation!", [J]"fuck!", [teacher] "that's suspension", [J] "Fuck!", [teacher] "Get out", [J] "fuck yourself" [laughing].*

Dylan felt that his lack of concentration was a factor in causing him frustration with schoolwork as well as with teachers. It was then his frustration at teachers which resulted in his expulsion from school. Grace suggested that her misbehaviour in school arose from an inability to cope emotionally with the breakdown of her family. Following the separation of her parents she moved through a number of schools when living with her mum and then her dad, and when she settled in the SmallTown area her first experience was being excluded from entrance to the local school. The 'anger problems' that were cited by the respondents as the reason for their difficulties at school were often the result of problems elsewhere in their lives. The process of being excluded from school meant that the young people became further excluded from their friends and were limited in the qualifications that they could receive.

This section and the previous section on the family have provided a context in which to understand these young people's lives. The following section will move on to explore the experiences that the participants have as a consequence of the ASB Agenda and the perceptions of young people as anti-social.

6.4 HANGING AROUND IN GROUPS ON THE STREET

Allison James (1986: 155) states that youth is characterised by young people as '"being nothing", having "nowt to do" and "nowhere to go", sentiments reflected by the young people who took part in this research. Young people in contemporary society spend more time with friends than parents, and spending time in friendship groups is an accepted part of being a teenager (Smith, 2011). The problems seem to arise when those friendship groups are located in public spaces. The importance of these spaces for the construction of youth identity and culture, as well as the tensions between young people's engagement with 'street corner society' (Whyte, 1943) and adult regulatory practices has been widely explored elsewhere (see: MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007; Malone, 2002; Sutton, Utting and Farrington, 2007; Corrigan, 1976; Hall, et al., 1999). As outlined in chapter 3.5, 'teenagers hanging around on the streets' was first included as an "anti-social behaviour" in the BCS from 2003/2004 (Wood, 2004). In conjunction with other ASB policies (such as the introduction of curfews and dispersal orders), the inclusion of this category in the BCS indicated that young people hanging around in public spaces was an official area of concern for the government. As discussed in chapter four, since its inclusion in the BCS 'teenagers hanging around' has regularly headed the list of public concerns about ASB (Walker, 2009; GoWell, 2010).

This section explores the attitudes that the participants in this study had towards 'teenagers hanging around on the streets'. MacDonald and Shildrick (2007; and MacDonald and Marsh, 2005) highlight the importance of a focus on socially excluded young people's free-time activities, or 'leisure careers', in mapping out their sometimes non-conventional transitions to adulthood. They describe this concept as an exploration of the: "dominant modes of free-time, leisure activity and socialising engaged in by a person and how they change or persist over time" MacDonald and Shildrick, 2007: 341). All of young people interviewed spent the majority of their leisure time hanging around on the streets with their friends and had experienced negative responses from police officers and community members as a result of this. They discussed their access to public spaces and how this was often limited (they felt) because they were young. In the interviews the participants also highlighted the importance of home territory and being part of a group, factors influenced by the rural location that they live in.

There are a multitude of reasons why young people hang around in groups (Byrne, 2006). The respondents outlined a few as; wanting to 'fit in', for protection, safety, financial reasons, and getting away from parents. Primarily though, hanging around in groups was considered as important for socialising. Amelia talked about accepting the values of the group, including clothing style, in order to 'fit in'.

> *... round here it's sort of like, trying to fit in with everyone. Cos if you don't you're just gonna get pushed out or they just like, oh yeah, "there's that lass, that weirdo". And it's like, you've just got to be in with them, otherwise you'll get it. Not like, you'll get it get it, but like, otherwise you're just never gonna make any friends. Cos it's all like one big group round here. Well mainly. And like, if you're not in with that group it's just like, no. Don't bother being anywhere around us, don't even walk past us. [laugh] - Amelia*

The consequences of not fitting in were perceived by Amelia as loneliness, isolation, exclusion and possibly even bullying. The male respondents were more likely to view the group as a form of protection. This was primarily because the young men had more experiences of fighting with people outside of the group and therefore considered it important to have a group of friends who would "back you up" in a fight.

Age was considered to be an overarching factor in perceptions of youth anti-social behaviour. There was a resignation from some of the young people that as 'youths' they were automatically considered anti-social because of their age. In an interview with Dylan and Alfie, the idea that they (as individuals) were labelled as 'troublesome' simply because of their age was raised over and over again.

> *VA: And why do they think you're intimidating? I'm trying to get to why people think...*
> *Alfie: ...Because we're young. Because we're young.*
> *VA: But what's wrong with being young?*
> *Alfie: Nothing, I think. But people do.*

The notion that groups of teenagers 'hanging around' are intimidating to the general public is inherent to anti-social behaviour measures such as dispersal orders and curfews (Crawford, 2008; 2009; Loader, et al. 1998; Walsh, 1999). Burney (2002: 73) goes so far as to state that youths hanging around on the streets "have become the universal symbol of disorder and, increasingly, menace". Particular factors including anti-social behaviour measures, the inclusion of 'youths hanging around' as an anti-social behaviour in crime

surveys and media representations of gangs of hoodies causing disorder have together created the impression that people *should* be afraid or intimidated by groups of teenagers. This was something that the participants were keenly aware of, with many stating that hanging around in a group with their friends would be classed as anti-social because people found it intimidating.

> *[Anti-social behaviour is] hanging in big gangs with hoods up. Because, it's intimidating to older people. - Jayden*

> *Well if we're just like, stood out like, a massive group of us out they're probably, either wary about, if there's a load of us, they'll be wary about us or just think we're a load of twats or summat. It's intimidating when you're in a massive group innit? - Simon*

The media were often referred to as the source of people's opinions of youth. The connection between media portrayal of teenagers and people's fear of groups hanging around was particularly made by Alfie:

> *Cos just being in a group, some people think as being anti-social because some people frown upon it cos you're stood in a big group, when I'm sure if they had any friends when they were younger, they used to do the same. But some people, of the older generation feel intimidated by it, you know, wary "ooh, they might stab me" and all this. Well it's right though innit? And a lot of them do. And a lot of times it's only cos we're there in the paper. - Alfie*

Goldsmith's (2008) respondents in her research on a housing estate suggested that they did not understand why their habit of hanging around on the street may be considered problematic. In my research the respondents were all conscious that their presence on the street in a group was likely to be viewed as anti-social, though they did not define hanging around as anti-social in itself. However, most of my participants considered that they were more likely to undertake anti-social activities when in a group than alone, reflecting research findings elsewhere (see Home Office, 2004a). The reasons my participants gave for undertaking anti-social activities whilst in a group included machismo (not looking like a 'wimp'), thrill-seeking, boredom, and most commonly fun.

> *I thought of it as fun. - Simon*

> *Yeah, when you're with other people cos, some people are kinda the same as me like, up for a laugh and that so, if you're doing summat,*

then they'll do it and you try to go one better and then they try to go one better and then it ends up going into mayhem and you end up breaking summat and causing trouble. Don't know, just, people try to impress each other don't they? - Joshua

The activities undertaken were largely considered to be 'messing about' rather than serious forms of harassment or harm-causing behaviour. Ethan was typically referred to by other respondents as less-anti-social, and he suggested that he rarely engaged in ASB other than being in a group. He suggested that the reason he hung around with anti-social people was partly living vicariously through them without actually placing himself in a position of troublemaker, "You could argue that it's doing it without actually doing it without doing it sort've thing [laugh]. Enjoying it without actually doing it". This type of risk-taking and thrill-seeking behaviour has been long documented as part of adolescence and pushing the boundaries (Smith, 2011). Although they frequently complained that they were treated unfairly by the police and people in the street, the majority of the respondents said that they understood why they may be perceived as threatening. Goldsmith (2008) reported young people who felt they were singled out as the cause of ASB reacted with a "real sense of anger and injustice" (p: 229), but that was not necessarily reflected by the young people interviewed here. The respondents in this study seemed more resigned to the fact that they had no control over how they were perceived.

The problematisation of groups of young people in particular was perceived by the participants as unfair targeting, particularly in conjunction with adult anti-social behaviour that the respondents experienced in the town. Dylan highlighted that he finds groups of older people intimidating:

I mean, we're intimidated as much as other people, are intimidated [by] us. I mean, I feel intimidated like, walking past a bunch of thirty, forty year olds, all pissed up, ten of em, and I'm on my own. I feel intimidated. I'm thinking, "fuck. What are they gonna do here? Are they looking at me, are they...?". I mean, it's just the same with old people about us but I don't say, it's like us saying "well I don't see why". But, then it's just like the thirty, forty year olds would say it about me, "I feel intimidated about them", it's like, "why? We're just out for a laugh. We're just getting drunk, having a few beers". I don't know they're doing that. They could turn around and do owt. It's like we could turn around and say owt to them but, I dunno. - Dylan

Dylan suggested that being seen as intimidating by others is more about being in a large group than it is about age. The participants believed that youths are perceived to be more intimidating than adults because young people are less able to voice their anxieties due to their powerless position in society. Alfie postulates that the media and government are run by adults, so they refrain from publishing stories about groups of anti-social adults because that would be "slagging themselves off" and thus challenging their own position of power.

Sutton, Utting and Farrington (2007) describe 'street play' as significant in providing young people who may be socially marginalised with space to socialise with their friends. Hanging around in public places is accessible to all young people, regardless of socio-economic situation and can be a levelling influence on young people from different backgrounds. Shildrick and MacDonald (2007) suggest that engagement in street corner society has positive social and psychological consequences for young people; the street and the relationships played out on it allow young people to play out, test and re-structure their own identities. It does not cost money to socialise on the streets unlike other activities such as the cinema, sports centre and football pitches. My own informal knowledge of the area and of local community groups indicates that young people were considered a problem in almost all areas of SmallTown; the local park, the skate park, around the shops, in the market place, and even outside the youth club. Often their presence in certain areas was considered to be unacceptable not because of their behaviour but because of their potential future behaviour:

> *There's nowhere you can go in SmallTown. Everywhere we go like, if we stand on a corner they think we're gonna be bloody prostitutes or summat. If we're sat on the wall they think we're gonna throw frigging stones at people when they walk past. Then we go in the park, think we're gonna bloody, get drunk and like, leave our bottles or rubbish and that there. - Lilly*

Lilly suggested that the perceptions of young people in public as anti-social was the most significant influencing factor in the enactment of social control measures against them, regardless of their behaviour. Crawford (2008) refers to this as a criminalisation of status rather than behaviour. The respondents, however, did not view their behaviour as anti-social, and considered that they should be allowed to spend time on the streets and in public places as this was simply a reflection of what young people do:

> *Dylan: It's just, cracking down on everything. You don't get no freedom, whatsoever.*
> *Alfie: They're not letting you be kids no more. You just can't be fucking young anymore.*
> *Dylan: You can't go nowhere without, being seen as summat or, getting accused of doing summat. You can't go nowhere. It's, you don't have your own freedom or nowt.*

There were certain places in SmallTown where the young people knew that they may be moved on. This included the children's play park, a local band-stand, the community centre wall, the market place, the skate park and the cricket field. The participants typically chose spaces that were easily accessible, away from the view of adults but near enough to the town to be considered safe. These places were somewhere for the young people to sit and chat with their friends and ideally provided shelter from the weather. At times, the respondents hung around in the town centre, close to the shops and in a position where they could be found and find their friends. In all of the locations where they congregated they were targeted by anti-social control measures. In addition to being 'moved on' by the police, in 2007 a 'mosquito' device (a machine which emits a high-pitched sound to people under 20 as discussed in chapter four) was installed in the town centre restricted the young people's access to parts of the Market Place.

The local secondary school was referred to as a site where anti-social behaviour often took place, and also a location from which the participants were regularly ejected. The school grounds represented a place which was 'theirs' because they attended school there and felt they had some ownership of it, but outside of school hours and without supervision the presence of young people at the school was considered problematic. The young people were aware of rules which prohibited entry to the school grounds after hours but felt that the rules were applied to them but not to others:

> *Jayden: They said "if you are on this premises again, we will...", like at school now, if you go down there, it's trespassing or you get a thirty pound fine.*
> *VA: If you go on the school grounds?*
> *Jayden: Hmm. Well no, just to anyone. When it's out of school time. ...But they let dog-walkers on. But you can't even go and play football. I dunno, they probably let all these little kids who are good and then they just see us lot and they're like "GET OFF NOW."*

Jayden's perception was that his youth and the judgement of him as a 'bad kid' affected his access to certain spaces. Olivia also felt that the judgement of her group as 'troublesome' meant that they were more likely to be targeted for police action.

> *Like automatically yeah there's like, you know Lola? And Scarlett? Say if they were sat with like, all their little indie friends on the bus stop and the police were driving about cos they were bored, they wouldn't go near them, but if they saw us sat on the wall, in the Community Centre they'd come to us wouldn't they? - Olivia*

The older respondents, those aged 17 and 18, explained how their movements were less restricted when they turned 18, largely because they could then enter the local pubs and avoid contact with the police. This is often the typical development of young people's leisure careers: from street-based activities to adult drinking establishments (MacDonald and Shildrick, 2007; Hollands, 2002). When the participants reached the legal drinking age it was "less hassle" to go and drink in a pub than it was to drink on the streets or in the park. One of the consequences of this was the dissolution of some friendship links, as those in the group aged under 18 were unable to enter the pubs and the older individuals became separated from the rest of the group.

6.4.1 Rural Setting

The majority of research on young people and anti-social behaviour has been conducted in urban areas or housing estates (Goldsmith, 2008; Sadler, 2008; Dillane, et al. 2001; Deuchar, 2010; Crawford and Lister, 2007; Crawford, 2008; 2009; Rogers, 2010). These are typically the areas in which young people are considered to be a problem and where new 'initiatives' are piloted, but it is important to acknowledge that perceptions of anti-social youths and associated control measures also reach into rural communities. It is important then to acknowledge the differing contexts and consequences that young people in rural areas experience as a result.

Many of the young people lived in the same small area of SmallTown – East Park. The area had both social housing and privately owned properties, and was considered to be the 'worst' end of SmallTown. As SmallTown only had a population of just over 4000, the East Park area only consists of couple of streets surrounded by privately owned relatively expensive properties. But in the context of SmallTown, Sophie describes it as "ghetto East

Park" and identified that the majority of the troublemakers in the area reside there stating: "It's like the worst place in SmallTown". Jayden and Ethan both live in the East Park area and reported that where they lived was unfriendly and the people who lived there could be characterised as confrontational and aggressive. This was particularly clear when Jayden talked about the different reactions that could be expected if he had kicked his ball into someone's garden in East Park compared to a garden in Meadowlands (an affluent housing estate):

> *Well this is what we said yesterday in Meadowlands, we were like "it's always warm in Meadowlands cos it's open and that. It's so nice here in Meadowlands". Where we live it's: [angry voice] "if that ball comes in my garden again I'll stab it!", [but in Meadowlands] [friendly American accent] "here's your ball back". Its like, "Ah ah ah, Jayden, Ethan, hello, morning to you, lovely day", that's what it's like at Meadowlands. Down here it's: [in gravelly voice] "alright, how you doin'? - Jayden*

Ethan considered the Meadowlands housing estate as an ideal place to live, "Meadowlands: where everything's just perfect and they're all like "Hi there"" and characterised it as friendly and welcoming in comparison to East Park where he lived. There was a perception that the people who lived in Meadowlands were distanced from the social problems experienced by those who lived in East Park.

> *They probably don't know any different, they probably think it's really nice down here and safe. – Ethan*

Ethan's suggestion that the East Park area was unsafe was not reflected by the other participants who typically considered the whole of SmallTown as a 'safe' area. For the respondents who had lived in bigger towns and cities, SmallTown represented a significantly less problematic area than they were used to. Grace, Dylan and Alfie in particular reflected on their previous anti-social behaviour as a result of where they lived.

> *If I still lived in NorthCity knowing me I'd probably be a drug dealer or something stupid like that. – Grace*

> *Yeah. Well if I lived in MidTown still I reckon I'd be locked up. – Alfie*

> *I wanted to come over [to SmallTown]. I knew I was getting into too much trouble. I mean, I was running away and all sorts, braying my mum and I didn't like it. I says I didn't wanna stay like that for the rest*

> *of my life so I moved over here. Whereas now I'd have probably been selling drugs or been inside [if I'd have stayed there]. - Dylan*

This was perceived as a relationship between place, friendship group, a different school and the likelihood of being caught for anti-social activities. Dylan suggests that his reasons for improving his behaviour were both due to addressing his ADHD at SmallTown School, and because: "they're more strict on it [anti-social behaviour] aren't they over here?". These respondents felt that the anonymity provided by cities and larger towns had allowed them to act anti-socially with less fear of detection, but because SmallTown was a community where everyone knows everyone else, it would be more difficult to avoid detection. They also suggested that anti-social behaviour such as fighting had more serious implications in SmallTown as fighting one person would mean that you would have to face ramifications from their whole family who lived in the area.

The young people who had lived elsewhere had a greater sense of perspective in understanding the anti-social behaviour and youth problems in the context of wider society. The relative peace and lack of reported crime and ASB in SmallTown was considered to amplify the behaviour of young people as a problem in the absence of other concerns.

> *It's different everywhere you go. But it's not so bad, I don't see why we get into that much trouble cos it's not bad AT ALL. Not at all round here. This is one of the nicest places you can live. It's like, nothing really happens...I mean, what's happened in the last coupla months? A coupla smashed windows and that... I mean, look at other places, they...they're getting stabbed and...well there's allsorts. - Dylan*

Although Millie (2008) suggests that anti-social behaviour concerns are more prominent in urban areas, the accounts of the respondents here suggest that although there may be fewer reported concerns, these concerns may actually be less warranted in rural areas. While Millie's suggestion that what leads to perceptions of anti-social behaviour "within an urban context, [is that] there are likely to be people with differing expectations ...of what is acceptable or unacceptable activity" (2008: 383) may be true, the young people in this research faced problems because of shared community views of youths as problematic. The constancy of this view meant that the young people felt powerless to challenge this assumption and were therefore frequently marginalised within the community.

The wider notions of anti-social youth as frightening, dangerous and problematic were largely accepted by the respondents in the context of 'other' teenagers. Although they were quick to dismiss the assumptions associated with anti-social youth for themselves, they viewed groups of 'other' young people as if the assumptions were correct. This can be understood as indicative of the extent to which the discourses have become ingrained in public opinion, but it may also be a consequence of the rural locality of these young people. Territoriality is often associated with young people largely in cities and disadvantaged areas (Kintrea, et al., 2008; 2010; Lyman and Scott, 1967; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2005), but this research indicates that territoriality also exists in relatively affluent rural areas. There was only one distinct group of young people identified in SmallTown which seemed to encompass all young people between the ages of around 12 to 21 years who spent their leisure time on the streets, and often included siblings of different ages. Ruby's introduction to the group was through friends and her bother Ethan, and she remarked that "it gets to [age] thirteen and I think everyone [round here] just groups together, don't they?". Within the group there were sub-groups of people with different interests such as drug-use or skateboarding, but the young people generally considered themselves to constitute one large group. As a consequence of this one group, the young people felt safe in SmallTown as they were familiar with the youths, but they viewed youths from other areas with suspicion. SmallTown 'folklore' (which had circulated since I was a teenager) about fights between groups of youths from SmallTown and MidTown, SmallCity and other towns fuelled this rivalry, but in reality this rarely occurred. Ella indicated this when considering whether group fights ever occurred in SmallTown:

> *Not really. Well, like when MidTown people come and that maybe?*
> *But I've never been here when that happens. - Ella*

> *But, us and MidTown, SmallTown and MidTown, don't get along. ...*
> *Cos they're always coming up here and we're always going to go there*
> *and, kick their heads in. It's always been like that. Ever since I, ever*
> *since I was in year seven at school, it's always been like that. It's just*
> *the way it always has been. – Jamie*

So although Jamie suggests that these rivalries revolve around big fights between warring towns in the past, it seems that they were based more on gossip and rumour – "we're *going* to go there…" and that these fights do not often occur. Although the negative consequences of territoriality have been documented as; creating social exclusion, blocking access to opportunities, increasing the likelihood of violence and potentially increasing the

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risk of young people becoming involved with more serious crime such as criminal gangs (Kintrea, et al., 2008), it seems that it in rural areas such as SmallTown territoriality was based around inclusion and safety.

6.4.2 Tired of Hanging Around?

As discussed in chapter 3, much of the literature and government policy reflects the notion that anti-social behaviour by youths is due to limited provision of positive alternatives. Policy documents entitled 'Tired of hanging around' (Audit Commission, 2009) for example suggest that young people largely commit ASB because they have nothing better to do. Deuchar (2010) in his research with young men in Glasgow found that 'there's nothing to do here' was a common explanation for criminal and anti-social behaviours. Deuchar suggests that this is due to the increasing control and privatisation of public spaces which leaves young people marginalised with little recreational space. While these factors were experienced by the respondents in this research, and many reported that they hang around in groups because "there's nothing else to do", Alfie suggested that does not necessarily mean that they *want* to do anything else:

> *But that's what the police don't understand, that you wanna hang around wi' your mates and when I was younger I always got told to "go out and hang around with your mates" so you get used to it, you get in the habit of always going out and hanging out with your mates on the streets. - Alfie*

These findings highlight the significance that simply 'hanging around' or 'doing nothing' (Corrigan, 1976; 1979) has for the lives of these young people. It is through engaging in time-passing activities that adults interpret as 'doing nothing' that young people socialise, test boundaries, and thus construct their identities and meaningful relationships with their peers (Corrigan, 1976; MacDonald and Shildrick, 2005). Even in light of potential 'things to do' such as a swimming pool or cinema, Alfie maintained the view that 'sometimes you just want to hang around with your mates'. He perceived that the rules change regarding street access when you become a 'youth' – it is acceptable for children to go out and play on the streets but not youths.

> *Yeah cos they think...if you're a little kid you're not gonna do anything wrong but when you get a bit older you shouldn't be on't streets. You should be somewhere else. I dunno. But I don't understand where*

*you're supposed to go. At home doing homework or summat, I dunno. -
Alfie*

In Alfie's experience, the distinction between childhood and youth was related not simply to biological age but to ideological notions of potential wrong-doing. Whereas children are trusted to be good, youths are constructed as potentially (if not actually) bad. This is reflected in wider policies which focus on providing positive activities for youths, based on the assumption that young people will misbehave if left to their own devices and not controlled.

This section has explored the attitudes of the respondents to 'young people hanging around' in public spaces. Their experiences reflect the findings of other research in outlining that their 'hanging around' is problematised. The participants were frequently judged on the perception of future behaviour and their status as 'youths' rather than their activities, and their use of public space was often restricted (experiences of being 'dispersed' by the police is addressed in the next section). The participants' accounts suggest that while some of their experiences mirror those of youths in urban areas, certain aspects of the ASB control they experience and their relationship to place were specific to the rural area in which they live. For some of the respondents the rural locality reduced their anti-social behaviour, but for others the differences between policing behaviour and space left them with the perception that the young people of SmallTown were over-policed. The following section explores the respondents' interactions with the police and other anti-social control agents.

6.5 POLICE

Research suggests that police officers often consider anti-social behaviour to be a 'youth issue' (Sadler, 2008; Bland and Read, 2000). The participants' experiences of the enforcement of anti-social behaviour measures were almost entirely through interactions with the police. This section explores the interactions that the respondents had with the police as the formal agents of ASB control.

There were no ASBOs or blanket measures such as curfews issued in the SmallTown area at the time of interview. Almost all of the young people indicated negative attitudes to the police, largely as a result of interactions with officers. The respondents raised a number of

themes in relation to their contact with police including, their experiences of being 'moved on' (dispersed) and having their names taken by the police. They felt that they were unfairly targeted for reasons including age and appearance, but also because they were better behaved than other youths so the police considered them an 'easy target'. Some of the participants maintained trust in the police with regard to what they defined as 'real' crime, but almost all indicated frustration that they were targeted for low-level unimportant activities. Some of the male respondents suggested that the police target young people in order to prove their authority. The participants experienced feelings of powerlessness in their interactions with the police, and often felt that the police favoured accounts of community members over their accounts. Although most of the participants accepted the power-balance of this relationship

Young people's interactions with the police affect their attitudes to the police more than other factors (Rusinko, et al., 1978; Nayak, 2003; Deuchar, 2010). Most of the respondents had immediate negative reactions at mention of the police. Olivia represented most of the young people's immediate response to mention of the police when she stated: "They're all dicks". The negative responses were a reflection of their previous encounters with the police. Although some respondents had had less-negative encounters, the overall impression that the respondents gave was that the tone of their interactions with the police were inconsistent. This meant that the participants were wary or suspicious of the police and were unable to predict how they would react in different situations. Some officers or interactions were described as "okay", but the majority only had cause to interact with the police when they had been targeted for punishment or some other punitive measure. Jamie's perception of the police had been influenced by the bad experiences of other people he knew:

> *No. I don't like em at all. Cos they're horrible. Because they do your head in, they try and move you every time you do, sitting down somewhere in a big group. Does your head in. One of the police officers pushed Isabelle Watson over, and sprained her leg so...he's getting sued by Leon Watson. So he has it coming to him, him. - Jamie*

The belief that young people were a conscious target of police officers was common in the interviews. Young people are indeed 'targeted' by the police for some anti-social measures (Crawford, 2009; Quinton, et al., 2001) and this was reflected in the participant's experiences. It has been argued that anti-social behaviour measures have become a

'random tool' to threaten young people or regulate their behaviour, and that this can have 'onerous and damaging' consequences (Burney, 2008: 145). An example of this 'random tool' approach became apparent in the interviews. Many of the young people recalled that they had received a letter warning them about their 'anti-social behaviour'. It seems, from their accounts, that each received a standard letter which had been sent to all the young people in the town that were 'known' in some way by the police.

> *Yeah. [We got a letter] Threatening us with ASBOs... There were 18 of us... I don't think we did owt wrong at the time though... It's not as if we'd gone out and...fucking done summat really bad... It said if you carry on in the way that you're behaving...like...I dunno, I can't remember now it was ages ago. Saying you could end up with an ASBO and all this lot... My mum went mad... Because she said "oh you've obviously been doing summat" and I says "no I ant"...and it's not until after I found out all my mates had got one as well. Them coppers were just trying to fucking...stop us hanging out... New coppers innit? I think it were a while after new coppers come in, the new sergeant. He's trying to show his authority int he? – Alfie*

If it can be assumed that the letters they received were official Anti-social Behaviour warning letters, then the fact that eighteen young people in the area received warning letters but no further action may be seen as an anti-social behaviour measure success. Government statistics suggest that 65% of anti-social behaviour stops at the warning letter stage (Home Office, 2011). In reality however, the young people did not understand why they had received the letter or what behaviour in particular had resulted in it. Also, that eighteen of the group had received the letter seemed to dilute the intended effect of the letter being an individual warning; because they all got them for apparently no specific reason they did not seem to take it very seriously. As a result it did not lead them to change their behaviour in any way – even if they had wanted to change they were unsure of what it was that they were not supposed to do. Yet because none of group (that Dylan, Alfie or myself (from further interviews and time spent at the YC) were aware of) received any further warnings, quite possibly the incident would appear on the policing statistics as 'resolved'. This one incident, although too small to be generalisable to the whole population, raises questions about the way in which anti-social behaviour incidents are catalogued and defined as resolved by the police.

The young people gave a number of reasons for police targeting them including reputation, location, their clothes, and because they were an 'easy target'. They felt that the

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SmallTown area was more heavily policed *because* there was less trouble. In this way they thought that they were 'easy pickings' for the police. Dylan and Alfie considered that the police targeted them to move on because of their age as outlined above, but they also suggested that the fact that they were *not* considered as particularly troublesome was taken advantage of by the police to control them. They believed that they were more likely to be targeted in SmallTown than groups of young people in a larger nearby market town:

> Alfie: [It's the] Coppers from MidTown [who give us a hard time]
> Dylan: They get it easy though round here the coppers
> Alfie: But they're allowed to do that
> VA: You're from BigCity?
> Dylan: Yeah and they get brayed and all sorts round there
> Alfie: And they try and...be in charge don't they?
> Dylan: They, what is it, they think they're big and, like...yeah, like...they're all like he's just mentioned "you're a little boy from a little town", just say, "yeah but, you think...if you think you're so big why don't you go to a bigger area".
> Alfie: They think they just get away with it cos they know us all

Olivia and Jayden thought that the police targeted young people as an easy option when they were not busy. The respondents made a clear distinction between their own nuisance behaviour and 'real crime', and felt that the police could be trusted to deal with real crime but unfairly targeted young people for petty nuisances.

> They overreact with everything. When it comes to serious stuff, yeah, I respect em, but little stupid things, they're just annoying, and in the way [laugh]. – Simon

Lilly suggested that she liked the police when they were "on her side" and for the most part that they were "just doing their jobs", but she was frustrated by the apparent endless list of activities which the police were increasingly able to target: "Cos they catch you for every fricking thing. They really do [laugh]. Everything, like literally *everything's* illegal these days".   In short, the young people simply oppose the constant focus on anti-social behaviour which they considered 'minor' in comparison with 'real' crime (Stephen and Squires, 2004; Deuchar, 2010; MacDonald and Shildrick, 2010).

6.5.1 Being 'Moved On'

The dispersal of young people by the police pre-dates the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, but what has changed is the way in which young people are constructed and problematised (Sadler, 2008). Being dispersed or 'moved on' was the most common enforcement measure that the respondents experienced, and the one which they found most frustrating (see also Crawford, 2008; 2009; Crawford and Lister, 2007). As outlined in section 6.4 of this chapter, the respondents were frequently told to 'move on' from certain areas as a consequence of local complaints to the police, or because the police considered that they were acting (or likely to act) anti-socially:

> *Yeah. That's the main [frustrating] thing. It's like, say we're at the park up there it's like "move along from here", so we start walking up to Meadowlands. They'd know we were going up that way anyway, Meadowlands or school, then they'd come up there, "you're not allowed to go up there, you're not allowed to go up there, move on", and we're like "we've only just turned up", and they're like "oh we've had phone calls, we've had phone calls, you need to move on". – Joshua*

As Joshua shows, frequently the police gave the reason that there had been complaints from local residents. Joshua did not believe this, and suspected that the practice of 'moving on' groups of teenagers was in reality an exercise to reinforce police authority. Experiences with the police were recounted as evidence that, not only did the police unfairly target them, but also that the authoritative stance of the police prevented them from doing positive activities. Being 'moved on' was viewed by the participants as another tool to control them:

> *Alfie: But no, the government obviously can't be too keen on all't young people and they must think they're right bad anyway cos, you know, like I said the coppers moved us on and that, my mum went fucking mad. Rang the police up and they said "oh no, we can do that now, it's a new law". If you're in a bigger group than 3 or summat, the police have the right to disperse ya, saying "we're stopping trouble before it happens".*
> *Dylan: That's been happening in BigCity since...since I lived there. That's been happening for ages over there.*
> *Alfie: But then, they're automatically assuming that if you're in a group bigger than 3 then you're gonna cause trouble.*

Dylan and Alfie's experiences suggest that the police dispersal powers were not being used to control troublesome behaviour, but the behaviour of all groups of young people regardless of whether or not they have caused trouble.

> *We was all in the park one night and it was, oh there was loads of us, and we weren't meant to be in there and they all just...cos like, after a certain amount of times they think we're gonna cause trouble and that, and we was all in there and they told us to move and that. And because we had drink on us and everything a well. And we moved, and we came back again and they moved us again, [to E] I don't know if you was with us? And they give us like, all a warning and took down our names and that. Because we'd like, not done what we were told. - Lilly*

Lilly's experience of being dispersed because "after a certain amount of times they think we're *gonna* cause trouble" was indicative of the pre-emptive use of dispersal powers by the police (Crawford, 2009). These accounts reflect the wider research on youth experiences of formal dispersals, as described in chapter 4.5.

6.5.2 Taking Names

The police practice described by the respondents as 'taking names' referred to occasions when police officers would ask for and record their personal details such as names and addresses. This practice was used by the police to gain knowledge of the 'troublemakers' in the area, and would sometimes be used to identify suspects when a crime had occurred. Dylan and Alfie talked about how the police would regularly take their personal details, sometimes through stop and searches. Other young people had their names taken when the police dispersed them from an area.

> *Oh, they all know our names. I've had my name taken loads of times – Alfie*

> *[I've had my name taken] For like, drinking and I've got those little yellow slips and that. Where they search you and like, confiscate booze off you and stuff. It's like, really annoying. I got searched for drugs in school once. Ooh, and a knife at one point! [laugh] No, I didn't have one. I was like "...okay". Some little shit said I had one on me and I was like "...okay" [laughing]. - Ella*

I experienced this attitude of the police 'taking names' when I attended a multi-agency community meeting aimed at engaging local young people in positive activities. Although

the purpose of the meeting was to engage all young people in the area, it was understood by all in attendance that the central aim was to engage problem teenagers whilst including others to maintain the impression that the problem youths were not receiving rewards for their trouble-making behaviour. In a discussion regarding the possibility of a new project, it was suggested that we should get a list of names to gauge the number of young people would may be suitable or interested. The police officer in charge of the meeting stated that even if the project did not go ahead, it would be useful to get the names of these (problematic) young people commenting jokingly: "at least we'll know who they all are". It was clear that he was referring to using the young people's details for local policing.

The respondents commented that one of the consequences of 'taking names' was that it allowed the police to make connections with older criminal or anti-social individuals to whom the young people may be related. Jayden suggested that the police practice of 'taking names' was a way of identifying friendship groups and also family connections. He felt that when the police knew his name they automatically associated him with his family and he was therefore unfairly judged based on their (rather than his) behaviour.

> *[The police] think, they ask what your name is and you say "Dixon", "oh, Dixon, hmmm..." and it's like yeah, my dad's just been in the paper for corruption on like, [laugh] British Company for like robbing loads of money off them, for fraud so that's not good on my name either. ... people shouldn't judge people just cos someone else like, related to em is like that. - Jayden*

As indicated previously, the reputation of an individual's family reflects heavily on the perception of that individual by others. This may be based on assumptions that an individual is expected to 'follow in the footsteps' of their family and become anti-social themselves, or that the individual is genetically pre-disposed to behave like their family. But whilst most of the young people accepted that family is a reliable indicator of an individual's propensity to bad behaviour, some of the respondents felt that they were unfairly judged due to the reputation of their own family. If you had a 'hard' or 'tough' family then you were judged as one of them before you were judged individually. The pressure of family reputation was particularly felt by Jack who felt there were certain expectations of him as a result of the previous local and police knowledge of his older brothers and cousins in the area.

> *Jack: Who doesn't know who I am?! Every copper knows me....family reputation and all that shit.*
> *VA: So what's your family reputation?*
> *Jack: Well, hard bastards practically. And, fucking...I can't even be fucked with it to be honest. I'm not bothered.*
> *VA: What, living up to the reputation?*
> *Jack: Yeah. I used to. I can't be arsed now. No point.*
> *VA: So why have your family got a reputation do you think?*
> *Jack: I dunno. Fuck knows. They're all a set of bastards... Brothers, and cousins and all that shit. [pause] Everyone.*

Alfie felt that his reputation with the police would be used to target his younger brothers when they got older. For these young people, having criminal or anti-social families results in a greater chance that they will themselves be targeted by the police.

The extent of the powerlessness that the young people felt against the police was recounted in many interactions. The participants felt that the police could do whatever they wanted in situations with young people, and that they could justify almost any action based on law and police discretion. In this respect, Alfie here felt that the law was there to protect the police rather than young people. They did not feel that they were able to refuse to be searched or challenge the police on the grounds for a search as this would result in further and more serious ramifications.

> *Coppers don't know shit anyway. ...Well they're all fucking gimps aren't they? Fucking...that Chris, that bald fucker, I bet I know the law more than him! I were drinking on the street one time, this was only about a month ago or summat. And he goes, "get here now! Right, I'm gonna give you an £80 fine, a section 4 and a section 5" and I was like, "you fucking what?! I haven't even DONE anything". I hadn't even opened the fucking bottle. So practically I wasn't even drinking. And fucking, I said, "oh, what's a section 4 then?" and he goes "public order offence", I went "no it isn't", and he goes "yeah it is, I think I DO know you know", I went "well, how am I doing that then? You fucking penis" like that. Stupid cunt. [VA: So what happened in the end?] Fuck all. I went home. Couldn't be arsed arguing. Couldn't be arsed getting in shit. I just thought, fuck it.*

Although most of the young people were resigned to the fact that the police maintained power over them, some participants discussed responses to police authority which may be considered as resistance included giving the police a false name, running away from the police and creating strategies to disguise alcohol so that the police would not confiscate it.

This suggests that they did not entirely adopt a submissive position, yet for some their resistance of running away from the police simply lead to more punishment.

> *I wasn't like, causing trouble I was just like sort've...running away from the cops. Like if the cops, like if we were somewhere we weren't meant to be and I was like, and the cops came we'd all like, do one and run away. – Amelia*

> *[I've been in trouble with the police for] just mainly running from them, like, underage drinking on the streets and they chase us. Wind em up til they chase us for longer and further... - Simon*

> *My trick is now if I'm drinking on the streets I have a bottle of coke, well Dr Pepper, and put vodka in it. And just put it in your bag when they come. I don't know why I need to hide it like, but it's open so I have to. - Grace*

The young people were not only regulated in public spaces by the police but also by caretakers, shopkeepers and local adults. Jack's experience of attempting to buy alcohol from the local shop is evidence of this 'dispersal of discipline' (Cohen, 1985).

> *Well round here you can't do jack shit. Well fucking, summat happens and if you've been in shit like, recently, but it's got fuck all to do with you, they come back on you and fucking, practically say "right, look. You're getting fucked for it" and fucking, shit like that. Round here I can't even fucking buy more than eight beers round here. Because the fucking coppers are wankers man. Because like, people have been caught for giving it to underagers and all that lot. Fucking hell man. I don't do it. Never even bought for fucking underagers actually. But it's like round here you have to be over twenty-one to buy more than eight beers. - Jack*

During my interview with Jack, it became apparent that a few weeks prior a friend of mine had been in a shop in SmallTown buying alcohol at the same time as Jack and his friends. The cashier had refuse to sell alcohol to Jack on the basis that he was aged under 21, yet my friend had been permitted to purchase alcohol without proving his age (he was 19). Jack's suggested that whilst he and his friends had been refused alcohol because they did not have the required identification, he was aware that this policy was not enforced universally and that he was targeted because he was known by the staff. This policy is used in many retail and drinking establishments to ensure that underage drinkers are not served, but Jack suggested that this policy was aimed at certain young people in the SmallTown area rather than others.

> *It's just us round here. Even the coppers have even said it. Cos it was*
> *their idea to be honest. Copper's idea to fucking, make us stop drinking*
> *as much. – Jack*

Through Jack's account and previously outlined accounts of respondents' encounters with the police, it becomes evident that practices such as 'taking names' and the extension of control powers to shopkeepers can be in the context of Cohen's (1985) social control thesis as a dispersal of disciplinary powers in order to increase the regulation of the activities of young people (Brown, 2004).

6.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has explored the factors and practices by which these young people felt that they were identified as anti-social youths. The stories and histories of these young people's lives illustrates that they felt they were regularly identified as anti-social youths. The participants viewed family relations and education as significant factors in whether they (or others) would come to be seen as anti-social. The ASB enforcement measures that they were most likely to be targeted with were police dispersal powers (largely informal from their accounts) and the police practice of 'taking names'. Dispersal powers were enacted in the form of informal 'moving them on' to another place either because the police reported receiving complaints or because they were acting in an anti-social manner (such as drinking alcohol). The participants believed that they were identified for ASB measures because they were 'easy targets' for the police, both because of their age and their rural situation. Those who had lived in larger towns and cities felt that SmallTown was heavily over-policed in comparison to other (more dangerous) areas. The practice of dispersing groups not created an adversarial relationship between the respondents and the police, but also the respondents and the wider community who had registered complaints. 'Taking names' was accepted as ordinary practice, but was viewed by some (Jayden, Joshua, Alfie, Dylan, Jack) as a way in which to identify the young people with their families or wider friendship groups in order for the officers to form an opinion about what 'type' of individual they were. Joshua viewed the practice as a way for police to gain information to target their investigation of later crimes, to create a list of 'usual suspects' to be utilised when a crime occurred with no obvious suspect. The interviewees all had negative attitudes of the police largely because they felt that the police targeted them unfairly due to their age but also

because of the inconsistency that they had experienced in previous encounters. Overall the participants felt that they were unjustly considered as anti-social in their community. They viewed the factors that identified them as anti-social – their appearance, hanging around on the streets, rowdy behaviour - as acceptable because it was a normal part of 'being young'.

The following chapter analyses the consequences that being defined as anti-social youths has for these young people's identity construction.

CHAPTER 7: NEGOTIATING AN ANTI-SOCIAL IDENTITY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter six described the processes by which the young people felt that they come to be identified as anti-social. This chapter explores young people's processes of identity construction in the context of being identified anti-social youths.

The chapter is split into three sections. The first deals with the contradictory ways in which young people define ASB as both relation and essential. In this way the participants were able to define their own behaviour as non-essential whilst constructing the 'chav' as an essentially bad, selfish and inconsiderate person. The participants engaged in a process of 'othering' (discussed in chapter 4.6.3) to separate themselves and their own behaviour from the behaviour and characteristics they associated with 'chavs'. Thus, while acknowledging their similarities to what they considered to be an anti-social person, the participants indicated that they did not accept this label as part of their identity: none of the participants defined themselves as anti-social. The second section of the chapter (7.3) involves an examination of the specific strategies that the participants used to deny an anti-social identity. These strategies are defined here as 'techniques of negotiation' (adapted from Sykes and Matza, 1957: see chapter 4.6.2) and allow young people on the one hand admit to having undertaken ASB while at the same time denying that they *are* anti-social. Through enacting techniques including deflecting the label - "I'm not anti-social but my friends are" - and presenting themselves as reformed characters - "I used to be anti-social but I'm not anymore" - the young people were able to avoid internalising the stigma of the anti-social youth label. These techniques allow young people to engage in anti-social behaviour whilst at the same time maintaining a non-anti-social identity. The final section of the chapter (7.4) involves an analysis of the social conditions in which the participants were able to manage stigma of an anti-social youth label. It outlines the participants' reflections on the official definition of ASB as vague and unclear (reflecting wider academic opinion: see chapter 3.2) and their experiences of the enforcement of ASB measures as patchy and inconsistent. I argue that the ambiguous nature of ASB definition means that the anti-social youth label is able to be negotiated by young people. It is also argued that whilst the participants were able to maintain positive roles elsewhere in their lives – for example, good worker or loyal friend – they were able to deny anti-social youth as their

primary identity. As chapter eight explores in greater depth, these young people construct themselves in terms of occupying the space 'inbetween' various statuses and this allows them the freedom and fluidity to constantly drift between different roles without them becoming a primary identity.

The first section of the chapter examines the contradictory definitions of ASB that the participants enacted to make sense of their own and others' anti-social behaviour.

7.2 DEFINING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: ESSENTIALLY AND RELATIONALLY

The participants' definitions of anti-social behaviour could be distinguished both as relative to a list of specific activities and behaviours (i.e. an essentialist definition) and in relation to a calculation of the harm that the specific behaviour might cause (i.e. a constructionist definition). The participants' definitions were as ambiguous as government rhetoric and policy which constructs anti-social behaviour as *any* behaviour that causes alarm or distress to people (see chapter 3).

> *...like vandalism, stuff like that. People wrecking the place like, on the streets 'til stupid hours of the morning, waking everyone up and all that. Just causing havoc round town. Yeah, that's it. – Simon*

> *Drinking on the streets...Being noisy? Like, after hours, so it gets too late.... Causing damage. Vandalism. That sort of stuff. [pause] Playing music too loud... – William*

For all of the respondents, anti-social behaviour was described in terms of a threshold: anti-social activities are either 'not crime' or 'less serious crime'. This was a common theme throughout the interviews and reflects the blurred boundaries between each of these categories that has been outlined elsewhere (Burney, 2002; Crawford, 2008). Yet the crimes against which the participants defined ASB were severe examples including murder and violence:

> *Examples would be like, smashing windows, kicking cats [both laugh], like breaking things and throwing bricks at people and throwing stones and shooting people with BB guns and, NOT everyday behaviour really. They just wouldn't...I don't know. Criminal behaviour. Not like proper criminal behaviour like killing people but, breaking windows, vandalising things, intimidating people, swearing, shouting at people like, from across the street and stuff. - Sophie*

It's like, people who disturb other people and like, violent people...who cause harm to others and to places. Yeah. Rebels. Criminals. - Lily

They defined anti-social behaviour relationally, but in relation to extreme examples of crime. None of the young people defined anti-social behaviour (at the beginning of the interviews) in terms of their own actions. All of their descriptions centred on anti-social 'others'.

Like when you think of someone that is an anti-social person you'd think of one ... who would destroy anything, hurt someone, do anything that's like, disrupting peace. That really isn't a respectable person. That would...he doesn't care about what he does, he doesn't care about his actions, he doesn't really have a conscience, yeah... They're just like the kind've people that you would cross over the road to avoid because you know that they're bad news. People who get in trouble with the police. I don't know! – Sophie

In terms of other people's ASB, the participants constructed individual action as a form of personal choice. Their construction of anti-social behaviour was that it was a purposeful and deliberate behaviour undertaken by disrespectful people. This informed the participants' construction of who constitutes an 'anti-social person':

[Anti-social people are] I dunno like, eighteen year olds. Cos they're always out drinking and they do stupid stuff.... [VA: Why specifically eighteen?] I dunno. I just find that quite a lot of eighteen, no, not like, just eighteens but like...sort of. About sixteen to twenty. Eighteen's just like the middle way point innit, sort of. Yeah. – Amelia

Although the respondents suggested that adults *could* be anti-social, on the whole they acknowledged that ASB was primarily associated with young people,

7.2.1 'Chavs' as Essentially Anti-Social

Young people often label their peers according to stereotypes in order to construct their own identity and explore their 'place' amongst their peers (Lesko, 1998; Erikson, 1963; Kinney, 1993). The respondent all identified anti-social people as 'chavs' (see chapter 4.6.4). Across the interviews a clear and consistent picture was constructed of 'bad' or anti-social teenagers as 'chavs'. Hollingworth and Williams (2009) suggest that 'chav' is a

construction used by middle class young people to create class boundaries between themselves and the working class 'other', yet the findings from the present study illustrate that the chav label is similarly used by working class young people. Chavs were constructed by the participants as young people who acted with disregard for social norms and values, were disrespectful and were therefore 'not normal'.

> *Like when you think of someone that is an anti-social person you'd think of one of the chavs round here... – Sophie*

> *No, there's Amy, she's not a chav. Millie isn't a chav. (VA: So what would you class them as then?) Normal. Normal people. – Grace, 18*

Although chavs were identified primarily by stereotypical views of their appearance, the respondents indicated that the label means more than simply appearance or clothing choices, illustrated in a discussion with William and Ruby:

> *VA: What's a chav?*
> *William: Someone who drinks cheap beer [laugh].*
> *Ruby: Wears holey clothes. They do!*
> *William: Yeah like, trackies, cap, complete tracksuit...*
> *Ruby: Yeah. Look a bit rough.*
> *William: Shitty Nike Airs...*
> *Ruby: Yeah, moon boots.*
> *William: Yeah.*

William and Ruby's description of a chav goes further than clothes and implies poverty as they wear "holey clothes" and that chavs are "rough". Sweeney (2008) outlines poverty as something which often causes people to be defined as chavs – if they cannot afford to buy new clothes they are often branded as chavs. William and Ruby also outlined chavs as having poor taste or fashion sense when referring to their "complete tracksuit" and "shitty Nike Airs" (trainers), reflecting Hayward and Yar's (2006) supposition that chavs are characterised in terms of their 'incorrect' consumption practices. This was further reinforced by Jasmine's description, particularly her mocking of buying jewellery from Argos:

> *Well, let's just say they normally wear their hats on top of their heads, tracksuit bottoms, Fred Perry jumpers, loads of rings, loads of gold jewellery, not all the people are like that but it's mainly like, you can describe them with the big huge gold hoops (from Elizabeth Duke [laughing], at Argos, even though I've got jewellery from there). Big*

long doll necklaces, they wear their socks sometimes tucked over their tracksuit bottoms. - Jasmine

The ways in which they described 'a chav' indicates that the young people viewed chavs as a lower social group than themselves in terms of morals and behaviour as well as appearance. Chavs were characterised as 'not normal' due to their anti-social attitudes, their social disengagement and disreputability. They were considered to represent the antithesis of civilised society:

Like when you think of someone that is an anti-social person you'd think of one of the chavs round here that are like, do you know what I mean, like Jake Wilson who would destroy anything, hurt someone, do anything that's like, disrupting peace. That really isn't a respectable person. That would...he doesn't care about what he does, he doesn't care about his actions, he doesn't really have a conscience, yeah. – Sophie, 17

The participants drew on existing discourses of the chav to construct them as outside of society, as 'others'. Through defining anti-social people as chavs, this sheds light on the characteristics 'normal' people; respectability, consideration, non-criminal. Chavs were considered in negative terms by the participants, reflective of wider 'chav' discourse (see chapter 4), and the chav folk devil allowed the participants to reinforce their own similarities to 'normal' people. Simon talked about how he did not like to hang around with chavs because it reflected badly on him:

Simon: Well they look down on you won't they? If they see a load of chavs and then me, a normal person, stood with em, still look down on you won't they?
VA: So why do you think people look down on chavs?
Simon: Scum [laughing]. I don't know. It's just what, anti-social behaviour, all chavs innit? Mainly. Well it's mainly chavs that get into more trouble int it? Normal people do, now and then, but that's about it.

This quote indicates very clearly that Simon views himself as a 'normal person' – yet, it seems that the chav 'other' allows him to more clearly define himself as normal. The social types defined in the interviews as 'anti-social' illustrate that the participants employed an essential definition of anti-social behaviour with regard to others; the anti-social characteristics of the chav were viewed as part of their personalities, their very makeup. Their anti-social activities are a reflection of their innate anti-social status in society.

7.2.2 ASB Label as Relational and Incorrect

In terms of their own anti-social label, the participants discussed the various ways in which they felt that they and their friends were viewed negatively (see also Wisniewska, et al. 2006), and how their ascribed anti-social label was *relational* rather than *essential*. They, unlike chavs, were only anti-social in relation to other people/factors. This section explores the circumstances that the participants considered to lead to their own (incorrect) identification by others as anti-social in the context of an admission of undertaking anti-social behaviours. All of those interviewed indicated that they thought they were regularly labelled as anti-social by strangers. The two most common themes raised to explain this were – their clothes and/or the stereotypical view that people have about youth from the media. To a lesser extent they also explained it as a reflection of the people they associated with and the fact that they were on the streets rather than at home. These four themes are indicated in the excerpt below from the discussion with Dylan and Alfie about why they thought people viewed them and young people in general as anti-social:

> *Alfie: It's cos you're wearing trackie bottoms and that innit.*
> *Dylan: ...You could be a perfectly normal person that's never been in trouble or anything before, done nothing wrong, and you could go somewhere and they'd think "oh, he's a troublemaker".*
> *VA: But why do you think that you specifically get labelled...?*
> *Dylan: Cos of his age. Well, because of the group I hang around in and they think, like, some of the people, what some of the people do in the group that we hang around with. ...*
> *Alfie: Well yeah, there's like, Ethan. Ethan never does nothing wrong, but he gets labelled as a troublemaker, by a few people.*
> *VA: Because he hangs around with you?*
> *Alfie: Yeah.*
> *Dylan: And it's just the group we hang around with and what, like, people do in the group. I mean, we all do summat, fair enough but...*

Within the discussion there is an acceptance that the label may be partially justified. Dylan acknowledges that they do "do summat", implying that they do partake in some behaviour they consider anti-social. All of the participants recognised their own behaviour as anti-social. Simon described anti-social behaviour as vandalism and being out on the streets late causing a disturbance, and then admitted, "Yeah, I've done, pretty much everything I've just said" (Simon). Amelia talked about how young people often engage in anti-social behaviour, and that therefore the anti-social youth label is in some way justified:

[Teenagers are viewed as] Quite bad... especially round here. It's like, that much gets done, like the parks get destroyed and stuff cos of anti-social behaviour and the parks get destroyed and then their younger kids don't get to do as much as they could. They don't get to benefit from like, as much as they could. Because we like, ruin everything. Sort've. Well like, my age [group] ruins like everything and stuff like that. I just think that they see us as bad. Baad... - Amelia

The participants acknowledged that adults often considered young people to be anti-social simply by virtue of their youth, and many of them had experienced this first-hand. The interviewees expressed that they were considered as anti-social or 'troublesome' by individuals, and often the police, on a daily basis:

[People think about me:] He's a young, he's a little mug. Fucking...he's a hoodie. He's a chav [laughs]. ...[They think] We're willing to start on some fucker or summat. - Jack

Whereas Alfie and the others talked about being considered as an anti-social *group*, Jack suggested that the perception of him as an individual anti-social youth was based on the fact that he hung around with an anti-social group. In describing how he may be viewed when walking down the street Jack stated that people think about him, "I'm a little mug. ... Cos I'm part of the gang. And all the rest of them are mugs." (Jack). Anti-social behaviour here is defined as a function of association. Jack's experiences were that he was labelled according to the group membership he had been assigned by society. This was particularly evident in the majority of the interviews in which the young people felt that the way they dressed signified them as chavs.

[You get labelled because of] the way you fucking dress and all that shit. I think. Cos if you have fucking trackies on, and a cap, you're like, an instant knobhead. Practically. That's what I think. What other people think... I wear jeans, yeah. But I wear fucking, chav jackets and all that shit... - Jack

Chavs, the participants felt, could be distinguished from the rest of society by their appearance (tracksuits, caps, and sportswear). This was considered the primary signifier to others that the individual was in fact anti-social. Unsurprisingly none of the participants considered themselves to be chavs, but most dressed in the same types of clothes that they themselves outlined as 'chavvy'. This contradiction was referred to by the participants as a reason why they were incorrectly labelled.

> *If they see you like all in trackies and that they'd think chav. Bad.*
> *[laugh] Bad, lock your doors at night. - Grace, 18*

Whilst their being labelled as anti-social or a chav was considered a misjudgement by most of the participants, some of the participants acknowledged the wider discourses that inform these processes. Although he felt that people incorrectly judged him, Dylan suggested that he understood why people did so; they had judged him according to general perceptions of youths suggested that people *like* him were anti-social. He recounted an event when he had been woken up by young people causing a commotion outside of his house in the middle of the night. This situation allowed him to reflect upon his own behaviour and understand how strangers come to the conclusion that he was anti-social:

> *But I can see how they, like how they do get [annoyed] though. ...They shouldn't expect to get woken up and having people shouting and bawling outside their house and stuff like that at that time of night, so I can see how they feel, in a way. - Dylan*

Although around half of the respondents concurred with Dylan's position in showing sympathy with stranger's perceptions of them, the young people on the whole felt that they were unjustly stigmatised. Dylan recounted two occasions when he perceived that strangers had misjudged him to be anti-social:

> *I was walking my dog right, past the bins and you know when they got burnt down? Yeah. And I was walking past the bins and there were these two old people talking, and they go, he goes like "Ah, so the paper bin..." (I overheard the conversation) "Ah so, it looks like the paper bin's have been burnt" and the old man goes "yeah" and as I walked past he goes "it's troublemakers like him" and I was just like "what the fuck have I got to do with it?". - Dylan*

He also described another situation where he had been unfairly labelled as a troublemaker when in reality those causing the trouble were adults:

> *And it's like [on another occasion], I was sat over there, and there were a group of them like, in the corner, do you know in the like, car park bit over there? Like, near the public toilets. And an old couple walked... through and they didn't see me, and he goes "I see the usual are out shouting and bawling and that. They can't behave at all can they?". And it were a couple of [adults] pissed up from the pub, and [my friends] were trying to sort it out, telling them to behave... I was like, I*

> *said to them I went, "actually we're trying to sort summat out they've*
> *just come out of the pub starting, so we aren't causing trouble at all",*
> *and they just walked off in a big huff. - Dylan*

On these two occasions Dylan felt that he had been identified incorrectly as an 'anti-social youth' due to the general impression of teenagers as problematic in contemporary society. The second incident in particular confirmed that his age was the primary defining factor; whereas the reality was that he and his friends were attempting to prevent a fight amongst adults, the observers automatically assumed the youths to be the source of the disorder.

The following section explores how the participants managed the stigma of being identified as anti-social.

7.3 MANAGING AN ANTI-SOCIAL IDENTITY: TECHNIQUES OF NEGOTIATION

Blumer (1969) suggests that interactions such as that described by Dylan (above), are sites of identity construction for individuals. Chapter four argued that there are particular social consequences as a result of the process of labelling, especially in the case of deviant identities which are associated with stigma (Goffman, 1963; Becker, 1963).   Labelling theory suggests that the negative stigma of being identified with a deviant identity may lead an individual to internalise the stigma and define themselves in terms of the label. Chapter three (section 5) outlined that media reporting suggests that young people are proud of their anti-social identities and that the formal recognition of those identities in the shape of ASBOs are some type of 'badge of honour' (Daily Mail, 12th March 2006; Daily Telegraph, 1st August 2006).   As the above sections demonstrate however, the young people in this study saw anti-social behaviour and anti-social youth in relation to disreputability, selfishness, criminality and disengagement from society. Central to their understanding of the essential anti-social youth was the figure of the chav. As this section illustrates, although the respondents were regularly labelled by people in their community as problematic or anti-social, they did not adopt it as a deviant identity. They did not accept the anti-social identity that was ascribed to them in these interactions:

> *No. I don't think I'm antisocial, no. – Alfie, 18*
> *No. I'm definitely not anti-social at all. – Jasmine, 17*
> *No. Not very much. – William, 17*
> *No, not really. – Lilly, 18*

I wouldn't describe it as anti-social but I'd just say that I like to have a laugh really – Josh, 18
No. Not at all. – Ethan, 18

Previously in the chapter a number of themes have been outlined; these young people undertook behaviour which they defined as anti-social; they had clear and consistent conceptions of an 'anti-social person'; they perceived that they were labelled as anti-social by others outside of family and friends; and yet they did not consider themselves to *be* anti-social. It is argued that the young people used a variety of strategies to avoid internalising an anti-social identity. As the previous sections of this chapter demonstrated, the respondents understood and constituted 'anti-social behaviour' and 'anti-social youths' in such a way as to create spaces and gaps which, in themselves, allowed them to negotiate their own sense of a non-anti-social identity. In order to make this argument, this section draws on the framework adopted by Sykes and Matza (1957) to explain the strategies that these young people utilise to manage the label of anti-social youth. I have defined these strategies here as 'techniques of negotiation' in an attempt to reflect that rather than being used as a way to neutralise their behaviour, the strategies were the way in which young people negotiate between identities both anti-social and 'normal'.

All of the participants said that they were able to identify an anti-social person from their clothes, and were often 'mistaken' for one of these people. Trautner and Collett (2010) suggest that individuals use 'othering' as a technique to distance themselves from the stigma of a negative label. In their research with student strippers, they found that the women viewed individuals who they felt conformed to the stripper stereotype as 'others' who are different from them, and this allows them to distinguish between a justified label and their own unjustified one. One of the strategies the respondents used was to modify the category 'anti-social youth'. Hence, many of the respondents did not see themselves as 'others' in society and rather recognised that *some* people may see them as 'others' at *some* times and in *some* places (Blinde and Taub, 1992)*.* The majority of the respondents stated that strangers' opinions of them were of little importance to them, that they 'didn't care what other people might think', yet some of the young people indicated that they were aware of the ways in which they may be viewed and aimed to challenge people's responses to them:

[Young people are portrayed] As anti-social behaviour-ists [laugh]. No, they do though don't they? Even in comedies and stuff, they dress up

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as a teenager and it'll be immediately trackies and a cap and like, loads of makeup and stuff, and it's like, no we're not like that. I mean, some of them are yeah, fair enough. ...in SmallTown cos most of the old people are quite nice and they're not snappy old women and old men that just yell at you, but if I go past them and I catch their eye I'll go "hiya, you alright", just to see that shock on their face, I absolutely love it [laughing]! And then I'll put my head down and carry on, they're just so shocked to think, cos they'll be walking past thinking "god quick, get past her or she'll beat me up", but no, I can be nice too... And I think that you do realise that they are quite intimidated by you which is why I look at them in the face and not like, wear your hood up and look down and stuff. Whereas if you look up at them and you smile then normally you just get [frown] but then a few nice people actually do smile back, that's nice. - Sophie,

Sophie adopted a fairly direct strategy of negotiating a non-anti-social identity. She talked about openly challenging people's perception of her. In this way, by challenging the expectations that strangers have of certain types of young people, Sophie was able to negotiate her own sense of self through the revised reactions she received from others. In the surprised reaction she received, she was able to confirm that she had successfully challenged the view that others may have of her – she was 'proving' to other people what she already knew, that she was not anti-social. Although Sophie's outward challenge of negative stereotypes helped her reflect and maintain a non-anti-social identity, the majority of the participants adopted other methods to resolve the label with their self-concept.

Accommodation of discrepant identities does not always result in an either/or decision that destroys one of the identities. Rather, identity negotiation can be construed as a process in which much of these identities remain intact. (Thumma, 1991: 334)

There were two key distinctions that the respondents used to negotiate a non-anti-social identity. Firstly, they accepted that some of their behaviour was anti-social even though they denied that they *were* anti-social. Secondly, they denied that their behaviour was anti-social and denied they were anti-social. In these ways they denied any anti-social identity. These distinctions arise from the young people's understanding of anti-social behaviour as being essential to behaviour and relational to people. The next section outlines the strategies adopted by the participants within these two overarching themes.

7.3.1 Acceptance of Behaviour, Denial of Label

'It's fun, no real harm done' - Minimising of impact

This technique, employed by all of the participants, involved denying that their behaviour caused any 'real' harm and thus allows the young people to minimise the impact of the individual's anti-social behaviour. Around three quarters of the participants, largely the young men, indicated that they did things which were anti-social because it was fun. Others defined anti-social behaviour as victimless or causing little harm, usually when compared to crime. Both of these techniques allow the young person to downplay the seriousness of their actions and re-conceptualise them as justifiable.

> *No, I thought of it as fun. Just, when you entertain yourself and somebody says "do this" and you're just like, "alright". Or it just comes into your head and you do it. - Simon*

> *Murder and all that lot, are crime. And just pissing about for anti-social behaviour really... I don't know. I'd see like, harming other people as a crime, like killing em and shit. But nicking a car, you can always replace a car but you can't really replace a person can you? I suppose. I don't know. It's quite hard actually. - Grace*

Grace perceived that anti-social behaviour was less serious because she considered that it did not cause physical harm to anyone; denying that there is a victim in the situation (Sykes and Matza, 1957). She was therefore able to justify her behaviour by lessening the impact as 'just pissing about'. This view was mirrored by Jack:

> *Like bank robbery and fucking, shit like that. THAT's an actual crime. Sort of... anti-social behaviour's like…like a lower group than fucking crime if you know what I mean. It's not as bad. [VA: So, something like assault then, would you say that was a crime or would you say that it was anti-social?] Bit of both. Depends what you do really innit, to them. ...Like assault, if you go like proper smash some cunt in, like, with a baseball bat or summat it's like manslaughter really innit. – Jack*

Sophie talked about her previous use of drugs. She had clear ideas about what constituted anti-social behaviour but this did not involve drugs:

> *Drugs are like, they affect yourself more than anyone else really. You know, people that do go round and graffiti everywhere and are known*

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> *to not be very nice, people are scared of them, but would you be scared of someone that was on drugs? I don't think... You'd think, yeah they might be a bit unpredictable if they're really quite high but...I don't know. I wouldn't... – Sophie*

Sophie's idea of anti-social behaviour was something which was deliberate and harmful to others, thus she defined drugs as not anti-social because they (in her mind) affect only the individual taking them. To illustrate this she referred to a woman to whom her ex-boyfriend (a drug dealer) sold drugs who was middle-aged with children but lived a seemingly 'normal' life. This woman was ordinary and drugs did not adversely affect others so Sophie concludes that it's not drugs that make people anti-social, rather something already within themselves. Many of the young people who employed this technique were also those who considered anti-social behaviour as physically or emotionally harming another person, and an anti-social person to be horrible in some way. This was also accompanied by strong ideas about what behaviour was and was not acceptable:

> *Yeah, it's like...again druggies, stuff like that. People that take like, real heavy stuff. Or like people stabbing each other and stuff like that. I mean, the odd like, egg at a window or kicking the odd car or whatever's a good laugh or summat. - Simon*

The young people who used this technique felt that there was a clear line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and as long as they stayed on the right side they could maintain their positive identity. These young people were therefore able to consider their own petty deviances as unimportant in the context of their lives as normal, good people.

'If I've had a drink down me, I'll be worse' – Denial of responsibility

This technique involved the participants placing responsibility for their anti-social behaviour with external factors, and therefore allowed them to deny that they were fully accountable for their actions. The factors that they utilised as causal for their anti-social behaviour included age (specifically that anti-social behaviour was part of being young) and geographical location, typically that 'there's nothing else to do here'. The most common factor the young people considered as responsible for their anti-social actions was overwhelmingly drinking alcohol, thus this section primarily focuses on alcohol. Alcohol was often presented as a 'reason' why they may act anti-socially. Drinking alcohol was

often described as anti-social in itself, particularly underage drinking, and was also provided as a reason why anti-social behaviour was committed. The young people often referred to their own anti-social actions in the context of drinking alcohol.

> *You don't really think about it when you've been drinking though. It's like just going to the sky! – Amelia*

> *Just because [people] probably know what people are like when they're drinking. Well, younger kids what they're like when they're drinking. They just get up to no good. They cause trouble, they go stealing, breaking fences. Not that my brother did that at all [both laugh]. Just, swearing at people, taking the mick out of people, like just, basic trouble. Just, doing stupid things. - Amelia*

Alcohol and 'being drunk' was used as a way in which to distance oneself from the actions committed whilst under the influence. Alcohol provides a barrier between an anti-social and an individual's 'real' or 'normal' self.

> *If I've had, if I've had a drink down me, I'll be worser, but if I haven't had a drink down me, I'll calm down a bit. Alcohol isn't my best friend. If I have quite a few then I will go mad, but if I have one I'll be alright, or two, that'll be fine. - Jamie*

Many of the instances of their own anti-social social behaviour were described as at least in part due to alcohol. Alcohol experiences appear to be somewhat gender-specific with males relating drinking with fighting and vandalism, and females relating it to fighting and sex. This finding may be related to the fact that the girls felt more able to discuss sex with a female researcher than the males interviewed who did not raise the subject of sex in any detail at all. This may also be due to the differing moral connotations of sex for males and females; females seemed to be more likely to view sex as something which may be considered anti-social. Lilly and Ella discussed a previous incident where a sexual encounter between Ella and a male had been recorded and subsequently uploaded to the internet video site YouTube where alcohol had played a significant factor:

> *Ella: I was incredibly drunk ... Yeah, I was really pissed. I passed out when I got home [laughing]. And sick [laugh].*
> *VA: So how come you get so drunk?*
> *Ella: Well, I had a crate, and then Lambrini. That cherry Lambrini [laugh].*
> *Lilly: No, but how come you get so drunk?*

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Ella: Cos it's fun and, it's like just boring. Like, and it's a weekend tradition, like, every Saturday I go out with Leah and Imogen. And get pissed.
Lilly: See, I used to do that when I was underage, I used to go out and get like, really pissed. But now that I'm actually like, of the age that I can do it, I don't really bother. I got really drunk on Friday I must say. Oh my god! No, Saturday sorry. I got really drunk on Saturday and I just like, God it's the best sleeping pill ever. It really is [laugh]. I didn't wake up for no fucker.

The theme of getting drunk and having sex was something which solely came up with the girls, and has been recorded elsewhere (Coleman and Cater, 2005). Alcohol was described by the three of the girls (Amelia, Lilly, Ella) as providing them with the 'confidence' to undertake these activities, as it could be used to justify misbehaviour. Amelia spoke about how 'being drunk' could be used as a viable excuse for behaviour which may not be usually acceptable:

Amelia: You don't really care about anything, at the time. But if you're sober...and also you can blame it on the alcohol, you can't blame it on anything if you've not been on anything.... [laugh] That's my excuse for everything.
VA: So why do you need to get drunk to do all those things?
Amelia: I dunno it's just like, confidence. When you're drinking you don't care what you're doing. Like if you... if you're like, self conscious. Like I am well bad like, with my weight and stuff, and I don't like doing certain things ...Like sex. I don't like doing, I don't like having sex when I'm not drunk. Cos when, when I'm drunk I don't care about my body. I don't care what it looks like, I don't care if anyone else sees it. But when I'm sober, I know what I look like. And I don't like it. Like, even if other people don't mind it I still think [it]

Amelia used alcohol to gain confidence and 'become' a different person. This connection between self-esteem or confidence and alcohol appears to take on different forms according to gender. Alcohol gives women perceived confidence in emotional aspects such as body image and relationships whereas it gives males confidence in the forms of bravado and risk-taking behaviour. (Coleman and Cater, 2005; Scheier, et al., 2000). Grace talked about using alcohol as a way in which to deal with pressures in her life:

Well my mum kicked me out when I was a month from my tenth birthday. Yeah. And then, just shit at home. That's the reason I get pissed. And stress out sometimes. Cos of family stuff going on. But, I don't try and look for attention, I just try and look for ways of getting out of it. Like, I wouldn't touch drugs to get out of it, fair do's I've tried

fucking weed but that's the only drug I've took apart from alcohol and smoking. There's no way I'd take coke or pills or owt. I'm not that stupid, but...yeah. I just have loads of shit at home, so this is the only thing I can think of dealing with it is drinking. - Grace

Grace illustrates that she drinks alcohol and becomes aggressive by 'stresses out sometimes' in order to escape from her situation. She considers drinking as an acceptable behaviour unlike drug-use, and as a means to manage her emotions. This was very different to most of the stories regarding young men's behaviour and alcohol which largely revolved around fighting:

[Alfie] was off his head. And there was a lot of fighting at Lily Young's party as well. She had a party a while, 14th March, she had a party and the police came cos Alfie were fighting and Jonesy was and Luca and everyone else like that. They was fighting amongst each other. Alfie and Jonesy were alright but Lucas was starting on both of em so he punched him. Alfie and Jonesy punched him and Peas put em both on their arses. Funny to watch but it serves em right cos Alfie were pissed before he came to the party anyway. Cos he always drinks soon as he gets home from work. - Jamie

Jamie illustrated that alcohol was the reason for his friends' anti-social behaviour of fighting. Underage drinking is a youth-specific anti-social behaviour. The participants viewed reaching the legal drinking limit as something which would mean they would be grown up and no longer anti-social, although part of the 'fun' of drinking alcohol as a youth was related to its illegality.

Yeah, that's what everyone tells me. As soon as you turn eighteen it [drinking] isn't as fun anymore. [VA: I suppose, do you think that maybe people get less anti-social as they get older cos they're in pubs rather than on the streets?] Yeah. More civilised. More grown up really. – Simon

In this way, alcohol consumption was viewed as a *temporarily* anti-social behaviour for these young people. The relationship between anti-social behaviour and alcohol is a complicated one. Alcohol consumption was viewed in itself as an anti-social behaviour, particularly when the drinker is under the age of eighteen or in a public place. For three of the girls in particular, alcohol was used as a tool to create a better, more confident 'self'. Reaching the legal drinking age was perceived as marking the end of some anti-social behaviour as you had to "behave yourself" when drinking in the pub (Jamie, 18). Yet,

'being drunk' was considered a valid excuse/justification for anti-social behaviour as it allowed the individual to relinquish responsibility for their actions and distance themselves from any notion that their 'real self' was anti-social.

'Sometimes I am, but not all the time' – Drift/Fluidity

> I can be [anti-social]. Sometimes. But not all of the time. I think girls are more…well, can be…better. – Amelia

This technique allowed the individual to admit that they could be anti-social at some times, but they did not equate this with *being* an anti-social individual. Through defining an anti-social person as committed to anti-social values, this strategy allows the participants to define as not-anti-social.

The young people adopting this technique can admit to having been anti-social, but are not anti-social *at the present time*. This suggests that young people have multiple identities, including anti-social, which they are able to shift between at any time. It reflects Matza's (1964) theory of young people's 'drift' into delinquency. These young people act anti-socially some of the time, but were not committed to any form of anti-social values or sense of self. They were able to drift in and out of anti-social behaviour according to the circumstances whilst at the same time maintaining a 'normal' identity.

> VA: So, when you said that you think that you can be anti-social...what do you mean?
> Amelia: Just like, swearing, be really loud, and get aggressive. And drinking. ...Mainly [when I've been drinking], yeah. Near enough all the time [laugh].
> VA: So when you're actually doing it then, like when you're drinking and getting loud, whatever you said, do you think at the time "oh, I'm being anti-social"?
> Amelia: No.... I dunno. It's just like, when you're drunk you've got like, you're just not thinking about anything like that, you're thinking about what you can do, what you can be doing. Or you're just thinking about drinking, you're not thinking about anything else. But when you're sober you think, I dunno, you just…think through in your head. You just think about all the things that you've done and what it is and stuff like that.

Others similarly talked about only considering their behaviour as anti-social when they had reflected on it the 'morning after' drinking alcohol. Jamie said that he enjoyed drinking and

considered his behaviour acceptable whilst he was drunk but stated: "[I] Always regret it in the morning though, but as the coppers say, that's not good enough, you should think about it before you do it". This strategy allows an avoidance of the anti-social label through only ever defining behaviour as anti-social retrospectively. These young people were never anti-social at the present time and therefore were able to maintain a normal identity.

Prior to this point, the participants' strategies of identity negotiation have been based within a relational understanding of anti-social behaviour. They accepted that their behaviour was unacceptable at times, but were able to neutralise the impact of that behaviour. The following section addresses strategies based on an essential understanding of anti-social behaviour. It moves away from techniques which 'neutralise' an individual's anti-social behaviour and explore strategies which allow the individual to deny both that their behaviour was anti-social and reject the notion that *they* are anti-social.

7.3.2 Denial of Behaviour, Denial of Label

'I'm not now but I used to be' – The reformed character

> [I'm] Not no more. I was anti-social but, I've had to grow up fast [referring to current pregnancy]. A little bit. Well I will have to, I'm just sort've getting there. - Amelia, 17

Around half of the interviewees suggested that they had been anti-social in the past but were no longer. This technique comes from the identification of a recognisable 'past-self' that committed anti-social behaviour that can be separated from the present self through changes such as circumstances, attitude or location – 'I'm not now because *this* has changed me'.

> Well I have been in the past but now, at the moment my life's calmed down so much and I've got a job and a routine and my own group of friends and yeah, I smoke and I go out and have a good laugh with my friends in town and I have a few drinks and stuff but, I wouldn't go out and meet drug dealers and buy drugs from them and like, it's rare that any of my friends do get weed anymore. I don't know, in some ways I... was a bit. I probably was actually. But I wouldn't say that I was anymore. But I don't know if that's just my opinion of me. - Sophie, 17

> *No. Not very much. Hardly ever out anymore so, probably used to be, yeah. This time last year... I always used to be outside this place. And erm, drinking and playing music out of Simon's moped really loud. - William*

This technique was often related to age or 'growing up'. Many of the individuals interviewed identified anti-social behaviour as something which was closely associated with teenagers, and something which people eventually grow out of:

> *Probably when I've grown up a bit more. I suppose. Grown up and realised what a little shit I was. And think about it and stuff. But I suppose, fair do's I still gob about and get stressed out and have a go at people but...I kind of try to tone it down a bit. – Grace*

> *I think the older you get the less anti-social you become. - Ethan*

Whilst these young people may well have similarly rejected the anti-social label during the period that they have outlined as having been anti-social, this technique was a recurring theme throughout most of the interviews. It may reflect that retrospect was a way in which individuals can accept the anti-social (or a negative) label but at the same time denying it for who they are now. In this way, the individual avoids a negative sense of self at any present time.

'People think I am but I'm not' – Misunderstood/Judged by stereotype

The respondents' perception that they were labelled as anti-social simply according to stereotype was a common theme to emerge from the discussions. Most felt that they were wrongly judged to be anti-social due to wider discourses over and above their individual characteristics. Reflective of Sykes and Matza's (1957) 'condemnation of the condemners', this strategy involves denial of the label through a claim of being 'misjudged' by the labellers.

> *I don't think that I'm anti-social, but I know people think I am... [They see me as a] Troublemaker. Troublemaker, the majority of them. – Alfie, 18*

> *Well I dunno cos it depends what you class as anti-social? Cos I mean, when I go into SmallCity with Alfie during the day and that, we don't really care what other people think, we've been singing down the street, shouting random stuff, just, if that comes under anti-social then... – Joshua, 18*

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This technique allows the individual to avoid the label through a denial of its correct application; whereas they see that others judge their behaviour as anti-social, they do not judge it so. This may be because those who are judging are considered as entirely wrong, misinformed, or spiteful. This was reflected in the opinions voiced about the government, the police, and particularly in the way that groups of young people are consistently viewed as 'intimidating'. Many of the interviewees stated that although they were aware that people (particularly older people) found large groups of them intimidating, they maintained that they were simply hanging around with their friends and therefore did not view this as anti-social. So whilst acknowledging that others found it anti-social they were able to justify this behaviour as acceptable because they felt that they had been misjudged. Alfie and Dylan talked about this in the context of their age:

> *Alfie: But then, if 6 of us sit on that wall (gesturing to Community*
> *Centre wall) we'll get told off for it. But I bet if 6 parents sat on that*
> *wall – coppers wouldn't say nowt.*
> *Dylan: Yeah but they wouldn't sit on't wall*
> *Alfie: No but the thing is though, hypothetically... if they sat on the wall*
> *they wouldn't say nothing to em. It's because of our age.*

Sophie had a similar viewpoint, feeling that some people would judge her to be anti-social regardless of the situation and therefore the most realistic solution was to ignore them:

> *VA: So do you worry about what other people think of you?*
> *Sophie: Nowhere near as much as I used to. Nowhere near. I just think,*
> *you just give up. I think you get to a point where you think "what's the*
> *point? They're going to judge me whatever I do". It's like, I walk down*
> *the street and have a fag and the amount of people that stare at you or*
> *give you dirties [dirty looks] it's not fair really. You think, right, that's*
> *what I want to do, whether they like it or not. I'm not going to go hide*
> *down an alley to have a fag, I'm just gonna do it. I'm not gonna give up*

In Sophie's opinion, her smoking was an issue that caused people to judge her. Yet she considered that smoking was acceptable and therefore that the people judging her were incorrect for doing so. For Dylan, Alfie and Sophie, the behaviours that they were being judged for engaging in were not anti-social, and were considered by society to be perfectly acceptable for adults. They were able to deflect the stigmatizing identity through reflecting that the stigma was due to their age rather than because they were somehow bad people.

The label was perceived as unjustified or "unfair" and thus was not internalised by the young people.

"I'm not but my friends are" – Deflection of label onto others

One of the common strategies the young people used to deny an anti-social identity was to deflect the label onto their friends. This was typically enacted through statements such as: "well I *can* be anti-social but I'm not as bad as my friends...". The strategy allows the individual to identify others as being anti-social but in comparison not themselves. This relates specifically to the participants' friends and others that were on the peripheries of their social group. It involves deflecting attention from their own behaviour to the behaviour of others and in this way the young person has "changed the subject of the conversation in the dialogue between his own deviant impulses and the reactions of others; and by attacking others, the wrongfulness of his own behaviour is more easily repressed or lost to view." (Sykes and Matza, 1957: 668).

> *[I] get in a bit of trouble sometimes but I'm alright-ish...I'm not as bad as Alfie and Jonesy, put it that way. I can be a bit yeah but, not as bad as Alfie and Jonesy. - Jamie*
>
> *Well my best friend Alfie, yeah, he's pretty anti-social. But, yeah he is. He hits anyone he doesn't know basically, that's just how Alfie is. Until he knows them they're a knobhead sort've thing. If they've looked at him, then they're a knobhead. And he stares at people, which is anti-social. Shouts loud, which I think is anti-social. Sometimes his driving you could say is anti-social cos it's not sticking to the rules. Yeah, he's pretty much an anti-social person ... So yeah, pretty much all my friends are but I'd say he's the worst...All my friends from SmallTown, yeah. [VA: So do you think that you're the same as them?] No. Not at all... We like a few things but behaviour-wise we're totally different. - Ethan*
>
> *Well, near enough all of my friends [are anti-social]. And why? Because, they all drink and do stupid things and even when they're not drinking they're either drinking or doing drugs so...just gets them to go stupid. - Amelia*

Through identifying others around them who they (and others) consider to be more anti-social than they are, the self-image reflected back to them is one of 'less anti-social'(Mead, 1934). Whilst the participants had people in their social circle that were considered anti-social by others and by themselves, they were able to deflect the identity of anti-social away from themselves.

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'Isn't everyone?' – Neutralising the behaviour through normalising

A significant number of young people interviewed stated the belief that anti-social behaviour was something which all members of society undertook at some point, whether deliberately or inadvertently. This highlights the breadth and variety of activities and behaviours that are covered by the definition of anti-social behaviour; in theory, *any* activity can be anti-social if it offends or distresses someone regardless of intent.

> *Alfie: No. Cos everyone's anti-social.*
> *Dylan: Yeah. Well, not everyone is but, everyone is to a different kind of people...It's like, you offend, anything you do you offend someone in some kinda way.*
>
> *I think everybody can be anti-social in their own like, when they want to be. – Lilly*
>
> *Well everyone's anti-social, they actually are. – Jayden*

This technique was one which was often reflected by the attitudes of their parents or families:

> *It's like my auntie says, they have to remember that there were young once, and they did it at one point. – Dylan*

Although this theme of 'everyone does it' is something which may be familiar to deviancy research, there is a case for stating that the specific conditions of the process of defining *anti-social behaviour* makes this a more significant technique of negotiation. Most of the young people illustrated confusion and frustration with what actually constitutes anti-social behaviour. They felt that, in a way they were being set up for failure in that *any* activity that they engaged in could be defined or redefined as anti-social which resulted in 'rule-breaks' which could not have been avoided because the rule was not made clear to them, or because the rules were not imposed consistently to all people in all circumstances. Alfie stated that when he was younger it was acceptable for him and his friends to hang around on the street, but once defined as 'youths' this activity was no longer considered acceptable. Others referred to situations where they had done something which at a different time may have been considered anti-social. In referring to a streaking incident that took place one night Josh suggests:

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Well if it was done in the middle of the day, [there would have been] people about wouldn't there and they wouldn't like what you were doing, disagree with it and... I suppose anti-social, it's just being, out of order and...yeah, out of order and, I can't really describe it – I'll find the word in a minute... Yeah, basically being out of order and out of line, just doing stuff that might anger someone else and that. And I'd say that [streaking] would, if it was done in the middle of the day! Yeah, I still think it was [anti-social] but it was in a pub full of people who were having a laugh and that so, they all enjoyed it and had a good laugh. – Joshua, 18

Rather than indications of some form of deviant subculture (Cohen, 2002; Matza, 1964) the research suggests that these young people were undertaking activities which would be acceptable in wider society for adults, it was often simply their age which made their behaviour unacceptable. In undertaking activities such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs, sexual behaviours and fighting the young people were replicating behaviour which they saw adults around them taking part in, including their parents. While these behaviours may not be behaviours that society wants its young people to be partaking in, these were the behaviours that young people saw adults around them enacting.

This section has illustrated that the participants employed a variety of strategies to avoid internalising the anti-social identity. The strategies are internal identity processes based on the young people's understanding of anti-social behaviour as essential and relational, with associated strategies to deal with each definition. The following section explores the conditions in which this identity negotiation is made possible.

7.4 Social and Political Conditions of Negotiation

The next part of this chapter follows examines some of the social and political conditions in which these young people were *able* to negotiate an anti-social identity.

7.4.1 Anti-Social Behaviour – An Ill-Defined Concept

As discussed in chapter four (section 4.4), deviancy theorists (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1951; 1967; Cohen, 1966; Schur, 1980) suggest that the process of labelling an individual as 'deviant' has negative consequences for their self esteem. The identification of an

individual as deviant can halt their life chances, mark them as a social 'other' and eventually become a self-fulfilling prophecy; the individual adopts the deviant label as their identity or 'who they are'. The negative effects of stigmatizing labels are outlined by Becker (1963) as ultimately removing the individual from normal society and making them a social 'outsider'. It has been illustrated throughout the thesis that the 'anti-social youth' label is a stigmatizing one even when imposed informally, and that the respondents were regularly identified as anti-social through interaction with their communities and with the police. Yet though they were targeted with some ASB measures the participants did not internalise the negative stigma. This suggests that the anti-social youth label is not a 'primary defining identity' (Lemert, 1967). These young people were able to maintain and manage multiple identities at once, and the stigma of an anti-social identity was avoided through recourse to other positive self concepts that were present. It is postulated that the particular conditions of the concept of anti-social behaviour, the vague definition, the reliance upon perception, inconsistency of enforcement and the expansive extent of behaviour covered, mean that the anti-social youth label is ambiguous and therefore fluid.

The identity negotiation techniques adopted by the participants were made possible because the label of 'anti-social' is volatile and contested. The vague legal definition, the multiplicity of institutions involved in management of anti-social behaviour and the implementation of formal responses to it as well as the reliance on individuals' perception in the detection process results in a label which provides young people with the space to redefine and reconstruct when necessary.

> *[ASB is] People acting in a way that other people don't like. So if you're doing something that someone else doesn't like or if they think's bad, then they class it as anti-social behaviour. – Alfie*

Alfie's suggestion that anti-social behaviour can be defined broadly as "doing stuff people don't like" mirrors the government definition "[behaving] in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress" (Home Office, 1998). Both definitions were based on the perception of the 'victim' rather than the intention of the 'perpetrator' of anti-social behaviour. As discussed in chapter three, the particular actions which actually constitute anti-social behaviour are ambiguous and unclear. The criticism of the vague definition of anti-social behaviour is well covered in the literature (Millie, et el., 2005; Burney, 2002; 2004; 2005; Squires, 2006; Squires and Stephen, 2005b; MacDonald, 2006;

Ashworth, et al., 1995; Scott and Parkey, 1998; Carr and Cowan, 2006). Yet, it is this lack of clarity which the young people were able to utilise to avoid the label 'anti-social youth' becoming part of their identity.

> *No. I don't think I'm antisocial, no. But then in a way I do cos I know I do stuff that people don't like. But at end of't day I'll do what I want...cos I wanna do it. If someone dunt like it it's their fucking problem. If you're tryin to do...you just won't be able to do anything, if you try to keep everyone happy you just can't do nothing. You may as well just fucking die, but then you're still gonna piss someone off. So it dunt matter what you do in life, you're still gonna piss someone off...you may as well try and enjoy yourself while you do it. - Alfie*

Alfie's quote reflects the extent to which he perceived that anti-social behaviour was defined by perception, and generally not his perception.

Most of the young people's experiences of the enforcement of anti-social behaviour measures were with the police. As discussed in chapter 6.5 (page 136), over half of the group of young people that I interviewed and many of the rest of their social group had received a formal letter from the police warning them of their anti-social behaviour. It was not clear whether the letter was a formal warning in accordance with anti-social behaviour procedure as the first step used on the ladder which culminates with an Anti-social Behaviour Order. The participants perceived that they had received the letter because the police 'knew their names' because they hung around on the streets rather than because of any one anti-social incident. They postulated that they had received the letter due to the introduction of new policeman in the area, and saw this as a tactic used by the new officers to illustrate their authority. This highlights the police discretion in defining anti-social behaviour, and illustrates that they may have used the flexibility of the powers to target this group of young people. Squires and Stephen (2005) predicted this use of powers as an 'enforcement opportunity'. The police have the power to define behaviour as anti-social through practices such as telling young people to move away from a certain place. The participants suggested that the police discretion to define behaviour as anti-social (or not) depended on the circumstances and was often inconsistent. Alfie outlined how the police at some times chose to define his and his friends' actions as anti-social whereas at other times they would 'let them off'. He also talked about how the police often 'threatened' to punish them if they did not follow police advice.

I remember once when we were over at bus stop [talking] and there was...bout six of us, wasn't even being loud, the coppers were just parked between bus stop and printers. ... Anyway, and these three coppers got out and goes, "right, move on now. You're being too loud". We're like "what?", and we goes "we haven't even done nowt", and he goes, "move on now or you'll be arrested". So we all walked off and went to sit outside here, dya'know, waiting for YC to open. ... About ten minutes later they come up, pull right up in front of us with headlights full on, and they goes "we told you to move on and disperse" or whatever. And we says "we're waiting for YC to open", and he goes "what time's it open?", we goes "oh, about twenty minutes", he goes "well walk about until it's open then". - Alfie

This experience shows not only how Alfie felt that he was powerless in relations with the police, but also that behaviour – such as waiting outside the youth club – was generally considered as acceptable behaviour, unless the police decided that the actions are anti-social. Once an action or behaviour had been defined as anti-social, Alfie and his friends were forced to adhere to police instructions or be faced with further (potentially criminal) action. Alfie's experience with the police as anti-social behaviour definers was that they were inconsistent in their judgements, and according to Alfie were able to pick and choose what counts as anti-social behaviour and at what times.

The experiences that the participants had of their behaviour being labelled as anti-social were inconsistent and often made little sense to them. Although most had a clear conception of what constitutes anti-social behaviour, usually defined as petty offences and 'trouble-causing', many of the occasions when they had been labelled as anti-social did not fit these parameters. The ways in which they chose to spend their leisure time (particularly hanging around on the streets) were at some times identified by others as anti-social but at other times were not. The result of this contradiction and the reliance upon the unpredictable and un-measurable perception of 'others' was that these young people did not know when their behaviour would be considered as anti-social or not, and therefore used other resources to guide their behaviour. If one's behaviour is judged by others with apparently little logic or consistency, then one is unable to reflect upon and predict the appropriate way in which to act during future interactions. The very inconsistency and ambiguity of these interactions forces young people to look to more consistent and regular sources – usually friends and family – for their reflections of self. It is in this way that the stigma of the 'anti-social youth' label was avoided by these young people and their self-esteem remained intact.

The subjective nature of defining anti-social behaviour was something which the young people identified, and something which allowed them to define their behaviour as acceptable – 'if adults can do it, why can't I?'. The vague/fluid definition of anti-social behaviour allows these young people to negotiate an anti-social identity without internalising it. Becker's (1963: 9) notion that: "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people", in the context of anti-social behaviour means that those people who are able to apply the label (in this case adults) can do so in a far greater spectrum of circumstances and with far less consistency, which has resulted in the 'anti-social label' being diluted somewhat. If the label is applied at some times but not others; if it is employed by some adults but not all; in certain locations more than others and to certain people more than others, this creates a less-than-concrete label. If a young person finds that they are judged to be anti-social by elderly people in their area for hanging around in the local park, but then go home and find that this behaviour is judged as acceptable by their parents or within their social group, then they are more likely to reflect on and internalise the positive, rather than negative self-image that results in these two responses (Mead, 1934; Becker, 1963; Blumer, 1969). Because these young people recognise anti-social behaviour as a subjective interpretation, this allows them to define their own behaviour as not anti-social, and judge those who label them as wrong rather than questioning their own behaviour (Matza and Sykes, 1957).

The nature of anti-social behaviour is that it is defined and sanctions enacted by individuals rather than by societal consensus. This results in an inconsistent, unclear and often contradictory imposition of this new 'rule'. The young people in this study were confident in their opinions of what was 'right' and what was 'wrong' (often viewed more simply as good or bad), but anti-social is a category which was not clearly defined to them. The only way in which it was defined for them was through official contact with the police or other authorities. They generally did not see their behaviour (particularly drinking, smoking, fighting and general 'messing around') as unacceptable because it was acceptable in other contexts; most notably, for adults. The responses of the young people who took part in this research indicate that; if young people knew where the boundaries of what constitutes 'anti-social' were, they would then be able to decide to define themselves as either one or the other (anti-social or not anti-social). Yet, at the present time, they are able to take part

in anti-social behaviour without adopting an anti-social label; 'anti-social' is a state which young people are able to opt in and out of, successfully employing internal strategies to avoid adopting an anti-social identity made possible by the fluidity of the definition of 'anti-social behaviour' itself. The subjective nature of the process of defining behaviour as 'anti-social' produces a label with boundaries which are able to be shifted and reconceptualised by young people, allowing them to avoid or reject an anti-social identity.

> *[The government should] Get their arse into gear and fucking, sort it out. And then, if they sort it out, then teenagers will understand what's right and wrong cos I think at the minute they're not clear of it. They know it's wrong but they don't know how bad it is. – Grace*

As Grace outlined, if anti-social behaviour was more clearly delineated the impact of the negative label would be greater for the individual. If they "knew how bad it was" they would be more likely to avoid the behaviour, or engage in it and accept the negative connotations for their identity.

A further condition which allowed the participants to successfully negotiate the anti-social label was through recourse to other positive role identities that they had in their lives. This will be explored in the next section.

7.4.2 Positive Alternatives to an Anti-Social Identity

Some suggest that rather than being the primary defining identity, stigma is relational (Crocker and Quinn, 2001; Trautner and Collett, 2010). Through recourse to their position as youths as a 'group' identity (Goffman, 1963), the participants indicated that they were able to associate the anti-social label with their group-association rather than their 'self' (see Crocker and Major, 1999). The stigma of being identified as anti-social was rationalised as a reflection on their youth-identity rather than on their personal identity. In their study of the stigmatising impact of obesity, Quinn and Crocker (1999; and Crocker, 1999) illustrate that the extent to which obesity negatively affected women's self esteem varied according to the participants' perception of their obesity as a result of self-control. The women who perceived their obesity as a result of a lack of control indicated that the stigma of the 'obese' label had a greater impact. For those that constructed their weight as out of their control, the stigma had a lesser effect on their identity. This suggests that in perceiving the anti-social label as a reflection of their youth status, the participants in this

study were able to avoid the stigmatising nature of the label. The participants' identification by others as anti-social was therefore related to their youth categorisation over which they have no control and consequently the stigma of the label was less able to be attached to them individually. In this context, the stigma of an anti-social identity can be mediated through having other socially acceptable identities such as 'good worker' or 'friend'.

One of the interview strategies adopted in the interviews was to ask the participant to describe themselves as others see them; for example, "how do you think your best friend/employer/parent/teacher would describe you?". This line of discussion was aimed at prompting the interviewees to attempt to objectively describe themselves and ascertain their identity status in situations other than anti-social behaviour (see Cooley's notion of the 'looking-glass self' (1902)). How people *think* that other people describe them can provide an insight into how they understand themselves. Some of the respondents talked in terms of a relatively stable and constant sense of self (more common amongst the male respondents), but most reflected that each situation could reflect a different version of their 'self'. A case which reflects both the consistency of some self-concepts as well as the possibility of dual/competing identities is Josh, an 18 year old young man who lived at home with his parents and worked with his father. He had sporadically been in trouble with the police for petty vandalism and fighting but at interview felt he was no longer anti-social unless he was drunk.

> *Author: How do you think your best friend would describe you?*
> *Josh: Okay, I dunno, probably just fun, like to have a laugh, drink and that but as soon as I drink maybe, turn a bit anti-social and that… Turn into a, yeah probably turn into a vandal … I'd like to think that they thought I was nice, could have a conversation with me, trust me and that.*

And then when asked the same question about his parents Josh replied:

> *Nice. Funny lad. Sometimes me dad calls me an arsehole and that, I get on his nerves and that, when I get into trouble and that. Apart from that I think they'd think I was a nice lad.*

And his employers:

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Erm, a good worker, funny, a bit cheeky and that towards him and other employers and that. I do wind a couple of em up and that and some of them can't take it but I like to think it's having a laugh and that … I got a bit angry and punched one of the saw screens and that cost him [the main boss] £1700 worth of damage, so I was lucky to keep my job for that. So he doesn't really like me much, you can see why.

Josh represented himself as a 'good guy' who sometimes does anti-social things rather than someone who was essentially 'bad' or anti-social. In each situation he imagined that the other people saw him as 1) fun or funny 2) nice and 3) sometimes trouble. Josh suggested that the reason his boss did not like him was valid – Josh was taking the role of the 'other' to reflect on the fact that, in his boss' eyes he was not nice. This illustrates that Josh was able to occupy more than one identity, and that his sense of self could be changed according to the situation. When with his friends he may sometimes have been anti-social but was at the same time a good friend, a good son, a fun colleague. All of the young people similarly had 'identities' (other than anti-social) that were positive in some way.

I have done [good] things. I've been in the local paper before with Poppy, advertising them things to put in your bottle neck things, to stop people spiking em. Erm, bought something from the charity shop. Donated some money to Erin to do her charity... - Alfie

Trautner and Collett (2010) in their research with students who are also strippers, suggest that having a positive self identity (such as student) can allow an individual to mediate a negative identity (such as stripper). Young people may therefore be able to avoid the full force of an anti-social identity through recourse to their 'normal' or acceptable identities as students, children, employees, brother or sister and so forth. All of the participants considered themselves as a good friend if nothing else. Alfie acknowledged that people may define him as anti-social but his positive identity as a 'hard worker' outweighed the stigma of a negative anti-social identity:

I think a lot of them will think [I'm a] "thug", "chav", "dickhead" … Because I wear trackie bottoms (got jeans on today), and because I used to sit on the wall all the time. Used to just sit and drink. They just see you, sat on the wall, with trackies on and a bottle in your hand and they just think "trouble-maker". Simple as. Labelled as that. I remember ages ago Kyle Jackson started on me, Josh and Turner. We was only about fifteen, and this is when I had three jobs, yeah. He started on us and he was hammered, and he was like "I could have all yous lot, I drink hard, me" and all this lot. Grabbed Josh's drink from the floor, stamped on it, and he's like "you just need to do something

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> *with your lives!" and all this lot and I goes "well I've got three jobs, and*
> *I'm at school", and he's like "I drink hard!", you know, he just couldn't*
> *say nothing else cos I've got a job and, d'ya know what I mean? He just*
> *didn't know what to say. - Alfie*

He went on later to indicate that not only could he choose between identities according to the situation, but he could also occupy more than one at a time:

> *Alfie: I can be sensible and I can be a fucking dickhead.*
> *Author: So what do you think you are overall?*
> *Alfie: I dunno. Cos I'm both.*

Crocker (1999) argues that stigma and the consequences that this has for the individual's self-concept are dependent on the social situation and the meanings that the individual gives to that situation. Thus stigma is not automatically internalised by the individual. The social meanings that a group of young people give to their practice of hanging around on the streets - that they are simply spending time socialising with their friends - may outweigh the stigma that others impose on them: that they are anti-social and intimidating. The young people all indicated that youths were judged as anti-social in wider society. This shared collective representation may allow the young people to blame their individual stigmatization on wider prejudice and stereotypes rather than any individual failing (Crocker and Major, 1989). If the young people experience labelling they may be able to rationalise this simply as a reflection of the prejudice against youths which exists in contemporary society.   This allows them to maintain their individual non-anti-social identity, in line with Goffman's (1963) suggestion that people are more able to resist stigma which is aimed at a 'tribal identity' – in this context, their group identity as 'youths'. If they also have other social roles which are socially acceptable, individuals may utilise this as the *real* them, thus avoiding the stigmatising identity.

7.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has explored young people's processes of identity construction in the context of the ASB Agenda. Although, as outlined in chapter seven, the participants felt that they were stigmatized as anti-social youths, they did not accept this as part of their identity. The participants adopted a variety of strategies to negotiate the stigma of the anti-social label including the 'techniques of negotiation' outlined in section 7.3, which allow the individual to engage in ASB whilst maintaining a non-anti-social identity.   The chapter has also

illustrated that young people understand anti-social behaviour in contradictory ways both as essential and relational. They adopted relational definitions for their own anti-social behaviour, but this was placed in opposition to the essential understanding of anti-social others identified as 'chavs'. These anti-social individuals were described by the participants as being disrespectful, selfish and aggressive; characteristics of their very being. The respondents utilised these stereotypical constructions of chavs to engage in a process of 'othering' and therefore construct themselves as 'insiders'. Grace explained the difference between normal and anti-social people in relation to social class:

> *I don't know anyone posh which is anti-social. I don't know anyone. ...Maybe it's the fact that, a lot of anti-social people are people that have like, that go into prison and they've got shit backgrounds and like, family backgrounds and that. Like, they might be near enough homeless and their family might be fucking, druggies and, live on shitty council estates which are really rough and actually don't give a shit. And these posh people...the ones which are well off, like, they get whatever they want, and they don't need to...look for attention, kinda thing. - Grace*

In the quote, Grace was clearly not situating herself as an anti-social person but neither was she categorising herself as 'posh'. This form of description, of binary opposites, creates a large space between where Grace was able to situate herself. She was neither anti-social nor posh but was something in-between. Through the use of identity strategies and recourse to the discursive tool that it the chav 'other', young people are able to negotiate an anti-social identity through a confirmation of what they are not. It has been argued that the socio-political conditions which allow young people to resist an anti-social identity include the subjective nature of the ASB defining process and the inconsistent enforcement of ASB measures, and the young people's maintenance of other roles which afford them a positive sense of self. Yet the overarching factor which allows young people the freedom to define as non-anti-social is the liminality of their position as youths. This construction of youth as liminal is the primary focus of chapter 8 which explores the ways in which young people make sense of the association between youth and anti-social behaviour.

CHAPTER 8: LIMINAL YOUTH AND THE MEANING OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

8.1 INTRODUCTION

> *Because we're in the way. Because we might do summat wrong.*
> *Because they think we're more likely to do summat wrong. Because*
> *we're young, immature, not responsible... - Alfie*

The previous chapter explored the strategies employed by young people to negotiate an anti-social youth identity. It argued that these young people were able to maintain a non-anti-social identity through recourse to identity negotiation strategies made possible by their constructions of their position as fluid and ambiguous. This chapter continues on the theme of liminality (as discussed in chapter 2.2), exploring how young people make sense of 'youth' and its relation to anti-social behaviour.

The chapter is presented in two sections. The first (8.2) explores the specific ways in which the participants defined youth and adulthood, and how they constructed their position in relation to these categories. This is done through an exploration of the respondents' construction of their position in terms of liminality, in particular as between social positions of childhood and adulthood. It explores what they consider to be 'markers' for youth and adulthood including jobs, marriage and children, and how they understand these in terms of maturity, independence and responsibility. For the participants, youth is defined not as a straight and forward path to adulthood but a complex transition reliant on a combination of inter-connected factors. It is argued that, for these young people, the transition from childhood to adulthood is a complicated one with few clear boundaries or thresholds against which they can mark their transition. The second part of the chapter (section 8.3) explores the participants' construction of the relation between youth and antisocial behaviour. This is done with reference to what the respondents considered that 'normal' youth entails – freedom, wildness, experimentation, irresponsibility – and how they make sense of the wider perception of youth as problematic. Finally, the participants' views of their future are examined in order to understand how they view their relationship to society. It is argued in the chapter that the ambiguous way in which young people construct themselves as both and neither child/adult and/or anti-social is reflective of the

liminal position that youth occupies in society. Matza's (1964) concepts of 'drift' and 'maturational reform' (see chapter 4.6.2) are drawn upon to explain the overwhelming view of the participants that they would 'grow out of' anti-social behaviour.

Firstly, the chapter deals with the ways in which the participants defined youth.

8.2 YOUTH & ADULTHOOD

Chapter two explored the literature surrounding the concept of 'youth' in society and what it means. This section explores both the ways in which the respondents constructed their own position, as well as how they conceptualise 'youth' in wider society. To begin this section, it is necessary to discuss the ways in which the young people defined their own position in relation to youth, childhood and adulthood. The age of respondents ranged from 13 to 19 years, a period broadly defined in previous chapters as 'youth' yet the data suggests that this period is seen as a transition through many different part-statuses that can be experienced both separately and at the same time. These were defined by the respondents in relation to social processes including education and work, but also through less calculable concepts including maturity, independence and responsibility.

During the interviews the ways in which the respondents described themselves including 'teenager', 'youth' and 'young adult' are often associated with the age range of the participants, but 'big kid' and 'adult' were also mentioned by some. The participants were most likely to align themselves with 'teenager', a stage clearly defined by age and therefore an easy reference point.

> *[I'm] Still a teenager. – Simon*
>
> *[I'm a] gobby, teenager really – Amelia*
>
> *[I'm] A grown up teenager – Ella*
>
> *I'd still class myself as a teenager...I'm still in my teens. So I think like that – Grace*

Teenager was a label which the respondents easily identified with, possibly because it no longer has the same associated negativity as other terms including 'youth'. As outlined in chapter two (section 2.3.4), the term 'teenager' originated in the 1940s in America and

represented the increased freedom and financial independence of young people as a new category of consumer (Savage, 2007). Subsequent youth subcultures in the 1950s and 1960s such as Teddy Boys meant that 'teenager' became associated with problematic youth, but this characterisation has faded with time and the term is now more neutral.

Age was an important marker for the respondents in defining status, with particular reference to social measures such as 18 years as the legal age of adult responsibility. Specific legal limits, particularly 18 years as the legal age to drink alcohol and 17 years as the legal age to drive were viewed as important markers in defining status. Grace, 18 years old at the time of interview, felt that these social markers were 'misleading' in giving the impression that adulthood or some form of maturity would be reached.

> *I thought coming eighteen I'd be like "Yes! Get in, I'll feel mint now". [But it's] Fucking shit. Going round town is absolute shit now. I hardly go out anymore.   Gay. …When I hit sixteen I was planning my eighteenth. Fuck my seventeenth. I hated being seventeen. It's like I'm stuck between being sixteen and eighteen. But I could've been driving. Could've been driving by now if I'd put my arse into it. It's gay. - Grace*

Before each of these age points (16, 17 and 18 years) Grace had felt that reaching the age would mark some sort of change in her life, but each time she had been disappointed. In the case of her eighteenth birthday, she felt that her life had actually become less exciting rather than more as she had previously expected. What is clear from Grace's view is that these young people have no specific events or 'thresholds' to mark these different stages, and they can therefore be experienced differently by different individuals. She expects there to be some 'magical' change within her which will manifest at one of these points but this does not materialise and she is left in status limbo. To be eighteen is seen as the ultimate goal but when it was reached Grace felt there had been no change, so she moved the expected feelings about adulthood to a prediction of when she would be older. What is evident through Grace's perception is that adulthood, although at first anchored to a future age, in reality is defined by a 'feeling' of being an adult which enacts a change in the individual to facilitate the changes to an adult life, or 'settling down'.

> *When I hit twenty one then I'll think, "right, I'm an adult now. Things need to change. I need to stand on my own two feet. I need to get myself a job. I need to get myself a flat. I need to get my life all in perspective and that". - Grace*

For Grace the ultimate transition will occur first when these 'thought changes' take place and this will then lead to the life changes such as settling down, gaining employment, and an independent home. So although factors such as age and social age restrictions were considered to be a factor in marking various points of youth (and ultimately entrance into adulthood) other more complex factors were also involved. This uncertainty around youth, when it would 'end' and what that would mean for the life of the individual was a common theme in the interviews. Whereas childhood and adulthood were constructed as fixed statuses, the participants found youth much harder to define. Thus, the majority of participants constructed their positions in youth through reference to childhood and adulthood, as being neither adult nor child. The central factors the respondents utilised to make sense of these statuses were maturity, independence and responsibility.

8.2.1 Maturity

> *VA: Why do you think that adults and teenagers are seen as different?*
> *Simon: Maturity really.*

A common theme across all of the interviews was the notion of maturity. The respondents viewed youth, childhood and adulthood as categories delineated by differing levels of maturity (or immaturity). The young people's construction of maturity was based on an imagined continuum from immature childhood to mature adulthood. These positions at either end of the spectrum were defined as fixed and static, with the time intersecting these points as fluid and changeable. Maturity was associated with age and social expectations (the older the individual the more mature they were expected to be), yet the participants illustrated that age did not necessarily equal maturity.

> *Well officially it's eighteen [when you're an adult] isn't it, but I think that's ridiculous cos there's some people who are quite immature. - Sophie*

Although the age of eighteen is defined in society as legally adult, Sophie's view is that adulthood in reality depends on the maturity of the individual. An individual who is immature cannot be considered a full adult, and both maturity and immaturity were defined by a range of factors. In a discussion about the wide age range of people in his peer group, from early teens to mid-twenties, Simon suggested that maturity is affected by

one's peer group. This accounted for what he perceived as the immaturity of the older people in his group.

> *It's cos they'll hang about with younger people so they'll get into the swing of being like them. If they hang around with older, more mature people they'll, mature a bit more. - Simon*

With reference to an older member of the group who was aged twenty-one, Simon suggests that to be an adult an individual *has* to be mature; there can be no ambiguity about their position.

> *You just can't see him as an adult [laugh]. I dunno. It's just, the way he acts really. You have to be mature... You don't see people, if you've grown up with them you don't see em as an adult until they're about twenty-four, summat like that. Somewhere round there. – Simon*

This illustrates that Simon views youth as a period characterised by socialising with other youths, reflecting Turner's (1967) assertion that: "the liminal group is a community or comity of comrades" (p. 100). Adulthood as defined by separation from 'youth' and integration into adult areas of life. Josh defines himself as young adult because he now spends his time in the pub (an adult environment) rather than at the youth club or on the streets.

> *I don't know what category I would put myself in. Well, young adult really. Started going to the pub more so... - Josh*

The older members of the group who still hung around on the streets after they had reached eighteen were considered to be immature 'for their age'. Although maturity was not defined entirely by age, eighteen represented a time when an individual was able to indulge in adult activities and spend time in adult places (typically the pub) so those that did not take advantage of this were considered to be socially immature.

> *...me and Jack are like, best friends and we've realised drinking on the streets is pathetic. We're both eighteen so we go to the pub every weekend. We go to the pub during the week as well if he's got money. As you can tell, we haven't been here [youth club] for the last three weeks or something. - Grace*

The view that drinking on the streets when aged over eighteen is "pathetic" indicates that youth is made up of various different stages and that maturity is defined according to a complex relationship of factors. Being mature is not something that can be declared in any sense but rather is judged through an individual's behaviour:

> *That just made me think, maybe I am quite mature? But then I also think it's quite immature to say "I'm very mature" [both laugh]. I really hate it, if people say "oh I'm really mature", well do you see a forty year old woman saying "I'm really mature"? Even though they are. - Sophie*

Thus maturity, or adulthood generally, is something which is an implicit change rather than resulting from any outward event or form of ceremony. This indicates the difficulty that young people may face in making or ending the transition from youth to adulthood, from finding and experiencing the appropriate thresholds. Simon talked about this liminal phase as a place where people 'don't know where they are', relating this period as one of confusion and exploration of one's identity.

> *VA: Do you think that there's a clear cut line between all adults and all young people?*
> *Simon: Sort've but there's like, a middle group as well who don't know quite where they are. I'm still at the bottom range [laugh], still immature and that....Yeah, [I'm [mature] when I want to be. Well actually I'm immature when I want to be, I've matured a lot recently. Just college, more grown up.*

This characterisation of youth as occupying a space somewhere in the middle echoes van Gennep's (1960) characterisation of youth as being "betwixt and between". Adulthood is equated with maturity, childhood with immaturity with youth positioned somewhere in the middle. Yet although the other stages were described in terms of a static position of maturity, youth was characterised as a time when the individual could oscillate between the two whilst being neither overall. This liminal position allowed Simon to have a choice of being mature or immature, and it is this aspect of 'choice' which separates youth from adulthood.

> *VA: What do you consider yourself to be?*
> *Alfie: [laugh] I don't. I don't fucking... No, I wouldn't say a boy. Adolescent young male? [VA: An adult?] No. [VA: A child?] No. In between. Teenager.*

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Alfie defines himself as not-adult, not-child but between these two categories as a young adolescent male or teenager. William's conception of his own position reflects a view of youth as a transition between two stages on a spectrum of maturity:

> *I'd say I'm, three quarters of the way to adult. I'm still very childish when I want to be, so... Young adult. Teenager, yeah. - William*

For William childhood means total immaturity, adulthood means total maturity and because he is mostly mature but can sometimes act immaturely he positions himself as 'almost' adult. The fluidity within the period defined by the respondents as youth indicates that youth is not one defined status but is made up of a variety of different sub-stages and circumstances which can be inter-changeable. This indicates that 'youth' is not a linear transition between childhood and adulthood but a complicated process which involves different statuses which can be moved between, both 'backwards' and 'forwards'. In response to a question of whether and when he would consider himself to be 'grown up', Jamie illustrates that he did not presently view himself as an adult.

> *No. I'm a big kid really... Probably [be grown up] about thirty knowing me. I'm getting that way. [I class myself as] Young person I think I am. Yeah, until you get to the two-oh [twenty]...Yeah, I'm a young person still yeah. - Jamie*

Jamie indicates that he sees himself as both a 'big kid' and a 'young person' simultaneously. He is able to occupy aspects of both identities, which appear to be contradictory, at the same time. This notion of occupying different statuses at the same time was described by other participants. Ethan equally described how he felt that he could move between statuses according to the situation. He equated childhood with 'fun' and adulthood with seriousness and being able to act confidently and responsibly.

> *[I'm] A big kid I guess. No, I don't really class myself as anything. Different times different...adult when it comes to like a fight in the street and it needs separating them and I'm like "c'mon guys, sit down", but then when it's a summer's day and there's nothing to do I'm like, "yeah, let's go to Flamingo Land or something", I'm a big kid or...it depends. – Ethan*

Ethan was able to accept aspects of adulthood whilst not defining himself as a complete adult. Adulthood is conceived as a static and permanent state of unchanging maturity

characterised by self-control and rationality. Josh particularly spoke about adulthood in terms of self-control:

> *I think, I'd say I was a young adult, yes. [I'd] Probably describe an adult as someone who, always in control of theirself [sic] and know what they're doing... I always know what I'm doing now, and that. But I still don't know when to stop drinking but, [I] still always know when not to do something, and when to like, do stuff and that and what stuff to do and that, what's acceptable. So I'd say I control myself more now. – Josh*

The rationality required for adulthood was defined by Josh as "knowing what you're doing" in different situations but this needs to be combined with self-control in order to be fully realised. So although he considered himself to be rational, he did not define as an adult because he did not practice self-control. Thus, whilst young people maintain an identification with immaturity or 'acting like a big kid', they do not define themselves (or others) as adult.

8.2.2 Independence

> *I'd say [adulthood] happens when [you] leave home and get a job, I'd say that's why. Because of maturity. Someone becomes an adult when they're mature and look after themselves. – Ethan*

Independence was a key theme in the participants' perceptions of youth and adulthood, and was conceived as a natural extension of maturity. This was explained in different ways including independence in terms of space (moving out of home), finances (earning money), and emotionally (from parents). Employment was viewed as a significant factor in the transition to adulthood in developing all of the factors associated with adulthood; maturity, independence and responsibility, although work did not automatically make an individual an adult. The money that employment provides was seen to be a central factor in enabling independence from parents, so getting job was considered to be an important step towards adulthood.   The emotional aspects of having a full-time job including responsibility, respect, and independence were the factors most talked about by the participants as making them *feel* like they were becoming adults. The respondents with full-time jobs (around half of the group) were more likely than the others to define themselves as 'young adults' or 'almost adults'.

This very second? I'm an adult. I don't know, I can sometimes act a bit stupid for my age but, well it's like, most people think that Reece's [younger brother] older than me. But that's just the way I look. Yeah. And it's sometimes the way I act as well, I can sometimes act like a little, kid. But then sometimes, like this! I can act sometimes like, you know, quite mature. And it's like at work...oh my god I've never been so mature in all my life! [laughing] It's like stepping into a new world. [VA: So you're an adult?] Nearly. Yeah [laugh]. - Lilly

The view that full-time employment is like "stepping into a new world" is symbolic in representing the crossing of a threshold in Lilly's move from youth to adulthood. Yet because there were still occasions when she identified herself as immature, she self-defined on the whole as 'nearly' adult. Only one of the participants – Jasmine – consistently referred to herself as an adult.

[I'm] Definitely an adult. I am holding up two jobs, just joined the army, I'm training for the army, I'm still working at the bakery, I'm paying my rent at my house, paying all my bills... I'm paying my own way, paying the gas, everything, what I use. Part of the TV license, EVERYTHING you can get I now pay for. I'm starting my driving lessons, I paid for everything for myself. Everything. My contract on my phone, to my own laptop at home and my own internet. I pay everything. So to me, I'm an adult. I'm paying my way, with my own hard-earned money. - Jasmine

This extract of the discussion indicates how clearly Jasmine felt that being financially independent from her parent/s contributed to her adult status. She felt that having a job and earning her own money was part of adulthood in that it enabled her to pay for not just the treats or luxuries such as a mobile phone and laptop, but also living costs and household bills. For Jasmine, economic independence was an important part of defining her adulthood but was achievable as a result of other social factors such as leaving school and gaining employment.

And when you're paying for your own stuff and you're not living off either benefits or ... like thirty year olds are still on benefits, I still think of them as childs [sic], they can't go off their lazy arses and get a job? That's what I mean, you're not an adult til you experience [it for] yourself. When you leave school, you pay for things, you're turning into an adult because you know, you're paying for everything yourself, you're not with your mum, your dad for money, you're not on benefits for money, you're earning it, you're earning a living, to become an adult. That's my point of view, that's what I think an adult is. - Jasmine

It is significant that Jasmine viewed financial independence valid only through "hard work" and not through being 'given' it by others. Through reference to people living on state benefits Jasmine clarified that she perceived simply having access to money as not enough to mark adulthood, but that it is the financial independence gained from earning one's own wages which allows access to an adult status and the advantages that come with that. These ideas about what adulthood means; financial independence, a job or career and independent living were intertwined with desistance from what Jasmine considered as childish behaviours including anti-social behaviour or "starting trouble". Alfie also characterised his independence according to money but also to leaving home, having a car and having a sense of ambition:

> *Cos I've always worked, and ever since being fourteen I've always worked, never asked her [mum] for money. [I] Always used to get money, was on a hundred quid when I was in year eleven, so I've never asked her for no money, [I] used to go out and buy my own clothes, everything really. Done my driving, and looking to move out, not like my other sister who just sits at home all the time, Caitlin. I mean, she's got a job, but she's not doing anything with her life. - Alfie*

This independence of thought in having ambition and wanting to "do something with your life" meant that Alfie felt he was closer to adulthood than his older sister who was still reliant on their parents. As well as getting a 'proper' job, moving out of home and getting a house or flat away from parents was considered by all of the participants as part of adulthood.

> *[You're an adult] when you've got like, a decent well-paying job. Erm, just like, your own house and, more civilised really. - Simon*

Ella and Jamie, like Jasmine, both talked about the wanting to move out of their parental home into their own accommodation as soon as they were able to. Yet for both Ella and Jamie this decision was more closely related to wanting to remove themselves from disruptive or abusive environments rather than because they felt that they had reached adult independence. Alfie, the oldest participant to take part aged 19 at second interview, was the only participant to have begun to actively look for his own accommodation away from the family home. His decision arose largely from overcrowding in his parents' home which at the time of interview accommodated nine people (and eleven dogs) in a four bedroom house which meant that he shared a bedroom with his younger brothers. Yet

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although this may have been the original factor in his decision to move out at that time, he was also influenced by a desire to gain independence. This 'spatial' independence could also be gained through other means, particularly getting a car and learning to drive. For Joshua, passing his driving test and buying a car had allowed him greater independence and freedom to choose how to spend his time.

> *I've definitely calmed down a lot since [last year]... I just realised that I had to calm down or I'd end up just, going even worse than what I am and ending up like people like Hughesy and that, in and out [of prison]. I didn't really fancy that, especially when I wanted to be a policeman. So I had to calm down a bit. [VA: So do you feel more sensible, more grown up now?] Oh definitely. And having a car and that as well you can do more things. ... when I go the pub, I tend to have an alcoholic drink unless I'm in the car, then I can stop myself cos I know that that's stupid, drink driving.*

Josh felt that having a car had enabled him to have a greater control over his life and the activities which he engaged in, and that this had contributed to facilitating the emotional changes that he had made over the previous year. Having both the independence and responsibility of his own car had made him more mature and enabled (rather than forced) him to exercise a greater deal of self-control.

The emotional aspect of independence was raised by Sophie who suggested that maturity could not be defined by chronological age but through separation from parents and appropriateness of social behaviour. To illustrate this she spoke of a family friend aged 16 who she considered to have acted in a childish and immature manner on a trip to New York:

> *Towards the end of the day she was nearly in tears and was like, "it's horrible and I'm so tired!" and it was about half seven at night and then she put on this fake limp and she was limping along holding her mum's hand and she was crying her eyes out and I was thinking, I stopped doing that when I was about ten! Complaining that my feet hurt and that I was tired, I mean, my mum would give me a right bollocking if we took some friends round SmallCity or something and wanted to show them stuff, I'd keep my gob shut, you don't complain that it's too tiring… But I was just looking at her thinking, god she's acting like a right baby, she's only a year younger than me - Sophie*

Sophie categorised this girl in childhood terms as "a baby" and indicates that whilst behaviours such as reliance on parents for comfort and support may be acceptable in

childhood, they are not youth behaviours. Her own position within youth could be defined according to an ability to be self-sufficient and weather difficult circumstances in order to maintain both her own dignity and the respect of adult others. Jamie suggested that he would be an adult aged around twenty or twenty two, but indicated that age was not the only definer of adulthood:

> *You have to try and be more mature when you're an adult. Cos erm, that's me not good at all cos I aren't very mature for my age. I still prat about. And, if you're responsible as well. So, that int me either [laugh]. Well me mum says I'm a big kid really so, can't do a lot about it... I'm off to go in for my [driving] license soon though. Gonna get a job and everything. Off to go do it then. Then I know I'll have money going in so, I can get it done. - Jamie*

Jamie did not consider himself to be either responsible or mature in spite of his age which, at eighteen, in his mind *should* have made him an adult. He was clear that he knew what things he would have to do to become an adult but insinuated that social circumstances – not having a job or money – were the things that may be 'holding him back'. He was keen to point out that he did feel that he was "on his way" to growing up but largely seemed to deflect responsibility on to others for not yet having completed the transition. During the interview Jamie talked at length about his mother as 'annoying' and over-controlling but he also used her as a reference point in his own opinions, often stating "well my mum says..." about different subjects. This may reflect an emotional dependence on his mother which partly maintained his identity as a "big kid" rather than young adult. At the other end of the spectrum of independence, Jasmine felt that the independence that she had gained through financially supporting herself whilst living at home had allowed her emotional independence.

> *To me, I'm an adult. I've got myself out there, I'm going to the army, I'm doing my dream job. ...I won't be at home, I'll be living off my own self, my own initiative, I'll have to get my own stuff in, my own food, like I do now. So it's not gonna be like "whoa, hang on a minute, what's going on here? I'm living in a completely different place, I have to buy everything myself", I've already experienced it, I've already paid for everything. So it's not gonna be like, a shock to me when I leave home. – Jasmine*

She viewed this as a preparation for adulthood and felt confident that she would be able to manage alone when she did leave home. It is evident that the participants viewed

emotional independence as a requirement for entering the 'adult world'. The transition between childhood and adulthood is characterised as the transition from dependence to interdependence (Jones, 1996). Youth, viewed in terms of this transition, sits between the dependence of childhood – on parents, school and other social institutions - and the social responsibility associated with adulthood. Youth then, is a time characterised by an independence from parents and when the responsibilities of adulthood have not yet been attached.

8.2.3 Responsibility

The young people interviewed generally talked about a time in the future when they would become 'responsible adults'. Responsibility was one of the key factors raised by all of the participants in both defining youth and adulthood, with particular reference to the freedom experienced in youth due to a lack of responsibilities. Responsibility was interpreted to mean a variety of different things by the participants. The responsibilities associated with employment were viewed differently than others such as having children and paying bills. This was due to the fact that responsibilities at work were seen to facilitate independence and maturity. Sophie in particular felt that her work at a children's nursery and the responsibility of looking after other people's children had allowed her to become more confident and mature.

> *...now cos I'm working full time, it's changed me a lot working cos ...when I first started I didn't want to talk to the parents cos I'd just think that they were thinking "why would we trust such a young girl to look after our children?" but then they'd come up to you and be like "how have they been?" and stuff and they would trust [me]. They're making me responsible for their child for a whole day and not just their child but a lot of other people, and that made me think, I'm not just a kid that hasn't handed in their homework, I'm responsible for all these children, they must think something of me or they'd pull them out of nursery. That's changed me loads... I don't know, it just makes me feel a lot older cos I do work, rather than go to school or whatever. - Sophie*

For Sophie, the responsibility that she had been given at work equated with trust and that had made her feel more like an adult. It was the confidence that other people had in her that had allowed her to *feel* that she was closer to being an adult because she was viewed as an adult by others. This suggests that the qualities associated with adulthood do not come about through a change in the individual but through changes in the way that society

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reacts to them. For the respondents, adulthood would be reached when society defined them as adults, not simply according to age but according to the social responsibilities which it allows them to have. They suggested that they would only be defined as adults when society had confirmed this status through treating them like adults in social interactions (Mead, 1934).

The participants commonly talked about having children as part of adulthood, but around half said that having children would be the primary reason for their change from youth to adult. This was primarily because children were considered to be the ultimate responsibility in life, for the female participants.

> *I think it'll be a while before I'm an adult. When I'm having kids. If I've got a kid, then I'll be an adult. – Alfie*

> *[I'll be an adult aged] About twenty. Probably have a kid by then [laugh]. So I've gotta step up to the bloody mark at some point haven't I! ... Yeah you're more of an adult when you've got like, a responsibility. ...When you're [young] you can just go out whenever you want, come back whenever you want, you can go out partying whenever you've got money [laugh] or whenever you feel like it. But when you've got a child, you've gotta find a babysitter if you wanna go out or you've gotta beg your mother or, do you know what I mean? - Lilly*

In referring to having children, Lilly considered that this life event would force her to become a rational and stable adult by "stepping up to the mark" in facing her responsibilities. At the time of interview she characterised her life through a lack of responsibilities which meant that she had the freedom to do whatever she wanted. Although all of the participants viewed parenthood as a serious responsibility, the reactions did differ according to gender. Whilst the males saw having children as an important part of adulthood, the females viewed this responsibility more in terms of what would 'force' them to grow up. Amelia was pregnant at the time of interview and in reference to her impending parenthood stated: "I've had to grow up fast. A little bit. Well I *will* have to, I'm just sort've getting there". Even for Amelia, it was parenthood rather any other factor, including pregnancy, which would oblige her to grow up.

Grace held much the same opinion as Lilly in believing that having children was something which she wanted to do at some point in the future, but that parenthood would be

restrictive and thus not desired in the near future. Having children was seen by Grace as a something that was associated with adulthood and responsibility, and was something that she was not keen to rush into.

> *Like, I've been asked to get pregnant so we can get a free house... I was like, "no ta, cos I don't wanna wreck my life". I said I'd rather pay for a flat than get pregnant. Fair do's my best mate's pregnant, well she's had a kid a year ago... But, she copes, she's got her mum's support so fair enough. It's scary though innit? I'd be petrified having kids, me. Be well scared. Fair do's I've like, made an age limit...when I'll have kids. Hopefully... but I don't wanna be too old for it, but I don't wanna be bloody, ten years older than it or something, well twenty years older than it or something. I can still go clubbing and it hits eighteen. I wouldn't mind it when I'm just forty or something but... I don't know. Scary. - Grace*

This illustrates that some responsibilities were judged to be more constricting than others; Grace would prefer to take the smaller responsibility of paying for a flat than the larger responsibility of parenthood which is far more restrictive. The general consensus among the participants was that although maturity and independence were positive characteristics that they actively sought, responsibility was an aspect of adulthood that they wanted to avoid. This construction of adult responsibilities as 'scary' was reflected by other participants (particularly Ethan and Ruby) who actively wanted to maintain what they considered to be the freedoms of youth and avoid adulthood. Ruby's view was that adults were constrained by their social position and were therefore lass able to 'have fun'. She considered that this was one of the reasons for the negative view of young people in society:

> *They're old, we're young, and they're jealous. They have more responsibilities so they can't do anything. Ha! Sorry [laughing]. [VA: Why?] Cos they have loads of responsibilities now, they have to pay bills [laugh], and look after their kids. But we're actually having fun. So they get all jealous cos they have to sit at home and watch Coronation Street, with their glasses, their reading glasses and their paper. [laugh] Sorry, that's a right like, stereotype [laughing], of an old person. - Ruby*

The freedom associated with youth has long been a concern of society, evidenced by the social programmes such as the Boy Scouts in the 19th century (Gillis, 1975), to provide youth with positive activities aimed at instilling young people with a sense of responsibility. This concern is related to the fact that freedom in conjunction with immaturity may lead

young people to make 'bad' decisions. In keeping with this view, Amelia thought that young people were more anti-social than adults and that this could be explained through the freedom which characterises youth:

> *[Young people] They're just more childish, they haven't grown up yet,*
> *they haven't got no responsibilities. And…they don't really think about*
> *other people or like, anything. - Amelia*

This selfishness in 'not thinking about other people' is a common criticism of young people, but something which Amelia considers as a result of the lack of responsibilities that young people experience. Ruby's caricature of adulthood as boring and restrictive in comparison to freedom and fun of youth was mirrored by Ethan in his interview.

> *I suppose cos most teenagers stay at home and live with their parents*
> *so they don't have to worry about anything like money or where to live*
> *or like, jobs or anything. And that's why they can be wild. I guess it's*
> *sort of a jealously aspect I suppose, all wild and free with their whole*
> *lives ahead of them. Whereas when they've got a job and their spirits*
> *have been crushed a bit it like, yeah they're an adult now, living in the*
> *real world I suppose [both laugh]. Yeah, I suppose that goes into it.*
> *Once they look after themselves they have worries I suppose, then*
> *they'd be seen as an adult. - Ethan*

Ethan's construction of adulthood was defined as maturity, responsibilities (which he refers to as "worries"), and a lack of freedom. He suggests that it is this freedom which allows young people to be 'wild' or anti-social. Ethan did not consider himself to be an adult despite having a job and being independent; characteristics he associated with adulthood.

> *Yeah [I'm independent], but I still live at home. I'm not an adult, no. I*
> *don't take anything seriously yet. I suppose, that's just assuming that*
> *there's just two categories of teenager and adult but if you looked at it*
> *closely there's different stages. I suppose I'm getting near to adult but I*
> *wouldn't say, not fully, no. [VA: So you think that you'll be an adult*
> *when you leave home?] Yeah. Well if you had to class it. You could act*
> *mature and make people believe you're an adult but other people could*
> *say like, "no, he's childish and he just jokes around". - Ethan*

Adulthood could not be defined necessarily with reference to financial independence but was about 'taking life seriously'. He views the relationship between youth and adulthood as complicated and fluid, and not clearly defined but including an amount of choice on the part of the individual – to leave home and get a job, but also in relation to attitude or

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whether to "take life seriously". Ethan's views indicate that there is no defining line marking the entrance to adulthood, that there are many stages and interactions that are not necessarily completed in any 'order' (as is the traditional view of youth as a progressive transition to adulthood) but can be chosen and experienced differently according to the situation. This challenges the conception of youth and adulthood as distinct and separate life stages. For example, one can reach maturity but act immaturely in certain situations. Ethan's general view of adulthood was that it was an inevitable part of life but not something which he was keen to rush into. Others also had this view, typically because they associated adulthood with a loss of freedom. Simon was clear that he wanted to avoid adulthood for as long as possible because as he stated: "I don't want to grow up and get old". Josh similarly felt that he should make the most of his youth: "you're only young once aren't you? Got to live your life, go to the pub and have fun".

The participants in the research defined youth and their own position within it as 'in-between' childhood and adulthood. This constructs youth as a time of becoming rather than being, and young people as occupying a non-status in society. Sophie defines her position as not adulthood, not childhood but as 'a person'.

> *VA: It sounds like having a job has made you feel more like an adult?*
> *Sophie: Yeah, definitely. Well rather than feeling like an adult, just feeling like a person and not...I dunno, just feeling like everyone is a person rather than there's adults and there's children.*

She felt that work had provided her not necessarily with an adult status, but simply *a status* that was previously lacking. This fits with the view of youth as a liminal phase in which youths are treated as 'non-people' with no defined social status (Turner, 1969). Sophie viewed youth as a time when an individual would be treated as less of a person:

> *Yeah, [working full-time] changed me so much... it's just made me more confident but rather than seeing everyone as 'adults' or 'children', that everyone's just a person and the adults shouldn't treat the children like they're half of them. Like they're better than them and stuff, and I don't like that at all. But it still happens. It's just made me realise, I'm a person and so are they, and we're both equal so they don't need to talk to me like a child even though I am one until I'm eighteen, they don't have to treat me like [that]. – Sophie*

Sophie felt that young people and adults were of equal status, but believed that the rest of society treated young people as if they were incomplete or 'half' a person.

Although it is commonly said that the young people of today are "growing up too quickly", this research indicates that this cannot be understood as a rush to adulthood. The participants indicated that they were keen to reach the age of eighteen in order that they can begin to be allowed to undertake 'adult' activities such as drinking alcohol, driving, entering pubs and gaining a greater independence over their life choices. Yet only one participant (Jasmine) was eager to be described as an adult. For the most part the research indicates that the participants wanted to retain the freedom of youth for as long as possible, particularly the space to have fun and 'act like a kid', whilst avoiding what they considered to be the *permanent* responsibilities of adulthood. Yet this lack of social responsibilities has, with the ASB Agenda, been re-characterised as 'selfishness'. Selfishness as well as 'respect and responsibility' are key themes of the ASB agenda in constructing anti-social individuals as those who do *not* have respect for others and *refuse* to accept social responsibilities. This may go some to explain the way in which youth and anti-social behaviour have been connected: youth is characterised by a lack of responsibilities, and a lack of willingness of accept responsibilities has been constructed as evident of anti-social attitudes. Thus young people are defined as anti-social due to the character of youth itself, an issue explored in the following section.

8.3 YOUTH & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The concept of anti-social behaviour and its connection to youth in contemporary society is discussed throughout this thesis. This section explores the respondents' perceptions of anti-social behaviour as part of 'growing up'. The data suggests that although the respondents present their position as occupying a social space in-between lots of statuses, they overwhelmingly presented themselves as 'normal' and the same as everyone else. The previous part of the chapter explored young people's views about youth, adulthood and their own transitions through an exploration of the factors which define individuals as youths or not-youths. This section further develops these views, particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour. It explores the ways in which the participants construct anti-social behaviour as a part of youth. It then explores the respondents' reflections on societal views of this relationship. Finally, the section explores the participants' view that anti-

social behaviour would desist upon entering adulthood and examines what they expect in terms of their own adulthood – that they would stop being anti-social and join the rest of society as is 'normal' for all young people.

8.3.1 'Normal' Youth

As illustrated in chapter two, the concept of youth as problematic to society has ever existed (see Pearson, 1983). Ethan talked about how youth is defined by society (the "general stereotypes") and what is 'expected' from young people during youth.

> *...when someone's becomes a teenager that's supposed to be like a dodgy part of their life where you've got to expect the unexpected, well from a parent anyway, if you think from a parent the teenage years are supposed to be quite difficult. You're supposed to go through changes and act differently and your behaviour changes. But I suppose it'd be seen as less, on the sort've social ladder, below people, below adults anyway. Seen as less morals, wild and uncontrolled. I'd say anyway. - Ethan*

Here he outlines what is 'supposed' to happen during youth as the 'dodgy' part of an individual's life which is generally understood as difficult for parents and society. It represents a change from childhood, both in attitude and behaviour. Youth are less-than adults because they act outside of the accepted morals and values and therefore in need of control.

The notion that anti-social behaviour is a normal characteristic of the youth transition is based within discourses of youth as a wild, free time of boundary-testing and experimentation. The freedom and immaturity of youth mean that young people are more easily tempted into bad behaviour than adults are. Adult responsibilities keep the individual more heavily anchored to the norms and values of wider society. In terms of social standing and status young people have less to lose and are therefore more able to take risks.

> *VA: So why do you think that there is this stereotype that it's young people?*
> *Sophie: Because mostly it is [laugh]. They're the ones more easily led astray and like, you're with all your groups of friends and stuff, if you're forty and you're happily married you don't have a group of friends that*

> *you're out with every night round town and stuff, you're in with your husband. So you don't judge each other as much.*

Experimentation, especially signified by the use of alcohol and drugs, was something which the respondents viewed as a standard part of youth. These were seen as 'normal' activities because youth was considered the time when the boundaries were being tested, when the individual could test their limits.

> *People that do do drugs like that, I'm like, really...interested in what it feels like, but I wouldn't do it. Like people that have done it, I always ask them what it feels like and how much they did of it and that. I'm like, interested in it but I wouldn't do it. – Joseph*

Having new experiences, trying new things and experimentation were characteristics associated with youth. For Amelia this is simply because young people *can* do these things; they have nothing to stop them from doing so.

> *[anti-social behaviour is usually related to] Drink and drugs. Because it just, you don't know what you're doing on them. ...Adults know when to stop. Well, some do, some don't. But quite a lot of the time adults will know when to stop because they've got to go home and have responsibilities… The younger people don't have no responsibilities, yet again. They don't have nothing to go home to and actually, need to be sober for, or need to know what they're doing. They can just go home and go to bed [laugh], wake up in the morning with a bit of a headache! - Amelia*

Again, the position of youth through is constructed through reference to how their behaviour is different to adults. Amelia suggested that responsibilities somehow force the individual to become mature, and that young people were less able (or willing) to control their behaviour in comparison to adults who are more practiced at self-control. This view suggests that the only thing preventing adults from anti-social behaviour are social responsibilities, presenting a normative picture of anti-social behaviour as the 'default' setting for individuals who are not properly controlled. This position is reflective of pre-Enlightenment conceptions of children as born with 'original sin' and therefore requiring strict moral guidance in order to purify them (Synnott, 2006). In Amelia's view, young people are anti-social *because they can be* as they are free from responsibilities which prevent them from being so.

We're only teenagers [laugh]. So why give us so much shit about what we do if we're only teenagers? We're growing up. We need to make our own mistakes, and learn from them. – Grace

Here Grace characterises 'bad behaviour' as a necessary experience in order that individuals can gain independence and learn for themselves. From this perspective, anti-social behaviour is constructed as not only a part of youth but also a necessary factor in creating fully-matured and independent adults. Although anti-social behaviour was defined by the participants as a normal part of youth, for the older respondents who defined themselves as 'young adults' this was associated with a previous stage of their own youth. Sophie, at aged 18 and in full-time employment, felt that she had done the majority of her 'growing up' and that anti-social behaviour in adults marked a lack of maturity. She considered that youth was a time during which individuals were able to experiment, push the boundaries and rebel against their parents and society, but viewed this anti-social behaviour as ultimately something which an individual should 'get out of their system' before adulthood.

[Most people] Grow out of it... Some people I would think, yeah most people I would say that they did. And I'm quite glad now cos when my friends say, "let's go to the gardens in SmallCity and just sit in a corner and get completely fucked off our faces on speed or ket" and I'll be like, no. It doesn't interest me because I've been there and done it and it's not like a big wow anymore. I've got it out of my system and I've done it... - Sophie

She considers that, in terms of her own transition, it was better to get the anti-social behaviour out of the way early because now she is more mature than her peers who are still "in that phase" where they consider the embarrassing consequences of underage drinking or drugs to be "cool". The benefit of this was that she was now able to settle down and enjoy the freedom of youth without the negative aspects of risky behaviour.

Sometimes I think, well that's better because if I go to a party now and someone in my year gets totally off their face and throws up everywhere, people look at them and think "oh my god", they're not like "oh my god they're cool" but when I first did that and threw up at a friend's house for the first time when I was thirteen and got completely off my face, everyone's forgotten that now. I did that ages ago, it's not like a big thing for me anymore, whereas some of my friends are still in that phase of thinking that's really cool. It's like, well, that was cool like, five years ago to me and no-one remembers it when I did it ... And I'm kinda glad about that because I'm past everything, I'm not getting

into trouble and I just feel like I've settled down a lot with work and, yeah. - Sophie

Sophie's view was that the earlier part of youth was when it is socially appropriate to 'experiment'. Although she considered that she had 'matured' out of anti-social behaviour, she still did not define herself as an adult. This indicates that the acceptability of anti-social behaviour for young people themselves actually relates to the early 'phase' of youth rather than the latter stages including 'young adulthood'. For Sophie, anti-social behaviour was something which she associated with her earlier youth but viewed her current position as closer to adulthood and therefore anti-social behaviour was no longer acceptable. Anti-social behaviour was therefore a phase within the transition of youth but was interconnected with other factors and dependent upon a variety of social circumstances.

It's hard to say cos it's like, there's good people out there that like proper knuckle down to study at school and stuff like that. They don't ever go out and they don't smoke and don't do anything wrong and stuff like that but, and then there's just like... chavs - Amelia, 17

Within youth the participants defined themselves according to a spectrum from good to bad. At the end of 'good teenagers' were those who were perceived as those who stayed in (as opposed to going out on the streets), worked hard at school, were socially inept and stayed out of trouble. These young people did not commit anti-social behaviour and were generally referred to as 'geeks' and at the other end of the spectrum were 'chavs'. On this spectrum of behaviour, the participants typically placed themselves in the middle. Amelia defined herself as: "a bit of both really". Josh characterised young people who worked hard at school and did not go out (geeks) to be socially sheltered and considered that they were missing out on 'fun'.

[They're] Not really...fun. But then, well no cos they're a bit, boring, they don't really interact with anyone if they just stay at home all the time. You don't really get to know people and that, and later on in life you probably, have trouble talking to people cos you won't have known how to interact and that if you just stay in all the time. Then again they could, get a decent job and have a good life cos, of what they're doing. - Josh

Josh's opinion of people who did not take advantage of the freedom and rebellious nature of youth was that they would be socially disadvantaged in the future. But at the same time, how this freedom was used was a factor in whether adulthood would be successful.

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He viewed the sociable aspects of youth, hanging around with peers, to be centrally important in preparing an individual for adulthood. But at the same time he considered that there were benefits to being both a geek and an almost-chav like himself. The ideal position for a youth to be in then is between these two extremes.

Joseph (aged thirteen) considered that people in their late teens were the most likely to be anti-social, as they found the behaviour least distressing and more acceptable:

> *[It's] Probably, young people [who are more anti-social]. They probably think it's more funny. Not like, my age, probably not as anti-social as you are at like, eighteen, nineteen. Cos when you're like eighteen, nineteen you find...cos when people like, Jake Waite and that are pissed, they think it's funny to put windows through don't they? And that's what they think's funny but then, people like Alfie Brown, they think it's funny to set fireworks off [laugh]. No, different kind of people think different anti-social things are funny. - Joseph*

In light of the range of behaviours that can be considered 'anti-social', from nuisance to criminal behaviour, it is necessary to clarify that the respondents did not necessarily view all of these anti-social behaviour as acceptable or as a part of youth. Joseph judges that setting off fireworks is considered as acceptable whereas smashing windows is unacceptable. The young people identified by the participants as having committed the most serious anti-social behaviour were those that were in regular trouble with the police. It is necessary here to remind the reader that the behaviour undertaken by the participants may be anti-social but is not necessarily criminal. Having been in prison was viewed as the mark of a 'real criminal':

> *VA: Like, Jake and Matthew and Daniel and all them. Why do you think that they're so different to anyone else?*
> *Joseph: I dunno cos Peas, he hasn't been in prison, he's ok and you can get on with him and that, even though he does a lot of drugs. But Jake and people that have been in prison, they seem to act a lot different, so I think it's cos they've been in prison, they think they look big. So then they can do it.*

So although the participants viewed lower-level anti-social behaviour (such as graffiti, noise, underage drinking - covered more thoroughly in previous chapters) as an 'excusable' part of youth, more serious anti-social behaviour and crimes were not considered to be acceptable. Other young people in the area that committed crimes or had been to prison

were viewed as the 'worst' type of young person and at the end of the continuum from good to bad teenagers (or geek to chav) in which the participants constructed themselves as 'in the middle'.

8.3.2 Social Perspectives on Youth

This section looks at the ways in which the young people view the portrayal of youth as anti-social in wider society, including their own view that young people today are worse than previous generations. The media, through television, the internet and newspapers was referred to by the respondents as the primary way in which views about youth are disseminated. All of the participants who discussed the media (sixteen out of eighteen) agreed that there was some truth in media representations of youth, but that these accounts were largely negative, with little acknowledgement of the positive activities that young people engage in. Amelia reflected this view articulated by the respondents, that the media only present the worst of youth. She suggested that the media only focus on young people when they have committed some horrible act, and ignore the majority of young people that do not act in this way. The overarching image created by media stories then is a negative one of young people, and all young people are then judged as if they are 'bad'.

> *Like, on the TV all you ever hear about is like young kids stabbing other young kids and, binge drinking like, teens binge drinking and stuff like that. It just always goes on about the bad things it's never as much as the good things. Like there is good things about young people but like, it's always mainly the bad things. Bad things, it's always on the front page. It's always something bad about people on the first couple've pages of the newspaper and all the good stuff you've got to go right into the newspaper to get to it. And there's never that much but... I dunno, I just think they see us as proper like, bad all the time. - Amelia*

The media was considered to portray young people generally as "anti-social behaviourists" (Sophie) and while none of the participants challenged the truthfulness of the stories in the media (they generally believed what the newspapers said), they did challenge the 'slant' that the media placed on the stories which presented them as the 'whole truth' about young people. The view that the media perpetuate a negative view of young people was referred to by Alfie as a reason for general fear of 'youths' in the rest of society and within their own community. He thought that people in general feared him and his friends

because of the 'scare stories' that are propagated "in the papers and on telly". He believed that although the stories in the media about young people may have been true, they were offered as the reality of all young people rather than a small minority that he considered that they represented.

> *Yeah but they're...given as a whole aren't they? They're saying that every young person's like that, they don't say "oh this young person's done this and they've done right well", no. It's "this young person's stabbed someone", "this young person's got an anti-social behaviour order" [VA: So you think that they're misrepresenting...] Well, yeah. They only show...well not 'misrepresenting' cos they're showing that people do that and they do but they just make it seem that all young people are a lot worse than what they are. And stereotyping the whole young people to be little bastards...who going round fucking causing trouble and they're all bad. That's what I think has a lot to do with it. - Alfie*

Although viewed as 'stereotyping' the participants accepted that some young people were correctly portrayed in the media. This is illustrated by Sophie's sentiment about young people in the media "I mean, some of them are [anti-social], fair enough" and Simon's view that the representation was around "Half and half. Some of em yeah but, some of em no" and was the common view throughout the group. Whereas the main issue that the respondents had with the media portrayal of young people was that the media exaggerated the anti-social behaviour of youth, Simon's view was that these portrayals were unjust in that they indicated that young people were *really* anti-social *all of the time*. His view was that young people in the media were portrayed as:

> *...pretty much all the same, like, everyone has the same view of them. Just like, all anti-social. Up to no good and all that. Binge-drinking. But they think every teenager's a druggie and stuff like that. That's out of order though. No, there's some [young people] which are stupid and do it every day and everything, and there's the people that do it once in a while and there's people that don't touch it. - Simon*

This idea that it's the amount of time dedicated to anti-social behaviour which dictates a person's true character was also raised by some of the other respondents. By categorising 'real' anti-social people as those who behave badly *all the time*, Simon is able to construct himself as not-anti-social. This reflects the fluidity of status and identity that the respondents presented; by not fully committing to an anti-social identity they were able to define themselves as both (and neither) good and bad.

The participants who spoke about the government (around a quarter) had very little confidence in politicians and considered that government policies indicated that society had a generally negative view of young people.

> *[The government think] That they just get up to no good. Well if they didn't think that they were getting up to no good they wouldn't like, bring out all of these laws. But obviously they know that they're up to no good because of like, all the trouble that gets caused by them but, I dunno. - Amelia*

As with the media representations of youth, Amelia seemed to agree that the government views were based on a reality of troublesome youth. The others indicated that they did not consider that the government really affected them but that the general opinion within government was that young people were "little shits" (Grace). The discourse of young people's and (demand of) 'respect' has been proliferated within government rhetoric as well as the media, and is held up as illustrative of a generation of young people who want 'respect' from society whilst not offering anything in return. This is a concept that has long been a concern for society, suggesting that young people should be grateful to their elders and should not be seen to be in a position to demand anything – in youth they have not yet contributed to society and can therefore not expect anything from it. It ties in with the liminal nature of youth as not-children but not yet adults. Whilst the expectations of childhood dependence have been removed, the shackles of adult responsibilities have not yet been attached to these individuals. In this time (youth) of relative independence young people are expected to behave as adults but are not yet allowed the benefits of it, such as respect. Grace raised the issue of 'respect' (or lack of respect) that young people are considered to have in contemporary society, with particular reference to the portrayal of young people in the media.

> *Yeah but if you're shown respect you give respect. So, I respect people who respect me. If they don't respect me I don't respect them… And maybe if they show us respect, we'll give them respect. Because you know gang leaders? Everyone respects them don't they? So they respect the gang back, if you know what I mean… Works both ways … But yeah, if they [society/media] did calm it down a bit, and come to different communities which are quite poor, say London and Manchester and all that lot, with like all the knives and shootings and all that, and try and talk to them...I don't know, I can't explain it, but*

> *give them respect and they might think, "oh well, life actually means something" or something. - Grace*

Although there were no 'gangs' in any sense of the word in SmallTown, Grace's example of a gang leader showing respect to his peers and thus gaining respect back illustrates what she considers to be the reciprocal nature of respect. Her experience is that society does not show respect towards young people and is concerned with controlling rather than working with young people. By being treated negatively by society, young people become alienated and feel that their lives "mean nothing". Other respondents similarly felt that the negative treatment of young people actually provoked an anti-social response.

> *Yeah, [teenagers are] definitely [treated differently]. And I don't agree with it. I think it's half the reason why Jake and Matthew and everyone [react badly to the police], if a policeman came over and asked them what they were doing as if they were having a chat like "are you alright, what you doing?", if they were like that they'd be so much easy to get along with, rather than go up and be like "CAN I ASK WHAT YOU ARE DOING?!", it just pisses you off, it really does. Cos it's like, I'm not a child anymore, you wouldn't go up to a fully grown man and say that so don't treat me like [that] - Sophie*

Sophie suggests that young people are treated by the police as if they are children, as she considers that she is no longer a child. She suggests that negative treatment of young people results in a negative response, which may encourage anti-social behaviour. Around half of the respondents illustrated the view that sometimes youth anti-social behaviour is a reaction to the less-than status of young people in society.

> *They're [society/media] always wanting to put us down so, what have we got to look up to really? I don't know. I suppose if they stopped getting on our backs and shit, maybe things would calm down and that. – Grace*

This view centred on anti-social behaviour as a normal part of youth and Grace suggests that young people are judged unfairly which may in itself lead to further anti-social behaviour. Although anti-social behaviour was constructed by the participants as a 'normal' part of youth in terms of testing boundaries, making mistakes and experimenting, around half of the participants voiced the view that young people are somehow 'worse today'. This is also connected to the acceptance that the participants showed for media accounts of youth behaviour.

The notion that young people in contemporary society are representative of a decline in morals and values has not been unchallenged. Pearson's (1983) history of troublesome youth in which each generation believes their youth to be somehow 'worse' than in previous generations. This view was perpetuated by the respondents in the study who, despite claims that individually they were not necessarily any worse than young people of the past, believed that the youth of today marked a decline from previous generations. This idea of a previous 'golden era' of crime-free innocence (Pearson, 1983) was illustrated by Ruby in her reflection on the negative opinion of young people held by older people in SmallTown.

> Ruby: So, they think of what they were like as well when they were younger... And they probably weren't that bad. Probably just played with that loop and the stick [laugh].
> VA: So do you think that teenagers are worse now than they used to be?
> William: Um-hmm [Yes].
> Ruby: Yeah.... Cos we don't play chess.
> William: Mmm. Loop and a stick.

This caricature of 'traditional youth' as innocent and simplistic may have been a little tongue-in-cheek but the sentiment was common across the interviews. It reflects the argument set out in chapter two, that each generation looks back on the youth of the past as merely mischievous rather than dangerous. The view that young people are perceived as intimidatory has been discussed in previous chapters (in particular chapter 6.4), but Amelia suggested that this was a characteristic of modern youth (rather than youth as a whole).

> Parents can't control kids now, well, that much. It's harder to control them now because they can just get violent on them, like on their parents or they can just, swear, they don't listen to anything their parents say or, anything.

Amelia suggested that young people were worse than in previous generations because of a lack of parental discipline and increased permissiveness in society. This is partly based on the view that the young people of generations past drank less alcohol and society in general was more moralistic.

Cos before ...you used to be able to like, hit [your children]. Like, proper beat them and now you're not allowed to. You're allowed to like, smack them but you, like in a certain way and stuff like that. And they used to have the whip and, or like, no, not the whip, the cane, or something like that. And it was just like...children were brought up to like, I know they are NOW but they were more brought up to frown on drinking. And not even adults drank as much like, well I don't know, I can't really say if they did or they didn't but I'm guessing that they didn't But it was just like, so frowned upon and everything. - Amelia

Amelia stated that her opinion had been structured by the media, family and older peers; common factors which influenced participant perception throughout the research. The view that not only were young people worse but that society in general is somehow 'less good' than in previous years was perpetuated by Amelia, Josh, Dylan and Alfie. Josh believed that crime had increased and that high crime levels in conjunction with the current economic recession had led to a situation in which more and more young people were "turning to crime". Dylan and Alfie had a more bleak view of society and its future. They suggested that the Britain had was 'going downhill' having been better in previous decades.

Alfie: [Old people say] "Back in my day I used to be able to walk out of the house and leave the door open". Now you fucking can't.
Dylan: Yeah.
VA: Do you think that things have actually changed? Or is it just the way people think about it...?
Alfie: Yeah I do think it's getting worse, yeah.
Dylan: Yeah, it's just the way people think about it.
Alfie: Nah, I just think it's getting worse, as well... Cos I fucking, dread the day when I'm old and I can't do fuck all. Cos the way it's going with little fucking, little kids fucking underage drinking and, fucking all that. It is getting worse...
Dylan: It's getting worse...

Both Dylan and Alfie held the view that British society was generally worse than it previously had been, and that the situation was only going to deteriorate further (this may be in part due to the fact that both were generally supporters of far-right views, particularly surrounding immigration). Dylan's views were slightly less pessimistic than Alfie's. He suggested that the social perception that "things are getting worse" could in part be explained through a change in public attitude, and that generally people become less tolerant of young people as they get older and 'forget' what it's like to be young.

> *It's like my auntie says, they have to remember that there were young once, and they did it at one point…. It's one big circle innit? They smoke weed when they're teenagers and then they get paranoid til they get really old…(laughing) and then they're really old and they think we're gonna say summat cos they're paranoid. We'll be like it when we're older! - Dylan*

Olivia and Jayden illustrated that although their first reaction was to say that young people are more badly behaved than in previous generations, upon reflection they considered that 'young people today' were simply *different* than in previous generations due to different social circumstances.

> *VA: Do you think that teenagers really are worse today than their parents, or their parents' parents?*
> *Olivia: Yeah.*
> *Jayden: Mmm, I don't know.*
> *Olivia: Yeah, I don't know cos I don't know what my mum was like.*
> *Jayden: Well like, my dad said that…well, I dunno…. Mmm, yes and no.*
> *VA: Why yes and no?*
> *Jayden: With like drinking and drugs but like, in the olden days like, kids and that used to drive about on't roads with cars and that. …*
> *Olivia: Yeah they all did different pills.*
> *Jayden: Yeah. LSD and that came in didn't it? Everyone's like "oh!"*

This view that young people were worse today presented a somewhat contradictory position in how the participants understand youth. Whilst they see their own behaviour as often misjudged and anti-social behaviour as a normal part of youth itself, they believed that as a group young people (not them) were worse than in previous generations.

The next section explores the participants' views of adult ASB as opposed to the behaviour of youth.

8.3.3 Anti-Social Behaviour & Adulthood

The young people defined youth as a time during which they were free from social responsibilities, and this is why they were able to be anti-social. It followed then that anti-social behaviour would be ceased upon entering adulthood when an individual would become more responsible. The view that anti-social behaviour is something that people 'grow out' of was common across all of the interviews. Only one participant – Alfie – indicated that he would likely be an anti-social adult: "Because I'm still gonna do stuff

people don't like". This may be understood in the context that he viewed the definition of anti-social behaviour, as behaviour that *other people* define as unacceptable. In these terms Alfie may be considering that he is unable to control the perceptions of other people and therefore may offend people regardless of his intentions. The rest of the participants indicated that they did not intend to be anti-social adults.

> *To me, when you're an adult, it's when you stop being a child, acting like a child. Start, stop starting trouble, you know got to college, go to university, get a good job. - Jasmine*

All of the respondents viewed anti-social behaviour as associated with youth, both in wider society and in their own lives. Yet although they acknowledged that they may do things that are anti-social *now*, the majority did not consider that they would be anti-social adults.

> *VA: Do you think that you'll be anti-social when you grow up?*
> *Jayden: No.*
> *Olivia: No... When we're older we'll be more like, we'll have stuff to do.*
> *Jayden: [Definitely not] Because I'll have a job, I'll have to think about bills to pay and like, if I have kids I'll have to think about them and how their future would be, and [puts on posh voice] I wouldn't want them going into the wrong steps would I now?*
> *[VA: Would you want them to stay in school and stuff like that?] Yeah man.*

For Jayden and Olivia it would be adult responsibilities that would cause them to desist from anti-social behaviour. They do not present this in terms of gaining a greater level of maturity but rather that having responsibilities will occupy a greater deal of their time (as well as setting a good example to their future children). This suggests that they did not necessarily view the anti-social behaviour that they were involved in as 'bad' and this was the reason why they would desist in the future. Rather it was the other aspects of adulthood – time, freedom, responsibilities – that would eventually prevent them from indulging in their present behaviour. Whilst Simon regarded anti-social behaviour is a characteristic of 'youth' and that he would be less anti-social as he got older, he predicted that certain anti-social behaviours would be continued into his adulthood.

> *Yeah. Probably will do [less], but, I'll still keep doing it now and then. [VA: Why?] I don't know. It's what everyone does. Just everyone I hang around with really. They do it; you're there, so you might as well join in [laugh].*

Simon's view of his anti-social behaviour was getting drunk, causing a commotion, and generally annoying people, and he considered that these were things that he may continue to undertake in adulthood but not to the same extent as in youth. He largely regarded more serious anti-social behaviour in negative terms and outlined that he did not consider this behaviour to be 'the norm' in any sense.

> *I think they grow out of it. [They] Stop being sad and then, go normal.*
> *Get on with their lives, get off the dole and everything. - Simon*

In defining anti-social behaviour as 'sad' and "not normal" Simon indicates that his moral and values represent those of wider society and cannot be considered as 'subcultural' as is often the expectation of youths. This view was reiterated by Jack who suggested that he did not intend to be anti-social when he became an adult, and would be 'normal' which he defined as: "Not like what I was. Like fucking, keeping out of shit practically. And keeping your head down about things". He considers staying out of trouble, or desistance from anti-social behaviour, as a marker of being an adult. Individuals that continue to be anti-social into adulthood were considered to be more threatening and dangerous than anti-social youths. Their behaviour is viewed as "scarier" because there is an intent behind it that cannot be attributed to testing boundaries or making mistakes.

> *And they're always scarier because you always think, well you're meant*
> *to look up to them, they're meant to be the older, maturer ones and*
> *they're not. - Sophie*

In Sophie's view, adults' social position as morally 'above' youth means that their anti-social behaviour is more dangerous to society as it marks a real (rather than symbolic) rebellion and disregard for social values. As most of the respondents predicted that they would become less anti-social the older they became, adults who acted in an anti-social manner were considered negatively. Anti-social behaviour was considered as part of the liminal position of youth and which *should be* left behind when moving to adulthood.

> *VA: So do you think that young people are worse than adults?*
> *Sophie: Yeah, sometimes I do. But then I meet some people in pubs and*
> *stuff in SmallTown and SmallCity and you're just like, "whoa, where did*
> *they come from?" and they'll just be getting into fights and stuff and*
> *it's like "didn't you do this when you were younger?! Didn't you get it*
> *out of your system?" [laugh].*

Again, this notion of 'getting it out of your system' suggests that rebellion and anti-social behaviour are an inherent part of the human character that is allowed to be released in youth. Sophie describes an experience that she had with a seemingly 'normal' adult who, despite having the 'perfect' adult life, was a regular drug-taker. The woman had worked at a supermarket with Sophie's boyfriend at the time.

> *[She] was like, forty-something and she had three kids and a husband and she used to do speed. Perfectly normal family, nothing like in a rough area of SmallCity or anything, but she used to earn quite a bit of money, her husband had a good job, they had three kids, pets, everything was perfect. But she used to do speed and you just think "that's weird" cos you think of speed, young people, teenagers, gobby people, people in caps; you don't think, you don't realise how many people actually do that kind of thing. And one of my friend's dad's does it. This guy in SmallCity that is a dealer that I didn't really know that well but Sebastian knew him, him and his mum sell weed together and they're like perfectly nice people. But then you just think...it's just odd to think about it. - Sophie*

This reflects the wider view that anti-social behaviours such as this which go against accepted social values, are the remit of young people rather than adults. In particular Sophie emphasised the fact that the woman she describes *appears* to be a normal adult but is what Becker (1963) would describe as a 'secret deviant'. Anti-social adults were viewed as a social anomaly, a real rather than symbolic threat to society.

Traditionally 'liminal' activities; underage drinking, sex, fighting, and outrageous style and clothing, which can be seen throughout history have been criminalised by the ASB Agenda. This presents new challenges to young people in their transition to adulthood. Youth is conceptualised by the participants as a time when roles, identities and behaviours can be 'tried out' without marking a full commitment to any. The belief that anti-social behaviour is something that the individual 'grows out of' was consistent and reflects a developmental approach which:

> *"...regards crime and other misbehaviour by young people as a transient and integral part of the process of growing up. Instead of exclusion, the approach seeks absorption and fortifies the developmental role of home and school. If there is to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, it is that sooner rather than later matters will be worked out. As with other childish things, misbehaviour will eventually be put away." (Rutherford, 1992: 29)*

The participants, as a consequence of their liminal position (between childhood and youth, social and anti-social) were able to successfully reject the anti-social label as part of their identities. In terms of labelling theory this may be due to the weak nature of the anti-social label which can be easily negotiated, but overall suggests that young people grow out of anti-social behaviour and into 'social' adulthood. The fluidity of identity enables this process through allowing boundaries to be tested and identities 'tried out' without ever becoming primary definers of individual 'self'.

8.3.4 Future Ambitions

The behaviour of young people is viewed as a potential threat to the morals and values of society (Jones, 2009). This fits into discourse of youth as being a non-status and therefore representing 'potential' which needs to be correctly managed. Young people are the future of society thus if young people are perceived to act outside of the accepted social morals and standards it is assumed that this is how they will act as adults, thus changing the social order.   The views of the participants in this study indicate that although anti-social behaviour may be accepted as a part of youth, they do not expect this to continue into adulthood.   This was evident not only in the respondents' attitudes to anti-social behaviour, but also in their ambitions for the future.   Overwhelmingly the young people who took part viewed their future in terms of conventional societal goals including marriage (for some but not all), having children, having a successful 'career', their own home, and being financially successful (a finding reflected in other youth transition studies, for example: MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). Jack's future ambitions were to have a job, a house and be a millionaire – closely representative of the 'American dream' values in Western societies.   Simon's prediction of his future reflects conformity with wider social values of children, marriage, a career and a home:

> VA: So what do you think you'll be doing in five years time?
> Simon: I always get asked this and I really don't know. Just have to wait and see really.
> VA: Do you see yourself with a house, a job and a car or like...
> Simon: Hopefully.
> VA: ...or going to pubs and getting in fights and..?
> Simon: Maybe on a weekend. Yeah, I'll go out on a weekend with mates and get trollied. But work through the week, earn a decent living. Get a house, car, have kids one day [laugh] and all that.
> VA: So you want to have kids?

> *Simon: Eventually. I wouldn't have them at this age though. Screw your life up.*

Sophie talked about adulthood as being the time when 'stayed in with your husband'. She did not view marriage necessarily as one of her ambitions but aimed for a stable relationship in which she would have children:

> *I've always wanted to be a mum and work with kids, they're like the two things. And you know people who are like "I was brought onto this earth to be a mum", that is all I've wanted to do since I was little. But I'm not one of these people who're like "you know what, I'm just going to go out and have sex with the first person I find and have a baby", yeah I want to be with the guy for a bit, but I'm not that fussed about married. I think that's a bit silly. It's be nice to get married one day BUT, if I don't it's not the end of the world. It's just a piece of paper that says you're married, like a ring-wow. I can't imagine myself having kids but I really would want to have kids one day. A lot of kids.*

Simon's view of 'the right way' to have children conforms to traditional moral views of children as the product of love and marriage:

> *VA: So you see yourself getting married one day then?*
> *Simon: Yeah. Yeah... generally, I'd prefer [to get] married then [have] kids but, if you like, found out you were having a kid, if I loved them then marry them so, you've got a kid born while you're actually married, or whatever.*

The remaining participants also viewed their futures in terms of a home, a partner, and a family. They held ambitions and dreams that are currently viewed as normal in society; Ella joked about becoming a 'footballer's wife'. Lilly wanted to be a successful singer which she would be able to do through going on the popular television shows such as 'The X-Factor' or 'Britain's Got Talent'. Joseph wanted to be a successful jockey. William wanted to be a mechanic and ideally own his own garage. Alfie wanted to own his own business. What these ambitions indicate is that the young people who took part in the research and who all defined as having been anti-social viewed their position as within and part of wider society. This reflects Matza's (1964) thesis that young people can 'drift' in and out of delinquency without committing to any form of subcultural ideal or values.

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8.4 SUMMARY

*"Young men and women appear to be 'somewhere' between youth and adulthood, varying between being **either** young **or** adult, being **both** young **and** adult or being **neither** young **nor** adult (Walther et al., 2002, cited in Plug, et al., 2003 [emphasis in original])*

This chapter has described the ways in which the participants made sense of youth as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, and how they conceptualise anti-social behaviour as a part of this transition. The participants constructed youth as a liminal transitory period between childhood and adulthood.   It has been argued that, in the absence of official ceremonies to define their transition, these young people have created their own symbolic boundaries and markers to facilitate their entrance into adulthood. Namely, the participants judged their transition according to the general themes of maturity, independence and responsibility. The construction of their status in terms of youth and anti-social behaviour reflects a fluidity of definition which allows them to be (and not be) various things at once. The participants defined their position and their social identities through reference to other fixed categories including child and adult, good and bad (in the context of youth as 'geek' and 'chav'), immature and mature. They described youth as a period that is fluid and interchangeable, allowing them to be both/neither one thing or another, whilst adulthood was characterised as a fixed, defined position which marked the end of the freedom of youth.

Overall, the data shows that these young people may *be* anti-social but this is constructed, by them, as a normal part of conventional youth. Because they were in a liminal position, which is characterised by its fluidity and indeterminacy, these young people were able to opt in and out of anti-social behaviour; it was attached to their status as 'teenager' and was therefore not a permanent label. Anti-social behaviour represents a factor in youth much like maturity - they are both aspects of an interconnected web of factors which mark an obstacle course on the transition from childhood to adulthood. Young people's position within this transition is marked by fluidity, contradiction, ambiguity and drift. They are, according to social perception, 'anti-social youths' but they are by no means against society; they are simply searching for their place within it.

The next chapter will conclude this thesis by drawing together the themes that have been raised by this and the previous chapters.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

This study specifically set out to answer the question:

How do young people make sense of youth anti-social behaviour?

This chapter draws together the themes that have emerged from this empirical study. After examination and analysis of the eighteen young people's accounts of youth anti-social behaviour, it is argued that the young people represented themselves not as anti-social individuals, but rather viewed their behaviour as a normal part of youth as the transition between childhood and adulthood. The central thesis in this study is that the young people's relationship with anti-social behaviour – their own identification as anti-social youths, their characterisation of anti-social people, their management of an anti-social identity, and their understanding of youth anti-social behaviour more widely – was understood by the respondents in the context of their own liminal position. As discussed in chapters two and eight, the liminal period is one characterised by fluidity, ambiguity, and indistinction. The young people presented themselves as liminads; occupying the space between their previous social position and the position which they are to become, but have the characteristics of neither. They are status-less 'becomings' rather than socially fixed beings. In making sense of youth anti-social behaviour the participants drew on existing understandings of defined, fixed, oppositional categories such as child and adult, good and bad, and social and anti-social, to describe other people whilst situating themselves as between these polarized statuses: defining themselves through what they are not.

The remainder of this chapter outlines the key conclusions based on the research aims which were:

1. To investigate, describe and analyse the specific ways in which some young people come to be understood as anti-social and the impact that this has on their everyday lives.

2. To explore, describe and analyse the ways in which young people make sense of their own and others' anti-social behaviour

3. To explore, describe and analyse the relation between the representation of young people as anti-social and individual young people's construction of identity.

4. To investigate, analyse and describe how young people make sense of the association between ASB and youth.

The young people who took part in the study were not subject to any individual ASB control measures such as ABCs or ASBOs, but were regularly identified as anti-social youths within and by their community. This identification meant that the young people were treated *as if* they were anti-social resulting in regular interactions with the police and authorities. The principle factors that led to their identification as anti-social were described by the participants to be:

i. Their age. The construction of all young people as potentially anti-social was considered to be a significant factor in their being identified as problematic.

ii. Their leisure activities, particularly hanging around on the streets in groups.

iii. Their appearance. Specifically that they were often misinterpreted as 'chavs' due to wearing clothing that was similar to that they associated with the chav caricature.

iv. The reputation of their family and/or friends. If their family or friends were known to the police the participants suggested that this made them a legitimate target to the police as they were judged to be 'guilty by association'.

v. The rural area in which they were situated.

I argued that young people in rural areas have a different experience of ASB control than urban teenagers. The participants believed that they and other young people in rural areas were more heavily policed than young people in urban locations, and were targeted for ASB control measures based on a lower threshold of behaviour. Thus the participants felt that activities which were defined as 'anti-social' in SmallTown would be considered merely 'nuisance' behaviour in other areas and would thus not warrant police intervention. They also suggested that they were more visible in their activities due to the rural location both because there were less places for young people to go and because in a small community young people are more likely to be 'known' by the police because they are fewer in number.

This study has illustrated the ways in which the eighteen young people encountered and experienced ASB control practices. Whilst they did not discuss any experiences with formal ASB measures, the identification of the participants as anti-social youths within their community meant that they were regularly targeted for informal youth-focused practices. Most often this involved contact with the police, resulting in the young people being informally dispersed, having their personal details recorded, receiving warnings, and informal reprimands or 'tellings off'. Outside of police contact, further consequence of their characterisation as anti-social were that the young people were ejected from certain areas by caretakers and a 'mosquito' device, and were barred from purchasing alcohol from the local shop. These practices meant that the participants' social activities were often restricted and their access to public spaces limited or tightly regulated. It has been argued that a broader consequence of these ASB control practices is that young people are marginalised and disempowered, particularly in contact with the police.

The participants held clear and consistent views of what it meant to be an anti-social person. They made sense of youth anti-social behaviour through invoking both relational and essential definitions of the behaviour. Whereas they characterised their own ASB as occasional and relational, they presented the ASB of other 'anti-social youths' as a manifestation of their innate bad character. The young people utilised the contemporary folk devil of the 'chav' to describe an anti-social individual. In defining anti-social others they constructed the behaviour as something innate to the individual 'chav' who is inherently selfish, destructive, violent and uncaring. In terms of their own anti-social behaviour, the participants enacted a relational definition; their behaviour was only anti-social in relation to the circumstances, their age, or the location. In this way they were able to separate and distinguish themselves from anti-social individuals.

I have argued that these young people do not consider themselves to be anti-social. It has been illustrated that the young people undertook what they defined as anti-social behaviours; they acknowledged their similarities to an anti-social person; and were identified as anti-social by others (police officers, community members, the general public etc); and yet they did not define themselves as anti-social individuals. This illustrates that whilst the young people felt stigmatised by being identified as anti-social in their communities, they did not internalise the stigma of that label. The participants' maintenance of a non-anti-social identity was dependent on the utilisation of a number of

identity strategies including 'othering' and techniques of negotiation. By engaging in a process of othering through enacting stereotypical views of chavs, the young people were able to define themselves as *not* anti-social. It was also argued that the participants employed a number of techniques to negotiate the anti-social identity which involved both accepting and denying the anti-social quality of their behaviour. Based on Sykes and Matza's (1957) 'techniques of neutralisation', specifically these were:

a. Acceptance of behaviour, denial of label

    (i) Minimising the impact of their behaviour

    (ii) Denying responsibility for their behaviour

    (iii) Characterising their ASB as an occasional event in terms of Drift/Fluidity

b. Denial of behaviour, denial of label

    (iv) The reformed character

    (v) Judged by stereotype

    (vi) Deflection of label onto others

    (vii) Neutralising the behaviour through normalising

I have made the case that these techniques of negotiation are strategies that the young people used to mediate the internal reflections of them as anti-social, and that this negotiation is made possible through wider "buffers" (Trautner and Collett, 2010) that relate to the AS label and to their youth status. The "buffers" to a stigmatizing anti-social identity are for these young people: their age, their liminal position, their experiences of the ambiguous and inconsistent ASB defining process, their other positive identities, and their belief in the transience of youth. I have argued that young people do not adopt an anti-social identity as they are able to opt in and out of the role of anti-social youth without it becoming a primary definer of their identity. The respondents' constructions of their identity was based on their ability to drift in and out of identities, they are able to be everything and nothing at the same time. This allowed them to access other positive identity roles to define them rather than the anti-social label. In this way, the stigma of the anti-social label is attached not to them individually but to their status as 'teenager' and therefore it is not a permanent label.

To make this argument, this thesis has developed a number of concepts. From the symbolic interactionist literature I utilised the concepts of stigma and identity construction.

This allowed an exploration of the internal sense-making environment of the participants, and I thus drew a line conceptually between anti-social behaviour and an anti-social *identity*. In applying the concept of stigma, I focused on the individual impact of anti-social behaviour rhetoric and outlined that although these young people were stigmatised as anti-social they were able to maintain a 'non-anti-social identity'. I illustrated this by borrowing from critical criminology to develop the unique concept of 'techniques of negotiation'. I have developed the 'neutralization' framework established by Sykes and Matza (1957). In that framework, Sykes and Matza focused on the rationalisations and justifications that were invoked by individuals to 'neutralize' the moral censure or social disgrace that accompanied committing deviant acts. They developed this framework by *not* drawing a distinction between the moral points of reference of deviant individuals and others. In that way, Sykes and Matza were able to demonstrate that individuals committing deviant acts did not form a separate subculture that was distinct from or different to mainstream culture. I have adapted this framework by introducing the concept of 'techniques of negotiation' in order to account for young people's maintenance of a positive sense of self in the context of their identification as anti-social by others. I modified Sykes and Matza's concept in order to focus attention analytically on the rationalisations and justifications that are invoked by individuals to neutralize, or rather as I conceive of it 'negotiate', the spoiled, stigmatised deviant label.

This thesis does not attempt explain how or why young people commit anti-social behaviour, rather the concept of 'techniques of negotiation' illustrates the way in which young people negotiate between identities both anti-social and 'normal'. In developing this argument I borrowed from anthropological literature the concept of liminality and developed its application within criminology to anti-social identities. I used the concept to not only to describe the transitional processes that these young people experience, but also to describe their identity-construction processes and specifically how they are able to manage multiple identities and drift between a variety of statuses, both positive and negative.

The young people in this research perceived themselves to occupy a position between childhood and adulthood. It has been argued that this position can be understood as liminal, characterised by flexibility and ambiguity which allows young people to exist in-between different roles and statuses. They are therefore able to opt in and out of different

identities without committing to any (until adulthood). The respondents viewed themselves as 'on the way' to adulthood: a fixed status defined by maturity, independence and responsibility. Yet, it has been argued that the transition to adulthood for these young people is a complex process dependent on a variety of factors; personal, social and cultural. The relationship between youth and anti-social behaviour is such that, for these young people, anti-social behaviour represents a phase in youth in the same way as maturity or independence: they are all aspects of an interconnected web of factors which mark an obstacle course on the transition from childhood to adulthood. The participants viewed anti-social behaviour as a part of the liminal youth period and the anti-social behaviours which they were involved in as acceptable due to the expected 'rebellion' which occurs during youth. In the same way that they constructed themselves according to childhood and adulthood – as neither child nor adult but somewhere on the continuum between – they construct themselves as both anti-social and not anti-social.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:

Age:

Type of Behaviour		Have I done it or been involved in it?
Drinking	Drinking on the street	
	Underage drinking	
	Buying alcohol underage	
Drug/substance misuse & dealing	Taking drugs	
	Sniffing volatile substances	
	Discarding needles/drug paraphernalia	
Vehicle-related nuisance & inappropriate vehicle use	Joyriding	
	Racing cars	
	Off-road motorcycling	
	Cycling/skateboarding in pedestrian areas/footpaths	
Noise	Noisy neighbours	
	Noisy cars/motorbikes	
	Loud music	
Rowdy behaviour	Shouting & swearing	
	Fighting	
	Drunken behaviour	
	Hooliganism/loutish behaviour	
Nuisance behaviour	Urinating in public	
	Setting fires (not directed at specific persons or property)	
	Inappropriate use of fireworks	
	Throwing missiles (e.g. stones)	
	Climbing on buildings	
	Impeding access to communal areas (e.g. stopping people getting past by blocking a gateway)	
	Games in restricted/ inappropriate areas	
	Misuse of air guns	
	Letting down tyres	
Intimidation/harassment	Groups or individuals making threats	
	Verbal abuse	

	Bullying	
	Following people	
	Pestering people	
	Voyeurism	
	Sending nasty/offensive letters	
	Obscene/nuisance phone calls or texts	
	Menacing gestures	
Criminal damage/ vandalism	Graffiti	
	Damage to bus shelters	
	Damage to phone kiosks	
	Damage to street furniture	
	Damage to buildings	
	Damage to trees/plants/ hedges	
Litter/rubbish	Dropping litter	
	Dumping rubbish	
Sexual acts	Indecent exposure (e.g. "mooning")	
Hoax calls	False calls to emergency services	
Animal-related problems	Uncontrolled animals	
Begging	Asking strangers for money	

*** ALL ANSWERS WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL ***

Young People and Antisocial Behaviour Interview

INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

Young people are often talked about by the government and in the news, but are not always given the chance to get their opinion across or speak for themselves. This research is an opportunity for young people to say what they think about themselves, about how other people see them and about antisocial behaviour. The aim of the study is to provide an insight into the experiences and attitudes of young people around the subject of anti-social behaviour.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part as you are aged between 14-19 years and have been identified as anti-social by an official agency (e.g. the police), or you have self-reported that you have been involved in anti-social behaviour at some time. I will be asking 20 young people to participate in total, in addition to conducting 2 discussion groups with around 5-7 young people each.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part in an interview. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information

sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?
If you decide to take part, you will be asked to spend around 30-60 minutes with me talking about anti-social behaviour. I will ask some questions and you can tell me what you think about things such as what anti-social behaviour is, what older people think about teenagers, how you think the news reports on teenagers etc.

The session will take place somewhere that you feel comfortable, such as your house or the YC building, and I will record the session using a small digital recorder so that I can write the details up later.

What's in it for me?
If you take part in an interview, you will receive a £10 high-street voucher as thank you for the time you have spent with me. You will also get the chance to tell me your views and potentially improve other people's understanding of young people.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?
All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and all identities will be protected so the information cannot be traced back to you. The only case where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed is if a young person is at the risk of harm, and then this will be reported to the relevant authorities.

What should I do if I want to take part?
If you would like to take part then all you have to do is let me know in person at YC (I will usually be there Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights) or by email on v.j.armitage@durham.ac.uk.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results of the research will go together to make a PhD thesis for the

completion of a Doctorate at Durham University. A copy of this will be kept at Durham University Library and at the British Library. If you would like to get a copy at the end of the research then contact me for details. All individuals who take part will be provided with a summary report of my findings if requested.

Why are you doing the research?
I am conducting the research as a student at Durham University, School of Applied Social Sciences, funded as a Durham Doctoral Fellow.

Contact for Further Information
If you have any concerns further questions please feel free to contact me on xxxxxxxxxxx or v.j.armitage@durham.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can contact my academic supervisor Dr Jo Phoenix on jo.phoenix@durham.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Vici Armitage - 18th June 2008

Young People & Antisocial Behaviour Project

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study in which I hope to get young people's opinion of different aspects of "Anti-Social Behaviour". I am talking to young people aged between 13 and 19 years who have, at some time, been involved in antisocial behaviour.

The discussion groups will be on:

Tuesday 24th June	**9:00pm – 10:00pm**
Wednesday 25th June	**6:00pm – 7:00pm**

at **the YC**

Refreshments will be provided!

If you decide to take part, this will involve watching a short DVD followed by an informal discussion about antisocial behaviour and perceptions of young people.

Each person who agrees to take part will need to sign a Consent Form which shows that you have agreed to talk to me and have the session recorded, written up and used as part of my study. Any discussion you have with me will be kept anonymous and anything you say will be written up under a different name so that you cannot be identified.

If you do decide to take part, you are still free to change your mind at any time – including in the middle of the session or at any time afterwards – and as soon as you let me know your information will not be used.

If you want more information on any part of the research then you can contact me on v.j.armitage@durham.ac.uk or speak to me anytime at YC.

Thanks for taking the time to read this invitation, if it seems like something you would be interested in then please fill out the form at the bottom of the page and return it to me or Erin.

Thanks,

Vici Armitage

17th June 2008

_____

NAME: AGE:

I am interested in taking part on: Tuesday 24th June   ☐

Wednesday 25th June   ☐

Young People and Antisocial Behaviour Interview

CONSENT FORM

I understand that my participation in this project will involve a one-to-one discussion about young people and antisocial behaviour (including my own) with Vici Armitage which will require about 30-60 minutes of my time. I understand that the session will be recorded using a digital recorder for writing up purposes.

I understand that taking part in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time (including after the discussion) without giving a reason.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to stop the session and discuss my concerns with Vici Armitage or Dr Jo Phoenix.

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially, and my identity protected so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually. I understand that, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, this information may be kept indefinitely.

I understand that if I disclose something for the first time which means that myself, another young person or a vulnerable adult is at risk of serious harm, then Vici will have to report this to another person who can deal with it properly.

I understand that the information collected will be used for the completion of a PhD, and that at the end of the research I will be provided with feedback about the study.

I, _____(NAME & AGE)

consent to participate in the study conducted by Victoria Armitage, School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University with the supervision of Dr Jo Phoenix.

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX V: INTERVIEW GUIDE AND QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Discussion Guide

1. Interview Guide read/provided to participant
2. Information letter provided for participant to read (or me to read to the participant) – limits of confidentiality explained (i.e. child abuse and schedule 1 offences)
3. Participant shown the questions which will be asked
4. Consent form given to the participant to read (or I will read to them) and sign if happy
5. Brief explanation of the recording equipment which is to be used
6. Practice with the recorder to ensure it's working and well placed
7. Explain to participant that they can stop recording at any time, show them how to stop the recorder if they feel the need
8. Discuss and agree what participant's code name is to be
9. Ask if there are any questions before we start
10. Recorder switched on: I confirm the date, location and the participant's code name and age

Main Subject Areas

- What "Anti-social Behaviour" is
- Why people do it
- Personal experiences
- What people think about young people – adults, media, government etc
- Personal future

Example Questions:
1. What do you think antisocial behaviour is? Can you give examples?
2. What do you think is the difference between crime and antisocial behaviour?
3. Can you explain what an ASBO is?

4. In your opinion, what kind of people commit antisocial behaviour?

5. Is there a difference between girls and lads? Or people with money and no money?

6. Do you think that anyone is to blame for antisocial behaviour?

7. What do you think should happen to people who are antisocial?

8. Have you ever been warned or punished for ASB? What was the experience like?

9. Do you have any friends who are antisocial? What makes you say that they are?

10. Have you ever acted antisocially?

11. When you were doing it at the time did you think it was antisocial?

12. Who do you think commits the most ASB?

13. Do you think that teenagers are more antisocial than adults?

14. How would you describe a "chav"? Or townie? Or a "yob"?

15. Do you think you ever get labelled as these? How do you deal with it?

16. If you had to give yourself a label (like chav or emo) what would it be and why?

17. Can you explain how you think other people see you?

18. How do you think that older people view teenagers?

19. Why do you think that adults and teenagers are seen as different?

20. Do you thing that people treat you differently based on what you wear?

21. Where do you think that people get their ideas about young people from?

22. How do you think that teenagers are portrayed in the media?

23. What do you think the government thinks about teenagers?

24. Do you think there are any good things about having an ASBO?

25. Do you think you are antisocial? Why, or why not?

26. Why do you think people worry about young people being antisocial?

27. And when you think about yourself generally do you think that you are antisocial?

28. Do you think that you will be an antisocial adult?

29. Are some things more "wrong" than others? Like what?

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